

Report of Study Abroad (Category of Study Abroad:
International Conference)

The 5th International Conference on
Responsible Tourism and Hospitality
(ICRTH) 2025

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Abstract

This report reflects on the multifaceted experience of presenting “Free-roaming Animals and Responsible Tourism Management” at the 5th International Conference on Responsible Tourism and Hospitality (ICRTH) 2025. Framed by the theme “Responsible Tourism for Sustainable Transformation and Inclusive Societies,” the conference facilitated a transformative immersion into the industry’s paradigm shift towards a more holistic and ethical framework.

A primary takeaway was the imperative for interdisciplinary action, moving beyond theoretical discourse to tangible, community-based solutions. The choice of the Philippines as the host nation provided a powerful case study, where the principles of inclusive hospitality were demonstrated.

The experience marked a significant professional transition from a postgraduate student to an active participant in the global academic dialogue by the author, as seen from the value of networking with diverse stakeholders for future research and collaboration. The insights from ICRTH 2025 have practical applicability, suggesting that the tourism industry must adopt models centered on community integration and authentic representation. To further this mission, future conferences could enhance their impact by integrating policy in practice workshops and creating dedicated platforms for community voices.

Ultimately, ICRTH 2025 reinforced that sustainable transformation is a collective endeavor requiring bold collaboration across sectors and a shared commitment to building a truly responsible tourism ecosystem.

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Purpose

The 5th International Conference on Responsible Tourism Management (ICRTH) 2025 gathered tourism professionals from both public and private sectors, academics, scholars, associations, and communities to address contemporary challenges and emerging trends in responsible tourism management. Held at the Bayleaf Hotel Cavite and Lyceum of the Philippines University, Philippines, from June 16-18 2025, this conference served as a platform for knowledge dissemination and sharing of best practices across government agencies, industry practitioners, and academic institutions.

The conference emphasized the critical need for ethical and responsible decision-making in tourism services, planning, and implementation. The event facilitated discussions on responsible tourism while building networks and partnerships with diverse expertise across disciplines including business management, cultural heritage preservation, environmental studies, public health, and sustainable design.

ICRTH 2025 played a pivotal role in charting the future direction of the tourism and hospitality sector. The conference recognized that in an increasingly volatile and rapidly evolving global landscape, the industry must accelerate its transition toward more sustainable, inclusive, and socially just practices.

The comprehensive approach of ICRTH 2025 to responsible tourism provided an ideal venue for sharing innovative research. Hence, our paper entitled “**Free-roaming Animals and Responsible Tourism Management**” was presented as part of the academic sessions, contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development.

Process

Day 0 (June 15, 2025)

Arrival at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (T1) and check-in at the Bayleaf Hotel, Cavite, Philippines.

Day 1 (June 16, 2025)

The conference opened with a keynote dialogue featuring speakers from diverse backgrounds who shared their insights in a roundtable format. These industry and community leaders collectively emphasized the urgent need for collective action and empathy toward both people and the planet, which advocates for social responsibility over purely profit-driven motives.



Figure 1. ICRTTH 2025 Keynote Dialogue (Photo by: Author)

The conference transitioned to parallel sessions in the afternoon, providing a platform for specialized research discussions. Our team presented early in these sessions, introducing our paper on stray animals. We underscored the interdisciplinary significance of such topic, arguing that there are many gray areas in addressing challenges (and even opportunities) brought about by free-roaming animals in tourism spaces. The following Q&A session was full of insights, with questions focusing on the

future trajectory of our paper, data analysis methods employed, and the current realities faced by tourism communities dealing with stray animals.



Figure 2. Parallel Session Presentation (Photo by: Antiya Methinthammapong)

Day 2 (June 17, 2025)

On the second day of the conference, an innovative lunchtime session was hosted by NKUHT, led by Dr. Li-Hsin Chen and Dr. Rita Wu. The workshop challenged participants to reimagine tourism education through a hands-on, creative exercise with LEGO® bricks. A key insight that emerged from this was the shared belief that future tourism curricula must be designed to be context-sensitive, equipping both students and educators to place sustainability at the core of their professional agenda.



Figure 3. NKUHT Session (Photo from: Phoung Nguyen)

Day 3 (June 18, 2025)

Our team composed of Dr. Li-Hsin Chen and Phoung Nguyen, was one of the awardees for best paper during the third and culmination day. The conference concluded with closing remarks from several key figures. Among them was Mr. Daniel Cheng, CEO and Founder of RTM and a valued program partner of NKUHT-IMTH, who delivered a brief farewell message. He concluded his address on a hopeful and forward-looking note, expressing his anticipation for future conferences.



Figure 4. Post-presentation Group Photo with Co-authors (L) and Mr. Daniel Cheng on Stage (R) (Photo by: Author)

Overall Conference Experience: A Reflection

The conference theme, “Responsible Tourism for Sustainable Transformation and Inclusive Societies,” has shown the importance of a paradigm shift within the industry. As participants, it crystallized our understanding of our collective responsibility and armed every student with new perspectives, connections, and a renewed sense purpose for our research.

Our own presentation on “Free-roaming Animals and Responsible Tourism Management” reinforced that the biggest challenges in tourism are deeply and truly interdisciplinary. The questions we have received showed that the field is in dire need for research that connects tourism with animal welfare, public health, and community governance. This pushed us to see our research not just an academic paper but as a potential catalyst for bridging tourism studies with stray animals. This was further enhanced by the NKUHT workshop, showing us that embedding responsible tourism into education requires us to break free from traditional pedagogy.

Additionally, hosting the conference in the Philippine was a wonderful experience, as the location itself became an integral part of the learning experience. The Filipino hospitality was a service like no other. The genuine warmth and sense of community we received served as a living experience in creating the “inclusive societies” we were there to discuss.

Lastly, the most transformative aspect of the conference was taking away different perspectives as part of a global academic community. Presenting our work and engaging in thoughtful discussions with established scholars and industry leaders was a pivotal moment that helped participants, myself for one, move from a consumer of knowledge to a product of it.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The following recommendations may further amplify the impact and appeal of ICRTTH to a range of stakeholders:

1. Introduce a structured “incubator sessions” where presents from different fields (e.g. managers, environmental scientists, culture and heritage experts) are grouped to brainstorm solutions to a specific challenge. This is foster the cross-sector partnerships the conference aims to build.
2. Pair postgraduate presenters with senior academics or established industry partners for a one-on-one feedback session. This can be leveraged as a springboard to jumpstart a mentorship program for youngsters.
3. Dedicate more sessions to non-academic stakeholders from the host community, indigenous leaders, or small business owners (MSMEs). This would provide ground-level perspective on responsible tourism.