

## CHRIE FutureFund™ Introduces Hyei Rin (Hayley) Joo



Hello! My name is Hyei Rin (Hayley) Joo, and I am a Ph.D. student in Hospitality Management at Iowa State University. I am excited to share my academic journey and recent research conducted under the mentorship of my esteemed major professor, Dr. Joan Su.

Originally from Seoul, South Korea, I earned my undergraduate degree in tourism from Kyung Hee University with the initial goal of pursuing a career in the industry. To gain firsthand experience, I took part in an international internship after my junior year at Hilton Guam Resort & Spa. Rotating through food and beverage, front office, and reservations while living on-site, I built meaningful connections with hospitality professionals and local communities.

This experience transformed my perspective on tourism. Guam, where tourism drives the economy, exposed me to both its benefits and challenges. I once believed that tourism was 100% an "industry without chimney" with minimal negative impacts. However, witnessing the volume of tourists—ten times the island's population—made me realize the urgent need for discussions on sustainability in tourism.

Motivated by this realization, I decided to pursue a deeper academic exploration. After completing my undergraduate degree, I earned my Master's Degree in International Tourism Management from the University of Surrey in the UK. There, I had the privilege of learning from renowned scholars and developed my first research agenda, examining the impact of indigenous employees' place attachment on their work engagement. This research, inspired by my time in Guam, solidified my interest in island tourism and social sustainability. Despite the challenges of conducting independent research, I found it deeply fulfilling which allowed me to confirm that academia was the right path for me.

After returning to South Korea, I worked at Agoda, a subsidiary of Booking.com, gaining deeper insight into the complexity of the hospitality industry. Now, as a doctoral researcher, I am committed to advancing social sustainability and responsible hospitality practices. Over two and a half years, my passion for social sustainability has deepened. However, it has been my biggest concern whether my research can meaningfully contribute to the industry and improve the travel experiences of marginalized communities who seek full engagement in hospitality services. Through ongoing reflection and guidance from my major professor, Dr. Joan Su, I was introduced to social entrepreneurship as a lens to address these challenges.

This perspective also shaped my recent research presentation at the 2025 Graduate Student Conference. In one of our research meetings, I shared an industry example of a hotel that hired people with intellectual disabilities (such as Down syndrome and ASD), a business model that simultaneously created employment and professional development opportunities for PwD employees and addressed employee retention challenges for company. Inspired by this case, Dr. Su helped me refine my research focus toward neurodivergence-inclusive service design in the hospitality and event industry—an approach that embodies social entrepreneurship in hospitality.

Receiving the Best Paper Award was an incredible honor, and I am deeply humbled by this recognition. However, I know there is still much more to explore and improve. Over the next five years, I aim to advance research on the development and implementation of inclusive service designs in the hospitality industry. My long-term goal is to become an assistant professor, where I can continue my research, mentor future scholars, and contribute to fostering a more inclusive and socially responsible hospitality industry.