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**CONTENTS**

**Volume 20 Number 1 January-March 2019**

**Articles**

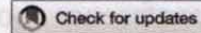
- 1 It's in the air: Aroma marketing and affective response in the hotel world  
*Basak Denizci Guillet, Metin Kozak, and Deniz Kucukusta*
- 15 Consequences of customer dissatisfaction in upscale and budget hotels: Focusing on dissatisfied customers' attitude toward a hotel  
*Bona Kim, Seongseop (Sam) Kim, and Cindy Yoonjoung Heo*
- 47 The influence of values and attitudes on green consumer behavior: A conceptual model of green hotel patronage  
*Imran Rahman and Dennis Reynolds*
- 75 The effect of on-site experience and place attachment on loyalty: Evidence from Chinese tourists in a hot-spring resort  
*Xiaoming Liu, Yi Fu, and Jun Li*
- 101 Restaurant authenticity: Factors that influence perception, satisfaction and return intentions at regional American-style restaurants  
*Robin B. DiPietro and Jamie Levitt*

**Volume 20 Number 2 April-June 2019**

**Articles**

- 129 Food tourist segmentation: Attitude, behavioral intentions and travel planning behavior based on food involvement and motivation  
*Jamie A. Levitt, Pei Zhang, Robin B. DiPietro, and Fang Meng*
- 156 A top box analysis of DinEX to optimize restaurant resources  
*Julia E. Blose, Robert E. Frash, and Robin B. DiPietro*
- 182 Crowdfunding: Preparation considerations and success factors for the German restaurant sector  
*Eric Honisch, Robert J. Harrington, and Michael C. Ottenbacher*
- 206 An examination of organizational commitment and intention to stay in the timeshare industry: Variations across generations in the workplace  
*Jennifer Redditt, Amy M. Gregory, and Heejung Ro*
- 226 Golf versus nongolf club operations: Benchmarks for 2014  
*Agnes DeFranco and Raymond S. Schmidgall*





## It's in the air: Aroma marketing and affective response in the hotel world

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### ABSTRACT

Smell is considered to be the sense that is most closely attached to emotional reactions. This makes scent in the hotel environment an important atmospheric variable to study, because fragrances are expected to increase the likelihood of producing an emotional reaction from consumers. Capitalizing on smell's ability to cue memories and conjure up emotions, the purpose of this research is to examine the emotional states evoked by various hotel scents in a hotel business in Hong Kong that uses scent throughout its premises. More specifically, this study intends to make a connection between the emotional states evoked by the hotel scents and how hotel businesses can make use of their guests' emotional responses. Scent marketing is an overlooked subject in hospitality and tourism research.

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Ambient scent; experiential marketing; hotel management; hotel scent

## Introduction

The sense of smell is considered to be the sense most closely related to emotional reactions. The actual ability to smell is closely linked to memory, and scent can be a powerful memory trigger. This claim is backed by scientific evidence (Wilkie, 1995). This is the reason why many hotel businesses around the world are making an effort to develop their own scents to represent their identity. Hotel businesses are using scent recognition to make guests feel good and, more importantly, to create memorable experiences. Perhaps a comment by Martin Lindstrom, the author of *Brand Sense*, explains it best: “the future of hotel branding is when there are no logos, no advertisements blasting, but I can just feel I'm there” (Stellin, 2007).

Major international hotel chains that have created their own signature scents include, but are not limited to, Mandarin Oriental, Le Meridien, Langham, Marriott, Omni, Ritz-Carlton, Shangri-La, Sofitel, and Starwood, in addition to many boutique hotels (Forbes Travel Guide, 2012; Mekhail, 2011; Stellin, 2007). For instance, according to Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts CEO Greg Dogan, “It adds another sensory layer of welcome” whether you are at Shangri-La in Hong

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