



Editorial Note

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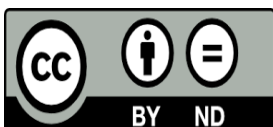
It is a privilege to present Volume VI, Issue I (April 2026) of the *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality (SAJTH)*. This issue arises amid a complex landscape shaped by economic uncertainty, rapid technological advancement, and an increasing emphasis on inclusivity and value-driven experiences. Against this backdrop, the contributions in this issue collectively reflect the sector's evolving priorities, particularly in South Asia and comparable emerging economies.

Dedication

The Editorial Board is deeply honoured to dedicate this issue to Senior Professor Nalin Abeysekera, a distinguished academic and an inspiring figure in Management Studies in Sri Lanka. Professor Abeysekera, affiliated with the Open University of Sri Lanka, has made an exceptional contribution to academia through his roles as a scholar, educator, researcher, and academic leader. A graduate of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura with a B.Sc. in Marketing (Special), and an alumnus of Ananda College, he has demonstrated academic excellence throughout his career. With decades of experience as a consultant and academic, Senior Professor Nalin Abeysekera had built a distinguished teaching portfolio encompassing Strategic Management, Marketing, and Research Methodology, enriched by international exposure in Dubai, Oman, Canada, and Qatar.

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He earned his MBA with three gold medals and a PhD in Leadership and Marketing from the University of Colombo. He thereafter made extensive contributions to research, teaching, and knowledge dissemination. As a Chartered Marketer and a key figure within the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM), including serving as the Chairperson of the Board of Study, Professor Abeysekera has played a pivotal role in advancing marketing education and professional standards in Sri Lanka.

Notably, he contributed to the development of the National Competency Standards (NCS) for marketing under the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) framework in Sri Lanka in 2026, collaborating with the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) and SLIM. This initiative reflects his commitment to strengthening vocational education and aligning professional marketing competencies with national development priorities.

Professor Abeysekera has also contributed as a visiting lecturer to MBA and PhD programmes across leading national and international universities. He served as the Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka, coordinated the MBA programme, and supervised doctoral research in Management and Marketing.

Professor Abeysekera's scholarly contributions include numerous international journal publications, conference papers, and books, as well as his recognition as a finalist for the Best Asian Researcher Award by the Philippine Association of Institutions for Research in 2012. Beyond academia, his commitment to knowledge dissemination is evident through his contributions to national newspapers and media platforms, where he actively engages in discussions on education, economics, tourism, and entrepreneurship. Further, he founded the Sri Lanka Journal of Management Studies, the official scholarly journal of the Faculty of Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka, thereby contributing significantly to the advancement of academic publishing in Sri Lanka.

Senior Professor Nalin Abeysekera has also made notable contributions to the field of tourism through scholarly and practitioner-oriented publications. Among his significant works are *"She is Mine: How to Win the Hearts of Chinese Tourists"* (2014), co-authored with S. N. Ganewatta, and *"Tourism in Sri Lanka: The Way Forward"* (2015), both published by Shaakkya Publications. These works reflect his forward-thinking perspective on international tourist behaviour and on Sri Lanka's strategic positioning as a

competitive destination, particularly in engaging emerging markets such as China.

In addition to his contributions to tourism literature, Professor Abeysekera has played an important role in localising marketing knowledge, notably through publications in Sinhala such as the book called *“Marketing Sinhalaen”*. His efforts to produce marketing-related content in Sinhala have significantly broadened access to management education, enabling students, practitioners, and wider audiences in Sri Lanka to engage with complex marketing concepts in their native language. This reflects his enduring commitment to knowledge democratisation and inclusive education.

This dedication recognises not only his academic achievements but also his unwavering commitment to nurturing future scholars, bridging academia and industry, and contributing to national and regional intellectual discourse. The Editorial Board expresses its profound respect and appreciation for his enduring contributions to the field of Management and Tourism-related scholarship. It is particularly poignant that this issue is published on the day that final respects are being paid to Senior Professor Nalin Abeysekera. This dedication stands as a tribute to his enduring contributions and lasting impact on academia and society.

A notable feature of this issue is its strong emphasis on the interconnectedness between tourism development, technological transformation, and inclusive service practices. The selected papers extend beyond traditional discussions and instead explore how tourism systems interact with broader economic structures, digital ecosystems, and socially responsive design approaches. This shift signals an important progression in tourism scholarship from isolated sectoral analysis to more integrated and multidimensional perspectives.

The opening article provides a rigorous econometric examination of the relationship between tourism and economic growth in Sri Lanka. Employing advanced time-series techniques, the study offers compelling evidence of both short- and long-term linkages, highlighting tourism as not only a contributor to economic expansion but also as a sector influenced by broader macroeconomic dynamics. By identifying key transmission mechanisms such as labour force participation and capital formation, the study reinforces the strategic importance of tourism within national development agendas.

The second paper turns to the hospitality environment, focusing on inclusive servicescape design and its influence on guest perceptions and behavioural outcomes. Through a structured analytical model, the study demonstrates how inclusive physical and social environments enhance perceived value and foster customer loyalty. Importantly, it positions inclusivity not merely as a regulatory requirement but as a strategic imperative that can shape competitive advantage in the global hospitality industry.

The third contribution further explores technological transformation by synthesising the existing literature on the role of cloud-based technologies in Sri Lankan SME hotels. The review highlights how digital systems contribute to customer satisfaction through improved responsiveness, convenience, personalisation, and service consistency. At the same time, it critically acknowledges contextual constraints such as financial limitations and capability gaps, offering a balanced perspective on digital adoption in developing economies.

Complementing these research articles, this issue also includes a scholarly book review by Mananage Shanika Hansini Rathnasiri on the book titled *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism (7th Edition)*. The review provides a comprehensive evaluation of the text's contribution to both academic and professional audiences, emphasising its integration of theoretical concepts with practical applications. It further reflects on emerging trends in marketing, including digitalisation and globalisation, while identifying areas for future enhancement, particularly in relation to regional contexts.

Collectively, the contributions in this issue underscore several key themes: the role of tourism as an economic driver, the growing significance of inclusive and accessible service environments, and the transformative impact of digital technologies on hospitality practices. These themes not only reflect current industry trends but also provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers navigating the future of tourism and hospitality.

As always, we extend our sincere appreciation to the authors for their scholarly contributions, the reviewers for their critical and constructive evaluations, and the editorial team for their dedication to maintaining the journal's quality and integrity. Their collective efforts continue to strengthen SAJTH as a platform for meaningful academic exchange. We trust that this issue will contribute to ongoing discourses, inspire further research, and support the development of innovative, inclusive, and sustainable practices within the tourism and hospitality sector.