Summary

This dissertation focuses on five major research aspects in the cruise economy: the two-sided market structure of the cruise tourism industry; the economic impacts of cruise tourism on ports; the cruise lines’ itinerary planning regarding their length of stay in ports; cruise tourists’ demand determinants in emerging Asian markets; and cruise ports’ electronic word of mouth generated from cruise tourists’ ratings and reviews on social media. In general, the dissertation addresses the industry organization of cruise tourism and cruise lines’ itinerary planning based on the interactions between cruise lines, cruise tourists, and cruise ports.

Chapter 1 builds up a conceptual research framework to analyze the relationships of the three main stakeholders in the cruise economy, including cruise lines, cruise tourists, and cruise ports. Based on the two-sided market theory, a platform model of the cruise lines’ intermediary role is developed to characterize the two-sided features of cruise lines between cruise tourists and cruise ports.

Chapter 2 examines the economic impacts of cruise tourism on cruise ports through a comprehensive meta-analysis. The findings indicate that cruise lines have mediation effects on cruise tourists’ expenditures at port destinations. It is also found that both the number and the expenditures of cruise tourists and cruise lines contribute significantly to the direct economic impacts of cruise tourism on ports. This has theoretical implications for the two-sided markets in the cruise tourism economy, and also provides practical knowledge useful for improving the economic performance of port destinations.

Chapter 3 investigates cruise lines’ itinerary planning and evaluates how factors related to cruise ports may affect cruise lines’ lengths of stay in ports. The findings show that the number of cruise passengers and the sailing distance to neighboring ports (including the previous one and the next one) could contribute to cruise lines’ length of stay in a port. It is also found that both home ports and attractive ports of call could increase cruise lines’ time duration, and that international cruise lines stay longer than the local ones. This chapter adds knowledge on cruise lines’ itinerary planning by connecting their length of stay in a port and the networks between ports, which also has implications for how cruise ports can better attract cruise lines.
Chapter 4 explores the determinants of cruise tourists’ demand, in particular the motivations, preferences, and intentions of cruise tourists in the emerging Asian markets by using factor analyses, path modeling and the ANOVA test. It is found that the motive of escaping and the preference for basic related cruise facilities and services can contribute to cruise tourists’ intention to take a cruise, and that cruise tourists in the four major Asian markets (i.e., Mainland China, HK, Taiwan, and Japan) and those in other global markets have different motives and preferences. Thus, these findings suggest cruise lines and cruise-tourism-related business should adjust the cruise products to adapt to the Asian markets.

Chapter 5 focuses on the influence of the port electronic word of mouth on cruise lines’ itinerary planning, using social media data generated from cruise tourists’ ratings and reviews. It is found that cruise tourists’ ratings and the number of cruise reviews were significantly related to cruise lines’ visits. Nevertheless, the social media editor’s recommendation and the number of port excursions were not likely to be related to cruise visits. It is also found that the social media editor has substantial mediation effects between cruise visits and cruise tourists’ port ratings.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions about the interactions between cruise lines, cruise tourists, and cruise ports in the previous five chapters, in order to give a systematic understanding of the cruise tourism economy. It also discusses the limitations and future directions of the cruise tourism research field. Thus, this dissertation adds knowledge about the economic impacts of the cruise tourism industry, cruise lines’ itinerary planning, cruise tourists’ consumer behavior, and cruise port destinations’ development in general.