# Guest editorial

## Huub Ruel

Huub Ruel is based at the Research Centre, Hotelschool The Hague, Den Haag, The Netherlands.

### Introduction to the special issue

*Theme: The future of e-HRM and artificial intelligence in the hospitality and tourism industry*

The international hospitality and tourism industry has been one of the sectors most severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions of jobs have been lost, and all over the world hospitality and tourism businesses are struggling to survive despite the relief that governments may offer. Expectations differ about how quickly the industry may recover from the consequences of the pandemic. The most optimistic voices claim that international tourism will soon reach the levels of the pre-pandemic era and beyond. Pessimistic voices try to convince us that international travel and tourism will suffer for many years to come because of enduring travel anxiety, something new such as post-pandemic stress disorder, a global economic recession and expected necessary government budget cuts to recoup the generous and lengthy financial support offered to businesses.

What do these considerations mean for human resource management (HRM) and global talent management (GTM) in the hospitality and tourism industry? And even more, what do they mean for the future of technology in HRM and GTM? The possible answers to these questions will depend on the choices that societies, governments, industry leaders, citizens and future guests make. If these stakeholders continue to choose a cost- and profit-driven hospitality and tourism industry future, then technology for HRM and GTM will be used to replace human resources and talents as much as possible and to make HRM and GTM processes more cost-efficient from hiring to firing. If the stakeholders mentioned prefer a long-term, sustainable and responsible hospitality and tourism industry future, then technology will be used to enhance the quality of jobs and working life and to improve HRM and GTM processes to nurture and develop human talents and organizations.

The first choice implies that the hospitality and tourism businesses are considered independent actors that predominantly need to respond to shareholder and investor demands. Organizations are then a nexus of contracts. The second choice implies that hospitality businesses are inseparable from society and have a duty to respond to societal demands or even to push the bar higher to help societies to develop. Organizations are then communities of people working together. Technological developments are subject to the societal contexts in which they take place and as a result also to the way they are applied.

For the post-COVID future, which most likely will confront us with similar challenges sooner or later, the international hospitality and tourism industry finds itself at a crossroads. Will it remain an industry that has an image of a rather unattractive employer in many societies, or will it aim to become a leader in sustainable and responsible HRM and GTM that serve societies?

This special issue on the future of e(lectronic)-HRM and GTM and artificial intelligence in the hospitality and tourism industry is proud to present four articles that in one way or another address these questions.

The first contribution by Jeroen Meijerink and Emma Schoenmakers, entitled "Why are online reviews in the sharing economy skewed toward positive ratings? Linking customer perceptions of service quality to leaving a review of an Airbnb stay," refers to one of the major hospitality and tourism industry developments, namely, the emergence of online platforms such as Airbnb. In an era in which guest experiences and customer ratings are often included in employee performance reviews (whether this is good or not is another question), the authors found that the more positive the customers' experience, the more likely they are to leave a review. Therefore, online reviews are skewed and may not be the most informative and useful about how and what to improve for hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs. For the future of e-HRM and artificial intelligence-based global talent management (AI-GTM), this may imply that if guest and customer online reviews and evaluations are to be used for employee performance reviews and for guest experience improvements, more needs to be done to avoid skewed review data.

The second contribution to this special issue is from Claudia Dossena, Francesca Mochi, Rita Bissola and Barbara Imperatori, entitled "Restaurants and social media: rethinking organizational capabilities and individual competencies." It addresses the issue of how restaurant managers can use social media for strategic purposes rather than for relational and marketing purposes only. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed thousands of restaurants to focus on online ordering and home delivery only. Many of these businesses were not ready or capable of doing this before the pandemic broke out. The post-pandemic future may show that online ordering and home delivery are here to stay and part of their catering future. Social media are key for restaurant owners and managers to promote and develop their businesses. This has consequences for their human resource and talent management aspects. The article shows that social media usage can go beyond relational and marketing purposes. Social media can be used strategically if specific capabilities and competencies are hired, nurtured or developed by restaurants.

The third article, entitled "The benefits of e-HRM and AI for talent acquisition" by Richard Johnson, Dianne Stone and Kim Lukaszewski, discusses how hospitality and tourism organizations can use e-HRM and artificial intelligence (AI) to help recruit and select qualified employees, increase individual retention rates and decrease the time needed to replace employees. The authors find that e-HRM and AI have the potential to transform recruitment and selection in hospitality and tourism businesses. But they warn that care must be taken to ensure that e-HRM and AI are well received by employees and that they lead to better employee and organizational outcomes.

The fourth article by Huub Ruël and Esther Njoku, entitled "AI redefining the hospitality industry," addresses the question of how AI technologies redefine the hospitality industry and how they impact employee engagement, retention and productivity levels. In their contribution, Ruel and Njoku define AI-GTM as: *all kinds of digital analytics technology or neural network-based intelligence with training and learning capabilities that an organisation chooses to put in place in a consciously, ethically and regulatory correct and focused way for the systematic identification of pivotal positions, and the development and deployment of a talent pool of high-performing, high-potential employees that contribute to an organisation's competitive advantage in the short or long term*.

Ruël and Njoku find it important to stress the addition of "consciously, ethically and regulatory correct" to the definition. The human application of information technology always carries the risk of invading privacy and compromising human integrity, but given the relatively aggressive progress pushed by Silicon Valley investments, they believe that the application of AI will be at risk of compromising human integrity and invading privacy to a greater extent than e-HRM. The application of AI to GTM needs careful consideration, and Ruël and Njoku believe that societies around the world do not yet have the legal framework in place to guide and regulate AI applications for GTM. This concerns the issue of allowing AI to serve GTM in new and better ways as well as avoiding the application of AI to GTM that disrespects the

talents' individual integrity and rights in favor of the integrity and rights of the talent workforce as a collective.

I believe that these four articles provide a useful contribution to the debate on the future of e-HRM and AI-GTM in the hospitality and tourism industry.

### References (with early cite link)

Dossena, C., Mochi, F., Bissola, R. and Imperatori, B. (2020), "Restaurants and social media: rethinking organizational capabilities and individual competencies", *Journal of Tourism Futures*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print, doi: 10.1108/JTF-06-2019-0050.

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Meijerink, J. and Schoenmakers, E. (2020), "Why are online reviews in the sharing economy skewed toward positive ratings? Linking customer perceptions of service quality to leaving a review of an Airbnb stay", *Journal of Tourism Futures*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print, doi: 10.1108/JTF-04-2019-0039.

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