CHRIE FutureFund™ Introduces Rachel Zhang

Rachel Zhang is a 2023 Dissertation Proposal Competition Winner. Her proposal, 'Restaurant demand seasonality: Measurement, drivers, and external shocks', was evaluated on five criteria; innovativeness, meaningfulness, practical relevance, academic rigor, and cross-disciplinary application. Rachel is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Purdue University. Rachel is from Lanzhou, an industrial city in central China famous for its hand-pulled beef noodles. She has two bachelor's degrees from Dongbei University of Finance and Economics, one in Hospitality Management, and one in Business English. She also studied at Universite' Blaise Pascal in Vichy, France during her senior year of undergraduate studies. She earned her master's degree in Hotel Administration with a minor in Statistics from Cornell University.

Rachel has interesting industry experience beginning with a position as a financial consultant in a real estate consulting company. She also worked as a data scientist at a technology company working on vacation rental pricing solutions. Recently she joined Zillow as an Economist/Applied Scientist intern in their housing forecasting team with a focus on improving forecast models of rental markets. Her favorite position was as a financial analyst intern at a resort property in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Rachel chose Purdue University for her doctoral studies as she was attracted by the interdisciplinary atmosphere in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and the strong faculty team, particularly her doctoral advisor, Dr. Hugo Tang. The collaborative environment has encouraged her to add another master's degree, in Applied Economics, allowing her to improve her dissertation research from an economist perspective. Rachel has identified hospitality revenue management as her primary research area with current attention to restaurant demand forecasting. She is interested in the temporal dynamics of restaurant visits and how they interact with economic or spatial features. She is passionate about utilizing quantitative tools to solve practical challenges in the hospitality industry.

Rachel envisions herself as a lifelong researcher and problem solver. She firmly believes that hospitality and tourism management education should be closely connected to industry trends. She sees herself being an active researcher in either academia or industry. She enjoys teaching and wants to help students achieve their dreams in the hospitality and tourism industry.

CHRIE FutureFund™ is pleased to recognize Rachel Zhang, and we wish her the best as she moves forward to degree completion.