

World Expos are among the oldest and largest international events, scheduled every five years for a period of six months. An all-age concept, the aim is to facilitate an educational experience in an exploratory, collaborative setting. Expo 2020 Dubai opens on 20 October 2020 and with 190 country pavilions, more than 200 restaurants and numerous attractions and events it is expected to attract millions of visitors. A mega event of this kind can have an enduring impact on the host city and in this theme issue, Sanjay Nadkarni and his team of writers and reviewers consider the potential benefits for Dubai, the United Arab Emirates and the wider region. I should like to thank Sanjay and his team for a fascinating perspective on the planning and preparations for Expo 2020 and for providing an analysis of its likely impact on the region.

*Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT)* aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact me.

**Richard Teare**

*Managing Editor, WHATT*

## **Expo 2020: What will be the impact on Dubai?**

Dubai has differentiated itself from its oil-rich regional peers by leveraging logistics, services, finance and real estate as drivers of its economic growth. It is important to note that Dubai has transformed from a backwater trading entrepôt to a city associated with superlatives – largest, most expensive, tallest, etc., in just a couple of decades. Further, its geographical location, complemented with pragmatic policies, has made Dubai what it is today.

As the city charts its next phase of growth towards a sustainable future, the successful bid to host Expo 2020 serves as an acknowledgement and an endorsement by the global community of the strides made thus far. The Expo 2020 sub-themes, sustainability, mobility and opportunity, are a reflection of Dubai's future ambition to become a hyper-connected cosmopolitan techno-oasis in the true spirit of globalization. It is hoped that the event will be a watershed moment, a “coming out party” of sorts for Dubai in positioning itself as a global leader and role model in “connecting minds, creating the future”, which aptly is the main theme of Expo 2020.

**Sanjay Nadkarni**

*Theme Editor*

## **About the Theme Editor**

*Dr Sanjay Nadkarni* is the Director of the Center for Innovation and Research at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management, Dubai. His domain specialization is in the convergence space of digital, analytics and sustainability in the service sector. Sanjay's portfolio comprises applied research, advisory and consultancy assignments for corporate, government and multilateral agencies, in addition to his pedagogic practice including visiting professorships at premier academic institutions in Asia and Europe. His professional achievements include academic awards and citations of merit. Sanjay is also engaged in courseware development and delivery of professional development programs, and supports social entrepreneurship. He endeavors to make his research and pedagogy as applied and applicable as possible to benefit industry and society. He is passionate about bringing the benefits of Industry 4.0 to small and micro-businesses and enjoys mentoring in digital entrepreneurship.

