

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of the Information Systems Journal

Transforming to a sustainable visitor economy with information systems

Special Issue Guest Editors

Brad McKenna, University of East Anglia, UK, b.mckenna@uea.ac.uk

Wenjie Cai, University of Greenwich, UK, w.cai@greenwich.ac.uk

Tuure Tuunanen, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, tuure@tuunanen.fi

Overview of the Special Issue

The visitor economy, which includes the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors, has the potential to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (United Nations, 2015). In 2019, there were 1.46 billion international tourist arrivals globally (UNWTO, 2020). Before the pandemic, this totalled 10.4% of global GDP, with 10.6% of the worldwide workforce in tourism and travel-related jobs, and creating 1 in 4 new jobs (WTTC, 2021). In addition to the economic impact, the visitor economy also contributes to social and environmental sustainability, such as empowering women and young people in the workforce, transforming perceptions through intercultural encounters, advancing heritage preservations through educating and engaging with stakeholders, improving quality of life, and reducing inequality in developing countries through community development. Although the sector has been significantly affected by the pandemic, it is expected to rebound as the restrictions begin to ease (Qiu et al., 2021). For example, the UK economy has accelerated as the hospitality and tourism sectors emerge from lockdown (Wearden, 2021).

In a recent article published in this journal, Zeiss et al. (2021) called on researchers to promote sustainable solutions for the circular economy. Information systems have played an active role in assisting the visitor economy in achieving their sustainable goals. The pandemic has provided new opportunities for practitioners to leverage information systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of the visitor economy, and information systems are widely considered as a tool that can potentially create value in post-pandemic recovery (Pillai et al., 2021). For example, digital health passports for travel, service robots in hotels and restaurants, and government trials for sporting and music events using contact tracing apps. In the visitor economy, information systems have been utilised by service providers, decision makers, or designers to provide sustainable solutions for the conservation of cultural heritage and endangered nature-based attractions. For instance, virtual reality and augmented reality can provide a sustainable solution to various forms of resource-intensive tourism (Dewailly, 1999; Han et al., 2014). Social media impacts sustainability by providing a platform for stakeholders to voice their opinions in decision-making on cultural heritage conservations (Liang et al.,

2021). Digital exhibitions utilising virtual reality in museums are proposed to preserve intangible cultural heritage (Kim et al., 2019).

The hospitality sector has utilised information systems, such as smartphone apps, to mitigate food wastage in hospitality (Filimonau & Delysia, 2019). For instance, a smartphone app “too good to go” allows customers to purchase restaurant meals at a heavily discounted price at the end of the day to reduce food waste and generate additional revenue. Several apps were designed for chefs to monitor food waste in commercial kitchens (Gould, 2016). In addition, capacity management modelling systems were developed for restaurants to forecast their demands better and plan supply accordingly (Parfitt et al., 2010).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the visitor economy play an essential role to generate working opportunities and contribute to economic growth. IT adoptions, such as blockchain, facilitate SMEs’ sustainable development and competitiveness with cryptocurrency payments (Nuryyev et al., 2020). Digital transformation and disruptive technologies adopted in the sector create new job opportunities for many, such as Uber, Airbnb, and online travel agents and have an impact on sustainable ecosystems (Leung et al., 2019). Smart destinations and infrastructure also play an important role in sustainability, with technologies such as the Internet of Things and cloud computing enabling resources to be used more smartly (Cimbaljević et al., 2019). However, there are potential issues for destinations and attractions which may not have the capacity to digitalise. Smart infrastructure may also not be suitable for visitors or service providers with low digital literacy.

In the visitor economy, information systems can act as a double-edged sword affecting sustainability. From the *visitors’* perspective, the application of information systems improves visitors’ wellbeing through innovating visitor experiences (Gretzel & Stankov, 2021), assisting disabled visitors to engage in leisure activities (Bazazo & Alananzeh, 2016), and enabling alternative forms of experiences through virtual platforms (e.g., virtual tours in the Faroe Islands during the pandemic and virtual museum tours by Google Arts & Culture) (Jarratt, 2021; Lu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). Questions remain regarding the hype of these platforms and their long-term sustainability. The over-reliance on information systems has also triggered wellbeing issues and blurred boundaries between work and life facilitated by technologies raising questions about ‘mental distance’ when physically away (Floros et al., 2021; White & White, 2007). From an *operators and destination management organisations’* perspective, emerging and disruptive technologies have been primarily applied in innovative operations, revenue management, managing tourism flows, and allowing many businesses to operate during lockdown through alternative methods (Kim et al., 2021). However, overtourism, which is contributed by the peer-to-peer accommodation (Eckert et al., 2019), and glamourisation of some destinations on social media (Gössling, 2017) have caused conflicts between the tourists and locals (Mihalic & Kuščer, 2021). It also has caused severe negative impacts for some destinations (Seraphin et al., 2018), especially destinations that may not have the capacity to accommodate large numbers of visitors. From the *employees’* perspective, artificial intelligence (AI) and service automation has proven to be a great support to employees, aiding with repetitive tasks which improve employees’ wellbeing. However, the applications of new technologies such as AI in hospitality services has caused employees’ concerns about job security (Koo et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019), particularly among the female workforce, which accounts for a large percentage of the workforce in the visitor economy (Ismail, 2018).

Information systems have long been extensively used in the visitor economy (Cai et al., 2019; Navío-Marco et al., 2018). Examples published within tourism and hospitality journals are broad. For example, recent research has explored AI in service failure (Lv et al., 2021), robotics in hotels (Yoganathan et al., 2021), virtual reality and mixed reality in tourism (Bec et al., 2021), and augmented reality in science festivals (Olya et al., 2020). However, there are few examples of visitor economy research in information systems. Examples with a sustainability focus include sustainable ICT capability (Gholami et al., 2017), marine animal conservation (Tan, 2018), and sustainable tourism in developing countries (Tsokota et al., 2017).

We believe that information systems research can bring new insights and produce new knowledge for a sustainable digital visitor economy. Therefore, this special issue calls for new theoretical developments at the intersection of the visitor economy, information systems, and sustainability. We apply a broad lens of sustainability and refer to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). Examples of sustainability include good health and wellbeing (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), decent work and economic growth (SDG8), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG9), or sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), among others. Potential authors may also refer to the UN World Tourism Organisation's alignment of the sustainable development goals within tourism (UNWTO, 2015). In this call for papers, we welcome qualitative, quantitative, design science, mixed methods, and conceptual papers within any aspect of the visitor economy. We also encourage innovative methodologies and critical studies. We particularly welcome papers with theoretical contributions beyond technology adoption models (e.g., TAM or UTAUT). We encourage submissions that also explore the environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of the visitor economy (Cai & McKenna, 2021; Cai et al., 2021) from an information systems perspective. All papers will be evaluated against their ability to extend theoretical debates and knowledge within information systems.

We welcome papers based on, but not limited to, the following topics. All papers must be aligned with at least one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- The role of information systems in cultural, natural landscapes, and heritage preservation.
- Artificial intelligence, robotics, and service jobs.
- Information systems, wellbeing, and travel (e.g., digital passports, e-mindfulness, digital-free tourism).
- Technological innovation and hospitality food waste.
- The sharing economy, peer-to-peer accommodation, and overtourism.
- The role of information systems in social exclusion/inclusion (e.g., LGBT+, disabled travellers, ethnic minorities, income inequalities, gender, accessibility, and digital literacy).
- Smart tourist destinations, hospitality and exhibition venues, or mega-events (e.g., Olympics, FIFA World Cup, Eurovision Song Contest).
- (Un)ethical use or the dark side of information systems in the visitor economy.
- Community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, social entrepreneurship, and digital empowerment.
- Information systems and sustainable destination and event management.
- Innovation in sustainable operations, marketing, and management.

- Social media in a sustainable visitor economy (the impact of glamourisation, influencers, fake news, or conspiracy theories).
- How economic impacts as a result of digitalisation has knock-on-effects for visitors, employees, residents, and other stakeholder's health and wellbeing.
- Digital transformation of the visitor economy in the post-COVID era.
- Sustainability issues arising from the digitalisation of visitor infrastructure.
- The design of sustainable information systems solutions (e.g., design thinking, design science).
- Digital innovations and the visitor economy's impact on the climate and natural resources.

Submissions

The submission deadline is 31 July 2022 which will not be extended. Please follow the ISJ's Author Guidelines when preparing and submitting manuscripts. Submissions will be made through <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/isj> and please indicate that the paper is for the special issue. All papers will be initially screened by the special issue guest editors to assess their fit with the special issue. Manuscripts that pass the initial screening will go through the review process. Reviews will be conducted on a rolling basis.

For queries about suitability of your work for the special issue, please contact the special issue guest editors.

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