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### **Emerging Scholar Profile**

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My interest on research started almost by mistake, and I have to say, without being fully aware of the challenges and amazing opportunities this job entails.

Some years ago, I received an email from a well-known professor for whom I have a great deal of respect (Professor Fernando Vera), in which he suggested a career option I had never considered before: doing research. I was still pursuing my master's degree but already started reading and becoming more and more interested in contributing to a field that seemed so exciting and new. Some months later, I prepared and finally submitted my predoctoral grant proposal. What a surprise when I was notified that I had been selected! Four years later, I have just been awarded a PhD by the University of Alicante (Spain) and I cannot feel more grateful for the journey I have lived so far.

My PhD dissertation was focused on smart destinations, and particularly looked at this novel concept from a demand-oriented standpoint. It involved working with destinations and tourists to understand their attitudes, behaviours and experiences in this new management approach in which technology and big data play a critical role. This project was from the very beginning a multidisciplinary one and required a combination of frameworks and tools from Geography (my bachelor's degree), Tourism studies, Sociology, Marketing, IT and Management. The dissertation was conducted by publication, and thus was built on three consecutive papers published in different academic journals. The results captured in these papers reflect the essence of our work and have been the base of our efforts to transfer this generated knowledge to destinations. Our (mine and my supervisor's) particular obsession during this PhD has been to involve the agents for which our results were relevant. For this reason, we have been engaged in different projects with the public regional and local administrations, working hand by hand with DMOs and holding with them several meetings, workshops, publishing open-access materials and developing tools to contribute to improve their doing. These actions have been very rewarding in terms of research, and also at a personal

level. I am so grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Josep Ivars, who has been the greatest example of what I would like to be as a scholar in the future. Together with Dr. Ivars and the incredible team working at the Tourism Research Institute of the University of Alicante, I have been lucky enough to participate in several research projects funded by the Spanish government. These projects have given me the opportunity to discover different realities and meet scholars around the world in conferences and meetings.

During this period of time I have also become highly involved in teaching at different courses (destination management, tourist territorial attractions, innovation in tourism...), having the chance to entice students' interest on Tourism and Geography and how these subjects, more frequently than initially thought by many of them, come together. Teaching is an extremely rewarding experience and the best way to keep our feet on the ground. Also, during the course of the PhD, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit two foreign universities. In the second year of my dissertation, I conducted research for some months in the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, where I could work with my dear friend Dr. Barbara Neuhofer. It was her who encouraged me to attend ENTER conference, and I did so the next year, having the honour to be awarded "Best PhD Proposal". I am now a proud member of IFITT and hope to be involved for many years in this amazing community of people. The second of these research stays happened in 2019 and took me to the University of Surrey's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, where I collaborated with Dr. Iis Tussyadiah and Dr. Athina Ioannou, who I now consider part of my research family. In this case, having almost finished my dissertation, we decided to explore issues that were latent during my doctoral dissertation. I became in this point involved in two new research projects in which I am currently working. The first of them is devoted to understand tourists' privacy concerns and use of technology in different travel contexts, while the second is focused on new forms of digital marketing and their ethical impact. I cannot thank them enough both research centres for the given opportunities. I also must acknowledge in this point the support of other colleagues, including Dr. Ulrike Gretzel and my close friend Dr. Sandra Navarro.

In the next months I expect to keep conducting research and teaching, but will leave my *alma mater* to join a new team in Madrid, where exciting opportunities seem to be awaiting! Overall, and coming from a background in which books were not common at all, I am extremely grateful to life for all the opportunities I have had, and to the public education system, which I will always defend as the most effective mechanism to make people more free and equal.