According to UNWTO international tourist arrivals were up by almost 7% to 935 million in 2010, following the 4% decline in 2009 – the year hardest hit by the global economic crisis. Further, the growth is expected to continue for the tourism sector in 2011 but at a slower pace. Further, UNWTO forecasts show that international tourist arrivals to grow 4% to 5% in 2011, a rate slightly above the long-term average. The vast majority of destinations worldwide posted positive figures, sufficient to offset recent losses or bring them close to this target. However, recovery came at different speeds and was primarily driven by emerging economies.

It is widely argued throughout the tourism management literature that during the past three decades tourism industry has been undergoing a substantial process of structural transformation. Interestingly, the information intensiveness of the tourism product, the increasing sophistication and needs of travellers all aspects of tourism business operations and strategy are intensifying the shift of the industry towards the knowledge economy. Thus, intended and unintended consequences of socio-economic and technological developments demanding quality research on tourism development approaches, strategies and diagnostic models.

Today, tourism is increasingly seen as a promising tool for eradication of poverty, socio-economic development, ensuring environmental sustainability, developing a global partnership for development, regional development, empowerment of local communities and social groups in both developed and developing countries. Thus, the expectations for tourism and its social, economic and political outcomes have evolved to a high level but there are still many practical and principal challenges and issues to overcome in the relationship between tourism industry and development. The ongoing trends & challenges have given rise to an increasing body of research examining new developments and strategies/approaches in the area of product development, sustainable development, service innovations, business performance, HRM, Marketing, Information technology and so forth. Despite the growing number of studies, current literature provides only fragmentary insights into the relationship between theory and practice, cross national comparison and interdisciplinary perspectives.

EMERGING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH: THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue is designed to cover various aspects of tourism development, which at times
are interrelated, though not necessarily directly linked. Certainly, these provide good empirical evidence about what is emerging within the field and practice of tourism development. We called for submissions that promise to add value to theory building and practice and that address critical issues, challenges and strategies in development of tourism. The accepted manuscripts cover a range of topics from. The studies in this issue cover a variety of sectors, represent different ownership forms, adopt a variety of methodologies, have diverse participants, and look at different levels of performance (both individual and organizational).

It is indeed pleased to have selected six articles which have provided us insightful and interesting ideas of the tourism development in different nations. We provide an overview of these six articles that appear in this special issue.

The first article by Adarsh Batra examines foreign tourists’ perceptions of travel related stress on their visits to Bangkok, Thailand; and test how demographic and traveller characteristics act on them and found that there are significant differences in foreign tourists’ perceptions of stress which can be classified in terms of nationality, personality, type of tour, purpose of tour, group size and familiarity with fellow travellers.

In the second paper, Anastasia A. Katou and Margarita A. Vogiatzi investigate the impact of perceived information technology (IT) beliefs on behavioural intention to use IT and to improve the understanding of why and how perceived IT beliefs influence behavioural intention to use IT in the Greek hotel industry. The study suggests that employee attitudes positively and fully mediate the relationship between perceived IT beliefs and behavioural intention to use IT. Furthermore, it suggests that this relationship is influenced by individual factors such as task-technology fit, self-efficacy, and individual contingencies, and social factors such as subjective norm.

In the third paper, S. P. Bansal and Jaswinder Kumar study the ecotourism perspective from the point of view of major stakeholders of ecotourism, i.e., local community, tourists’, ecotourism operators and Govt. officials in GHNP Great Himalayan National Park of Kullu district in Himachal Pradesh and to find out the various issues related to ecotourism and the opinion about these issues from these stakeholders. The results suggest that the people need to be made aware and motivated for the ecotourism. Ecotourism brings an increasing number of infrastructures and amenities to the local people.

The forth paper by Mohinder C. Dhiman and Arvind Kumar Dubey investigate various sustainable tourism development dimensions among tourism stakeholders; and to examine whether these dimensions depend on the demographic characteristics of stakeholders. The findings indicate that there is a significant difference among the tourism stakeholders in terms of perceived sustainable tourism development dimensions in India.

The fifth paper by Vinay Chauhan examines the Rural Residents’ Attitude towards the impacts of the pilgrimage tourism and suggests the strategic interventions for the sustainable Tourism development. The research points out that the sustainable development is important for responding to the current problems as caused due to tourism development as well as to address the needs of the future generation.

Last but not least, G. Poyya Moli provides a conceptual framework for community based eco cultural heritage tourism for sustainable development and evaluates the potentials and constraints for evolving and implementing such strategies in the region with their policy/planning implications.

I hope that this special issue will provide interesting insights into tourism development trends, challenges and strategies globally. More research is needed on the ways in which
researchers contribute to the contested processes both in research and in their other academic day-to-day activities. I hope that the contributions in this special issue will act as a basis and platform for innovative and thought provoking empirical and conceptual researches on tourism development. I would like to thank the contributors to this special issue and also like to thank all the reviewers who have helped to ensure the success of this special issue.

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