

Hospitality Insights

For a sustainable industry

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Hospitality Insights

Vision: To communicate hospitality research to practitioners in the hospitality industry in order to inform their thinking, processes and practices.

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Hospitality Insights contains concise and accessible summaries of AUT's hospitality research. Our publication is aimed at a practitioner/industry audience, with a focus on relevant issues to help build a more sustainable hospitality industry for the future.

This journal will operate as a tangible vehicle for meaningful outreach with local and international hospitality communities. Our objective is to stimulate dialogue between academic researchers and industry practitioners, as well as other interested members of the hospitality community. We believe such a discourse can improve business practice, sustainability and workers' wellbeing, and lead to the creation of more healthy societies, whilst also engendering impact and uptake of academic research.

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Editorial

Alison McIntosh, Shelagh Mooney and David Williamson

Haere mai and welcome to this inaugural issue of *Hospitality Insights*. The journal presents short executive summaries of original research and expert opinions on issues of topical importance to the hospitality industry. Among the key topics considered in this first issue are: visas for skilled hospitality workers; how to create memorable guest experiences; the history of the Tourist Hotel Corporation; hospitality labour issues; employment issues for female chefs; and the usefulness of online restaurant reviews. In providing free, open access to the key implications of academic research for a wider readership, we hope to stimulate conversations that offer insights into some of the most enduring issues encountered by hospitality providers, which affect the sustainable future of our vibrant industry.

Recent changes to immigration laws: Implications for hospitality employers

Stewart Dalley

Stewart is a Senior Solicitor with Ryken and Associates (www.rykenlaw.co.nz). He assists in all aspects of immigration and refugee law, including advising on visas, deportation and humanitarian claims. He has experience in representing clients at the Immigration and Protection Tribunal, Family Court, District Court and High Court.



Stewart is an active member of the Auckland District Law Society's Immigration and Refugee Law Committee, where he engages with Immigration New Zealand, the Immigration Protection Tribunal, and other outside organisations, to help shape and inform discussion on immigration and

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) recently announced changes to the skilled migrant residence and essential-skills work visas based on a strong association between skills and salary. This shift will impact both employers and migrants, especially in hospitality.

According to the INZ, the hospitality sector was the fourth-largest recipient of skilled migrant residence visas in their last reporting year [1,2]. INZ expects migrants employed as chefs, café/restaurant managers and retail managers to be the hardest hit by these changes [1,2]. Residence under the skilled migrant policy can be gained for jobs in skill levels 1–3 as defined in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). Traditionally, hotel managers, chefs, and café/restaurant managers have been classed as level 2, and bakers at level 3 in accordance with ANZSCO. However, skills levels are now also assessed based on salary (at least \$23.49 p/h) and specialist skills obtained through qualifications and/or work experience.

Migrants paid a justifiable \$35.24 p/h for a position previously considered unskilled (levels 4–5), or those with positions unclassified by ANZSCO, could gain residence under the new policy shift. While this could mean a residence visa for people whose jobs do not neatly fit within ANZSCO, INZ are not easily deceived. Indeed, the Labour Inspectorate reports that 20 percent of the published list of employers currently barred from recruiting migrants (due to breaches of employment and immigration laws) are in the hospitality sector. Accordingly, there is little to be gained by migrants claiming to be paid \$80,000 for a housekeeping position.

Approximately 21 percent of essential-skills work visas issued by Immigration New Zealand in the last reporting year were for migrants in the hospitality sector [1,2]. Essential-skills work visas cover five skills levels (as indicated by ANZSCO) but now have accompanying salary thresholds. The main change affects migrants earning below \$19.97 p/h because they will now be unable to sponsor their partner's work visa or child's domestic student visa. While their partner and child would still be able to apply for visas, the partner would have to meet the visa requirements in their own right to obtain a work visa, and their child could only obtain an international student visa – the costs associated with which would likely consume the 'low' salary of the migrant worker. Additionally, this 'low-skilled' migrant will only be able to obtain one 'low-skilled' essential-skills work visa of three-year duration before experiencing a 12-month stand-down period, during which they would be barred from applying for another low-skilled essential-skills work visa. This does not, however, prevent the migrant from applying for an essential-skills visa at a higher

refugee-related policy matters. His work has been published in the New Zealand Law Society's official magazine (*LawTalk*) and the *New Zealand Law Journal*.

skill level or for a visa in another category entirely. Those in positions assessed as skill levels 4–5 under ANZSCO and paid below \$19.97p/h will only be issued a 12-month work visa, and will be unable to sponsor a partner for a work visa or a child for domestic student status. There are some elements of the policy change that are not retrospective. It is, therefore, vital to seek specific advice in each case.

Many employers will now be faced with the prospect of increasing salaries to attract migrants or expending more time and resources to recruit and train New Zealanders. However, it is recalled that many employers, particularly in the regions, have experienced recruitment difficulties for decades. It is, therefore, unclear whether these changes will produce the desired increase in job opportunities and salaries for New Zealanders or whether they will only add to the recruitment woes of employers.

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Accommodating co-creation in a hotel experience

Tracy Harkison

Tracy is a Senior Lecturer in Hospitality at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Her research passions are hospitality education and the co-creation of luxury accommodation experiences. This has resulted in the completion of her PhD thesis on how the luxury accommodation experience is created.



The co-creation process within the New Zealand luxury accommodation sector has, until recently, been under researched. However, in 2016, a doctoral thesis was completed [1] with the key question, 'how is the luxury accommodation experience created?' Following an interpretivist paradigm, data were collected that included 81 interviews (of 27 guests, 27 employees and 27 managers) within six luxury properties (three luxury hotels and three luxury lodges) which were selected via purposive sampling.

Drawing from the findings of the thesis, this article aims to show that co-creation is a valuable tool for hoteliers. Co-creation is about customers creating value for themselves through an interactive relationship with a company. The hospitality industry is a complete veteran at this; for example, the use of à-la-carte menus, whereby a customer has the ability to compose a meal that has value specifically for them. The possible scope of the co-creation process, beyond à-la-carte menus, is now being recognised by the luxury accommodation sector.

Co-creation can be described as a joint process that involves a customer and an organisation resulting in an output of value [2]. Co-creation permits and indeed encourages a more active involvement from the customer [1], and is important to organisations as it can ensure that any personal interaction that their customers have adds value to their experience [3]. If co-creation is used to its full potential, it can give an organisation a competitive advantage due to increased customer satisfaction resulting in a positive impact on customer loyalty [4]. Co-creation can also provide continual feedback for improving existing services, presenting a business with constant opportunities to increase their revenue and success [5].

In summary, the main finding of the doctoral research was the consensus among guests, employees and managers that the luxury accommodation experience is materialised through a process of co-creation, involving the many different forms of interaction happening between guests, employees and managers, as well as with external contributors outside of the properties [1].

The practical implications of co-creation cannot be determined without luxury properties first identifying what makes their accommodation a luxury experience. When this has been defined, more interaction between guests, employees and managers should be encouraged to ensure that this particular brand of luxury accommodation experience is created. This could include having staff members dedicated to interacting with guests, and having certain 'touch points' throughout the guests' stay that ensure the type and the amount of engagement that is required happens. External co-creation should also be encouraged; for example,

staff visiting the local producers of food and wine, which in turn would enable them to talk more informatively to guests about these products when they are interacting with them during their stay. Another example would be to build relationships with external agents who offer activities to the guests, to enable the continuation of the experience when guests are away from the property.

Luxury properties also need to apply co-creation strategies that would enable guests to innovate new products and services. One such strategy is in the form of a digital customer relationship management tool; an example of this being HGRM – Happy Guest Relationship Management, although this technology is still quite innovative. Hotels and lodges need to make sure that they are using Web 2.0 applications such as videos, blogs, fora, wiki, podcasts, chat rooms, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to encourage communication and social interaction, which is the customer engagement that enables co-creation.

For any business that is involved in customer experience, especially hospitality, there is every good reason to go down the route of co-creation, especially when it can give that business a competitive advantage.

If you would like to read the PhD thesis this research is based on you can access it here:

<http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/9925/HarkisonT.pdf?sequence=3>

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The Tourist Hotel Corporation: It is time the story was told in full

David Williamson

David is Senior Lecturer at the School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology. He spent 18 years working in the hospitality industry as a hotel manager and restaurateur. His research includes work, employment and labour market issues in hospitality and tourism. David completed his PhD in 2017 – a history of employment relations in the New Zealand hotel sector, 1955–2000.



Ki te kore nga putake e mākukungia e kore te rakau e tupu
If the roots of the tree are not watered the tree will never grow

New Zealand is in the middle of the most dramatic and sustained boom in tourism and hospitality in its history. The hotel sector that underpins our tourism growth stands utterly transformed from its humble beginnings. Yet the history of the Tourist Hotel Corporation (THC) and its role as the ‘roots’ of the modern hotel industry still tends to be told only as a minor part of our wider tourism story. Recent PhD research [1], based on extensive archive sources and interviews with senior practitioners, argues that the time has come for the THC story to be told in full.

While there have been histories of the tourism and hospitality sector that cover the THC [2–7], they have not included in-depth discussion of the origins, structure and legacies of the organisation. Established in 1955 and sold in 1991, the THC dominated the New Zealand tourist hotel sector for 35 years, running around 10 resort-style properties and setting the standard for service. However, the current dominance of neo-liberal ideology has resulted in the achievements of the Government-owned THC being somewhat dismissed and the role of massive Government investment in the development of our hotel sector often being ‘conveniently’ forgotten. It is common for the THC to be depicted as rather archaic. Burdened with political interference and gross underfunding, the THC is sometimes depicted as a prime example of what happens when the state tries to run a business.

However, this research argues there is a more heroic telling of the THC story, one that celebrates the THC as the fundamental ‘roots’ of the modern hotel sector. The THC was a key player in transforming post-war New Zealand hospitality, raising the bar for service, food and beverage and accommodation significantly. The THC invested heavily in improving buildings, vehicles, equipment and machinery, developing the skills and careers of its staff, and innovating menus. Staff from the THC were seen as ‘A grade’ and many of today’s most successful General Managers learnt their trade in THC properties. Many THC staff also went on to set up influential restaurants outside of hotels during this period.

The THC managed significant tourism development even while showing a profit from 1974 till the late 1980s, posting a 2.7 million dollar surplus in 1986. However, a combination of perceived indebtedness, the 1987 recession and free-market Government ideology resulted in the sale of the THC to the Southern Pacific Hotel Corporation in 1991. The story of the THC involves drama, intrigue, politics, high finance, rapid growth and equally rapid collapse. But most importantly, this is the story of the origins of our hotel industry, showing the huge contribution this state

funded group made to the modern industry. Surely it is time this story was told in full, on its own terms and in glorious technicolour.

If you would like to read the PhD thesis this research is based on you can access it here: <https://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/handle/10292/10412>

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Staff shortages and turnover: Causes and solutions

Jill Poulston

Jill is an Associate Professor at the Auckland University of Technology, where she studies a wide range of ethical issues in hospitality, such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and ethical food consumption. Prior to this, she worked in hospitality management, which included two roles as a General Manager. She currently teaches leadership to postgraduate students, and supervises student research projects.



The New Zealand hospitality workforce is young; most are between 18 and 24 years old and attracted by the ease with which they can get work in a bar or restaurant. The work suits them; it is dynamic and easy to find, but many have no intention of staying in the industry. Hence, staff shortages and turnover are a constant problem for employers. However, the solution is not as difficult as one might imagine.

This study identified why there are so few older workers in the New Zealand hotel industry after interviewing 44 managers and older workers in New Zealand hotels and looking at Human Resources (HR) policies, recruitment methods, and selection criteria. The hotel industry was found to be discriminatory towards older job seekers in both principle and practice, even though some companies' policies appeared to address age discrimination. Interview data from the HR managers suggested older workers had the characteristics they were looking for, yet they were not specifically recruiting them.

Recommendations arising from the study focus around changing attitudes at senior level so older workers are perceived as potential employees. Recruitment processes need to be checked to make sure they do not disadvantage older job seekers, and senior managers need to be objective and consider the skills, abilities, and attitudes of older job seekers. Either of these simple changes could be made through training or well-supported policy and would positively affect the age profile and turnover of the industry's workforce.

Practical suggestions also include using older workers to mentor younger workers to promote communication across an age diverse workforce and allowing older workers to demonstrate and share their knowledge and experience. Combining older and younger workers in work teams may also help remove barriers by allowing older workers to impart some of their values through frequent interactions and working towards a common work goal. In-house training programmes may also help educate staff at all levels about the benefits of diverse workgroups.

Data from this and prior studies show that older people are ideal employees where good work attitudes [1] and well-developed soft skills [2] are important. Interestingly, prior research also shows that policy does not prevent discrimination, as it is too easily ignored. Recruitment methods such as 'Seek', Twitter, MyJobSpace.co.nz and word-of-mouth recruitment are discriminatory because they favour young people and act as barriers against the employment of older workers.

Older recruits have much to offer, but in practice, their potential for employment is being restricted by recruiters' attitudes, as managers' views are more influential than policy. The challenge, therefore, is not so much in what needs to change, but how to make changes to reduce or eliminate discrimination in hotels against older job seekers.

More information about this study is in the original article [3], which can be obtained from the authors.

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Attracting and retaining female chefs

Charles Orido

Charles is a chef and lecturer at Kenya Utalii College, Nairobi, Kenya. His research interests include inhospitable hospitality, culinary arts, human behaviour in the hospitality industry, and indigenous research. He holds a Certificate in Food Production (currently Culinary Arts) from Kenya Utalii College, a BA degree in Hospitality Management from the University of Nairobi, Kenya, and a Master of International Hospitality Management (MIHM) from Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.



The chef profession is considered a challenging career, with female chefs seeming to be most affected. As such, it is rare to find female chefs occupying the coveted executive chef positions. The aim of this research was to establish if female chefs in Kenya encounter similar challenges to those experienced by female chefs elsewhere.

Previous research shows that female chefs encounter career challenges in hospitality organisations and hence they struggle to make it as chefs; for example, studies by Druckman [1] and Harris and Giuffre [2,3] in the United States, Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons [4] in the United Kingdom, as well as Zengeni et al. [5] in Zimbabwe. This article poses the important question: how can these challenges be overcome?

The study sought to make sense of the lived work experiences of Kenyan female chefs. Baum [6] recommends contextualised research methodologies to explore hospitality issues in non-Western countries. Moreover, Adelowo [7] asserts that lived experiences are better expressed through stories. Therefore, a qualitative approach was employed in this study where 15 chefs working in the Kenyan hospitality industry were interviewed [8]. Ten female chefs told stories of their workplace experiences while five male executive chefs recounted their experiences of working with female chefs.

Despite the different geographical, socio-cultural and economic factors between Kenya and other countries previously studied, female chefs expressed common challenges such as sexual harassment, gender discrimination, unsupportive attitudes towards pregnancy and an unhealthy work environment, as well as hierarchical kitchen structures that they believed discriminated against them. There was an indication of engrained patriarchal attitudes that limit the professional success of potential female chefs. Unfortunately, hospitality employers appeared to support the status quo; that is, a gendering of the chef's profession that privileges men and penalises women.

These findings suggest a trend that must worry hospitality employers. The highly competitive career structures and the male domination that discourages women from making a long-term career in the kitchen [2], coupled with stiff competition for scarce hospitality human resources, support the need to retain female chefs. Christensen and Rog [9] stress that employee retention strategies will only work if human resource managers are fully committed to creating a positive workplace culture that treats all employees equally, regardless of their gender or any other dimension of diversity.

In his study, Orido [8] suggests that the following measures may help to attract and retain female chefs. Firstly, employers should introduce personalised career

development plans. For instance, a female chef who has attained postgraduate qualifications ought to be promoted and remunerated accordingly. This will not only retain female chefs but also enable them to further their career aspirations within the hospitality industry. Secondly, female chefs should be given the opportunity to fully participate at all levels of the kitchen hierarchy, thereby acquiring the necessary skills for promotion in the future to executive chef's positions. Additionally, it will encourage a clear career progression path within the kitchen hierarchy.

Hospitality employers must ensure that employment opportunities as well as employment terms and career progression are not dependant on a chef's gender, but on their qualifications and competencies. By investing in female chefs and, most importantly, keeping them safe from bullying at work, the hospitality industry will not only attract, but retain, these talented professionals in satisfying culinary careers.

If you would like to read the PhD thesis this research is based on you can access it here: <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/10626>

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Comparing online and professional restaurant reviews: What can we learn?

Ziye Zhang

Ziye is an emerging researcher in the field of hospitality management. She received her bachelor's degree from Beijing Union University in 2015 and her master's degree from Auckland University of Technology in 2017, majoring in international hospitality management. Her research focusses on user-generated content in restaurant reviews, a relatively new data source for analysis in this area. Ziye also researches electronic word-of-mouth, online restaurant reviews and writers' criteria for restaurant measurement.



Social media and review websites such as Trip Advisor are emerging as important platforms for restaurant reviews. The tendency of consumers to seek out electronic word of mouth before deciding where to dine has increased rapidly, with online content being shown to significantly impact purchasing decisions. Practitioners have indicated they are keenly aware of the importance of online reviews, but there is almost no research that looks at this phenomenon in the New Zealand context, and no research that compares traditional, print-based reviews with online content. In order to address this gap, a recent Auckland University of Technology master's thesis applied content analysis to compare online and published restaurant reviews of restaurants in Auckland, New Zealand. Three hundred reviews from TripAdvisor website, *Cuisine Magazine* and the *New Zealand Herald* newspaper were analysed, and some results are presented here.

Traditional print reviews (*Cuisine* and the *Herald*) tend towards a more 'specialist' approach, including detailed information about the chefs, the owners and the restaurants' histories. They also use more 'fancy' language in their food descriptions, including very detailed menu ingredients. TripAdvisor reviews, by contrast, tend towards non-specialist, 'plain language' reviews, with simple menu descriptor words and little attention on ingredients. When discussing price, print reviews take an 'objective' stance, listing the price but rarely making a personal judgement about value; whereas the online reviews feature prominent personal judgements about value for money. In addition, online reviews emphasise the social aspects of dining (who they are dining with, the social nature of the event, e.g. birthday, interactions throughout the meal), often spending as much time discussing their companions as the products and service involved in the experience. By contrast, print reviews tend to focus more on the 'physical' aspects of dining (the wine, the food, the decor). Finally, both platforms strongly emphasise food and service as the main criteria for judgement, accounting for almost half the word counts in both styles of reviews.

What can the practitioner take from this research? Firstly, the fact that *food* and *service* are the predominant criteria for both online and professional reviewers serves as a reminder for restaurant operators that, no matter how exquisite or stylish the restaurant is, well-cooked food and attentive service are significantly emphasised as the primary criteria by reviewers. Moreover, both review formats stress that the reliability of the booking system and efficiency of the service staff tended to enhance all reviewers' satisfaction.

However, there are clear differences in the review styles that represent the different audiences they are addressing. Each format attempts to recognise the perceived social identity of their audience, with the print reviews taking the 'insider expert' voice and appearing to speak to a more sophisticated upmarket, product-focused audience. The print reviews also assume their readers are less sensitive to price, rarely discussing the perceived value of the meal. By contrast, the online reviews are more 'plain language', discuss value directly and are socially driven. By being aware of these differences in reviewing approaches, restaurant operators' can finesse their marketing strategies. By reading and reflecting on the link between the contrasting review styles and the social identity of the respective readers, practitioners can consider how their offering 'fits' with their target markets. Finally, as online review platforms become increasingly important, practitioners should engage with the content they find there, ensuring they take time for reading, reflecting and responding.

If you would like to read the original thesis this article is based on, please email:

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