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President’s Welcome
Welcome to the 8th edition of the TTRA Asia-Pacific (APac) Chapter Newsletter.

We begin with a review of the 50th TTRA International Annual Conference held in Melbourne, Australia, in June. This is the first time the APac Chapter has hosted the International conference, and by all measures it was a standout success and one to remember. A key output of the conference was ‘Setting the Research Agenda’ for the coming decade, and the four emergent themes represent significant and sobering challenges for the tourism research community. Please take time to review the paper (linked herein) that fully lays out the agenda – there is much food for thought, and research opportunities abound.

Another highlight of the 50th international conference was the awards success of some of your Chapter colleagues - read on to learn more!

This issue’s ‘Spotlight’ column returns to the academic domain, introducing current board member Professor Philip Seaton of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Philip’s love of Japanese history and culture shines through, and he also shares perspectives on the implications of high-growth tourism for the Asia-Pacific and the tourism research agenda.

Finally, something to note in your diaries. The 2019 Chapter AGM will be presented via webinar at 17:00 AEDT (UTC/GMT +11 hours) December 9, 2019 – we will lead off with a highly topical panel session before moving onto the AGM. Look out for the invitation in the days ahead.

I hope to see you at the AGM!
The 2019 Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) annual international research conference took place in Melbourne Australia, with delegates from all continents and tourism sectors. The overall theme of the conference was Navigating Shifting Sands: Research in Changing Times, and two special round-table sessions were held at the beginning and end of the conference around Setting the Research Agenda. The aim was to take what was discussed at the conference, set some research priorities and move into the future.

Four over-arching, related themes emerged from the discussions: climate change and overtourism, business employment and supply, measurement and KPIs, and people-centred planning along with First Nations people. It is clear that greater connections and collaborations need to be made between the various sectors of the research community, a task that TTRA is well positioned to address. As such, TTRA is in the early stages of developing the TTRA Collaborative Research Hub that will provide a platform from which all researchers can share their knowledge in plain English and where collaborations can and will be encouraged and facilitated. In addition, TTRA encourages papers or projects on the listed priorities to be presented at the TTRA International conference in June 2020 and beyond. Adapted from Dawson, Ruane & Beeton (2019)
Some of our Chapter Award Winners at the
TTRA International Conference 2019

**Lifetime Achievement Award**
The ‘Lifetime Achievement Award’ is the highest honor given by the Travel and Tourism Research Association. This award is presented at the TTRA International Conference to the individual or organization who has made a highly significant contribution to TTRA as well as to the travel and tourism industry.

**Sue Beeton** – President, TTRA International; & Founding President, APac Chapter

**Distinguished Researcher Award**
A ‘Distinguished Researcher’ is one who is recognized by their peers as a valuable resource in the tourism research community and who has provided outstanding service to the field. The recipient is recognized by not only general overviews of contributions during their career but also recognized by specific examples of what they have done to advance tourism research, the people in it, and how they have worked to ensure that the tourism research community continues to flourish.

**Jeff Dalley** – President, APac Chapter

**Best Illustrated Paper Award**
Awarded to the best visual paper presented at the conference.

**Leah Gibson**, William Angliss Institute. In Recognition of: “What’s Old is New Again: Instagram as the New Slide Night”.

**Best Graduate 3-Minute Thesis Award**
Awarded to the best graduate colloquium paper presented at the conference.

**Yawei Jiang** (The University of Queensland). In Recognition of: “Building Dynamic Capabilities in Tourism Organizations for Crisis and Disaster Management: Antecedents and Barriers”.

TTRA
Asia Pacific Chapter
I was elected to the TTRA APac Chapter Board in 2018 after joining TTRA in 2014 when I went to the international conference in Bruges. I am originally from London, but have lived in Japan since 1994. My current position is Professor and Vice Dean in the School of Japan Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. My research career started in Japanese memories of World War II, and more generally representations of modern Japanese history (since the 1850s) in popular culture. I only consciously became involved in tourism studies from around 2010, but in retrospect tourism studies was always an important part of my war memories research. I was visiting many heritage sites – Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Okinawa and countless other local sites in Japan that will not be so familiar for an international audience – and considering their roles in forming historical consciousness. As I have consciously engaged tourism studies research in the past decade, I have found many people with a similar interest in how history is represented in tourist sites.

I got involved in TTRA because of a life-changing meeting with Sue Beeton in 2011. At the time I was in the very early stages of my tourism research and developing my research partnership with Takayoshi Yamamura at Hokkaido University (where I was working then). We both knew that Sue was a pioneering scholar in the field of film-induced tourism, and I introduced myself after her talk, which started a wonderful research partnership. Sue, Takayoshi and I co-authored the first article in English introducing “contents tourism”, which was published in 2013, and our most recent collaboration has been the edited volume Contents Tourism and Popular Culture Fandom: Transnational Tourist Experiences (Channel View Publications), which comes out in January 2020.
I strongly believe that the Asia-Pacific region is going to be the centre of tourism studies in the next few decades. For instance, inbound visitors to Japan have risen from just over four million people in 1998 to just over 31 million in 2018. This exponential growth has been made possible by hundreds of millions of people in China, Indonesia, Malaysia and other Asian countries with a rising middle-class population with the propensity to travel. Other regions are also experiencing significant growth and it is no longer possible to ignore Asian examples in the discussion of world tourism trends.

Against this backdrop, English-language tourism studies scholarship will increasingly need to incorporate Asia into its discussions in two key ways. The first is at the level of theory. As we see new tourism phenomena emerge in Asia, new theory will emerge to make sense of it all. Our contents tourism research is a case in point. The concept of contents tourism emerged in the Japanese creative industries in the 1990s, but as we indicate in Contents Tourism and Popular Culture Fandom, this theory originating in Asia offers a strong analytical framework for understanding tourism phenomena around the world.

The second is at the level of environmental protection. At the 2019 international conference, the need for the tourism industry to be fully conscious of its role in the anthropogenic climate crisis was a major theme of discussion. Amidst massive growth in the desire and capability of Asians to travel and with numerous Low Cost Carriers now crisscrossing the region, the idea of tourism being sustainable, let alone “regenerative”, seems a distant prospect. Asia must be at the forefront of the world’s efforts to curb the environmental impacts of tourism. But, it must all be done in a way that is sensitive to both the West’s disproportionate historical contributions to the climate crisis and the complicated legacies of Western empire in the region.

In short, it is an exciting and important time to be involved in tourism research in the Asia-Pacific region. I will do what I can to help TTRA, and in particular the Asia Pacific Chapter, be a leading organization in promoting and supporting research on the region.

www.philipseaton.net
In this volume, an international group of scholars rewrites the old canon of 'contents tourism' with impressive cultural sensitivity. Across several chapters exploring aspects of Japanese popular culture’s adherence to performance and visuality, native phenomena are examined as instances of transnational hybridisation and global cultural connectivity. An essential read for students of international popular culture, tourism and the moving image. Rodanthi Tzanelli, University of Leeds, UK

This book recontextualises the largely compartmentalised views of media tourism relationships, such as film and literary tourism, advancing and compounding them within the socialising frame of contents tourism. The authors provide engaging insights into the formation, creation and (re)crafting of media-related narratives, variously bonding communities, media, tourists and places across the different contexts. These insights promise new interpretations and considerations, which will benefit anyone studying contents tourism (or any tourism media relationship).

Glen Cryer, Monash University, Australia

This important book expands the concept of contents tourism, which has so far been limited mainly to the Japanese context, and shows its transnational and transmedial potential. Case studies from different cultural contexts, which refer to enthusiasm for literature, theatre, folklore or anime, illustrate the variety of paths the imagination can take—and how imaginary journeys become real tourism.

Elisabeth Scherer, University of Dusseldorf, Germany

Contents tourism is among the very few productive new ideas that has emerged in tourism studies in the past several decades. The authors in this important volume capture the dynamics of the emotional and symbolic connection of tourists to the places they visit. The chapters prove the promise of contents tourism beyond studies of the niche scene of Japanese anime where it originated.

Dean MacCannell, Emeritus Professor, University of California, Davis, USA

The term ‘contents tourism’ has been defined as ‘travel behaviour motivated fully or partially by narratives, characters, locations, and other creative elements of popular culture.’ This is the first book to apply the concept of contents tourism in a global context and to establish an interdisciplinary framework for contents tourism research.

Takayoshi Yamamura is Professor at the Centre for Advanced Tourism Studies, Hokkaido University, Japan. His research interests include Japanese animation and tourism, pop culture and regional development/community revitalisation.

Philip Seaton is Professor at the Institute of Japan Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan. His research interests include Japanese war history/memory and contents tourism (with a particular focus on historical dramas and heritage sites).

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This editorial piece concerns the roles of theme parks and their growing interest in leveraging on the potential of the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) industry. While theme parks have existed since the days of the Disney empire, the highly competitive landscape has triggered new forays into markets that could create new competitive advantage for key players in the theme park sector.

The theme park landscape has clearly shifted, and further blurring the lines of what Lichy and McLeay (2018) term as ‘bleisure’. According to the authors, the term bleisure mixes business with leisure activities, and is now clearly the case for the Sunway Lagoon theme park to feature unique experiences for markets such as the MICE industry.

As a leading theme park in Malaysia, Sunway Lagoon welcomed a record 1.6 million guests in 2017 (Anand, 2018). It is a key attraction that was primarily known for its water-based rides and activities, but is now actively pursuing the MICE sector through offering a range of experiences. These include evening gala dinners, corporate team building activities and outdoor meetings as it builds on its reputation as arguably one of Asia’s most decorated theme parks (Metro News, 2018).

By offering potential and existing guests a fun and active form of engaging with leisure, Sunway Lagoon creates the personalised MICE experiences that are unlikely to be reproduced in a hotel or restaurant setting. The photos below, from Sunway Lagoon’s events website, show a few ways that the theme park can cater to the MICE market.


Forthcoming Conferences and Events

2019 TTRA APac AGM – 9 Dec 2019


PATA Adventure Travel Conference and Mart 2020 (Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia) – 12 to 14 February 2020: [https://www.pata.org/atcm/](https://www.pata.org/atcm/)


Direct Booking Summit (Bangkok, Thailand) – 19 to 20 February 2020: [https://www.directbookingsummit.com/apac](https://www.directbookingsummit.com/apac)


PATA Annual Summit 2020 (Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates) – 31 March to 4 April 2020: [https://www.pata.org/pas/](https://www.pata.org/pas/)

