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TechTalk with Dr. Chris Ryan: University of Waikato, School of Management and Marketing

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Professor Chris Ryan undertakes research in the field of tourism, and has developed research interests in China in the last two decades, including contractual work with Chinese partners such as Beijing Union University, Sun Yat-sen University and others. He has also undertaken reports for the United Nations World Tourism Organization in China, is editor of Tourism Critiques: Practice and Theory, and for 25 years was editor of Tourism Management and took it to its current position as the leading tourism research journal. He also founded Tourism Management Perspectives, which is also a SSCI cited journal. Tourism Critiques is fully Plan S compliant.

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as Smart Career (second pillar), Smart Tourist Eco (third pillar), Smart Network (fourth pillar), Smart Application (fifth pillar), and Smart Safety (six pillar).

"Condolence messages to Dr. Keith Hollinshead"

Prior to the presentation, Professor Chris Ryan starts out by expressing his deepest condolences to Dr. Keith Hollinshead, a leading figure in the field of Tourism who passed away in 2022. Professor Ryan described Dr. Hollinshead as a top qualitative researcher who was a "very intuitive insightful writer about contemporary tourism in a contemporary society". Not only he was an elite scholar, Prof Ryan remembered him as a respected friend and colleague who will be deeply missed by many people who continued to look upon him as a treasured advisor, researcher, and editor.

"Thinking about Tourism Recovery, the TALC and Smart Tourism"

COVID-19 pandemic, one of the biggest global crisis in the 21st century, had negatively impacted businesses worldwide, and the tourism industry is no exception. Professor Chris Ryan shared his thoughts on tourism recovery in the post COVID-19 period by distinguishing the pandemic into two main periods: short-term and long-term post-COVID period. He also shared his thoughts about the latest technology trends in the airline sector as well as forecasting future technology trends in the travel and tourism industry.

Short term post-COVID period

In the short term post-COVID period, Prof. Ryan specified that many participants in the tourism and hospitality industry are recovering from low occupancy rates, few tourists, a period of caution in travel, and newly added bureaucracies of travel (i.e., presenting certificates of vaccination and ability to issue necessary visas). Prof. Ryan then explained the substantial negative impact of COVID-19 especially on the aviation industry. He used New Zealand as an example; airlines are struggling to repay debts to the New Zealand government (NZ$ 2.2 billion debt), need time to re-assemble fleets, and are checking air-worthiness.

He also mentioned the Russian and Ukraine war which had shaken the airline industry and had jumped the cost of airline

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tickets. Even though there is a widespread fear of corona virus as well as fuel price rise due to the war, Prof. Ryan forecasts that the global travel and airline industry will rebound to pre-pandemic level. He pointed out that most tourists tend to have relatively high income and are desperate to go traveling again. As a result, tourists will still be willing to travel amid COVID-19, and more travels are expected, despite the high gas prices. He further provided empirical evidence to support his argument:

"The air fares from Auckland to Christchurch has doubled what they used to be, but people are flying, and one reason why people are flying is that because they are so desperate [to] have a change of environment, many of them have been living in rooms for long periods of time and so their wish to fly is actually quite high."

Even though COVID-19 and high gas prices due to Russian and Ukraine war are threatening social stability and harming numerous supply chains, Prof. Ryan is optimistic about the future of travel and tourism. He discussed about airline industries' investment on experimenting sustainable aviation fuels, known as electric/hybrid aircrafts. He predicts that the use of battery-powered electric flight will help reduce operating costs, fuel cost, and most importantly, improving environmental footprint in the near future.

Long term post-COVID period and the potential of SMART tourism

Prof. Ryan believes that the speed of technological advancement will trigger a new wave of digitalization and transform the way we live and travel in the long term post-COVID period. He said that "*Now we are really coming into the potential of smart tourism.*" Prof. Ryan borrowed Vasuaninchita's (2018) Smart Tourism Model and presented a visual graph that shows six major pillars that makes a successful smart tourism and smart city. The first pillar is *Smart Mobility*. He used smart-bus-stations in New Zealand as an example of smart mobility where it allows passengers to track the bus location in real time and monitor up-to-date timetable displays at every bus stations. The remaining five pillars known as *Smart Career* (second pillar), *Smart Tourist Eco* (third pillar), *Smart Network* (fourth pillar), *Smart Application* (fifth pillar), and *Smart Safety* (six pillar) were also briefly mentioned during his presentation.

Most importantly, Prof. Ryan highlights that in order to successfully integrate the "SMARTS" in the next two decades, there must be three pre-conditions. First, there needs to be a demand for the services. Second, there needs to be an interim period to integrate smart tourism, and third, there needs to be a platform that permits seamless live transmission of data. Since the speed of technological advancement has increased exponentially, Prof. Ryan states "we are on a cusp of real significant changes." Although smart tourism is slowly becoming to be aware, he is unsure quite how to integrate smart tourism. He carefully predicts that the society will not see the changes until we build a solid 5G networks. "5G services are just coming now to Hamilton where my university is located [...] 5G services have been available in Auckland now for about 6 months, but we really need that ability to have seamless live transmission of data. The problem about that is it then begins to be mount in faster than the human brain can actually take advantage of, and that then takes us into the next stage of in fact artificial intelligence having the ability to utilize all of those starters in live forms and we are not quite at that stage yet but I think certainly within the next decade we will be moving into that stage." he said.

Given that many companies are going a step further discussing about 6G. Prof. Ryan also shared his thought about 6G networks.

If 6G becomes a reality, Prof Ryan anticipates that 6G features will bring a new automotive services to the society. For example, vehicles will no longer be considered as a form of transport; instead, it will turn into software platforms where all the cars at junction in a city will be controlled and managed by the intelligent transportation systems.

Future of SMART tourism and current applications

With the recent technological advancement, Prof. Ryan says that it does have obvious implications for the future of tourism. "What I think smart tourism will do is people who are currently not able to pay for the top-end services (they can be like student who just wishes to go from Auckland to say Brisbane or Sydney or Perth) will go on to an online travel agency, and they get their cheaper ticket and, generally speaking, there is not much problem with that particular flight. So online travel agency is fine." he said.

Moreover, based on his previous working experience in Chinese museum where they use innovative technologies, Prof. Ryan predicts that the use of online ticketing and latest technologies (e.g., AI services) can create better accessibility (i.e., access to better choice through use of information sources), convenience (i.e., greater ease of booking, time scheduling advanced booking systems), and experience (i.e., less congestion, greater personalization of service, high-technology presentations).

Prof. Ryan also shares his opinion about the loyalty schemes. "We also see a big switching in loyalty schemes. I think initially a lot of loyalty schemes were based on identifying higher infrequent spenders, and their immediate reactions were to give discounts. What we are beginning to see now is a different pattern of provision by more personalized services and by providing more options." Prof. Ryan further emphasized that the current technology trends in tourism are visible and foreseeable. However, he left a question mark of what is going to be happening beyond the stage where we move into the era of AI (artificial intelligence). He forecasts that the destination will begin to lose connections with physical places (both material and immaterial). "In the post-modern world, there is no demand for original authenticity; it is all about existential authenticity. I begin to wonder whether in fact tourism, gaming, and even pornography are beginning to merge into sets of virtual realities."

Prof. Ryan closed his presentation by leaving a question to *Journal of Smart Tourism*: "How does the algorithm sustain human senses of reality?"

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Chulmo Koo (Ph.D.) Dr. Chulmo Koo is currently a Chair and Professor of Smart Tourism Education Platform (STEP), College of Hotel and Tourism Management at Kyung Hee University, South Korea. Dr. Koo has a strong record of smart tourism research and scholarship with significant contributions to both instruction and service. Since joining Kyung Hee's faculty in 2012, Dr. Koo
has received prestigious research award and the Kyung Hee Research Fellowship (2018-2020), Excellent Professor of Kyung Hee (2019) at the school level and the Best Research Paper Award in the ENTER (2015) conference at the IFITT (International Federation of IT and Travel & Tourism). Prior to joining Kyung Hee University, Dr. Koo was an Assistant Professor at Chosun University, South Korea, a Full Time Instructor at Marshall University, USA, Research Fellow at Inha University, and Yonsei University, and Post-Doctorate in the MISRC at Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, Minnesota, USA. In addition to his academic research grants, he is a Principal Investigator (PI) of Brain Korea 21 Research Fund (2020-2027) entitled "Sustainable Smart Tourism and Hospitality Education Platform" (Nation Research Foundation of Korea, USD 4.2 million; EURO 3.8 million) and the Board Member of Director, IFITT (2020-Current), He is h-index 40 and i10-index 85, and Field-Weighted Citation Impact 2.11. Dr. Koo's research interests have been in smart tourism, smart tourism ecosystems, smart tourism cities, and eTourism. As a part of his research activities, Dr. Koo and his colleagues have published several special issues of smart tourism in various interdisciplinary journals. Also he published more than 200 papers in refereed journals including Tourism Management, Journal of Travel Research, International Journal of Hospitality Management, Information and Management, International Journal of Information Management, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Computers in Human Behavior etc. Among these published articles, "Smart Tourism: Foundations and Developments "is recognized as Paper of the Year (2016) from Electronic Markets (citation 1063) and "Conceptual Foundations for Understanding Smart Tourism Ecosystems," in Computers in Human Behavior (citation 501) in Google Scholar, and "Smart Tourism Cities: a Duality of Place where Technology Supports the Convergence of Touristic and Residential Experiences" (2021) published in the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research. He was a co-Editor of Information Communication Technologies in Tourism 2021 in ENTER conference of the IFITT.