

Hospitality Insights

For a sustainable industry

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Volume 5 – Number 2 – December 2021

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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 with 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 and Shelagh Mooney

As the world continues to deal with the ongoing pandemic, there is no greater time to bring industry and community together. This issue includes an industry opinion piece about the importance of retaining and recruiting staff as the hospitality industry opens up “post-pandemic”. Also included are research summaries on the inclusive employment of people with disabilities in the hospitality industry, the value of hospitality education in prisons, the therapeutic nature of hospitality, and the influence of the “hospitality” personality in the hospitality experience. We hope that through the dissemination of summaries of our research findings we open dialogue for a more hospitable and sustainable future of our industry, and inspire a vision for change through our education, research and practice.

Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro nōnā te ngahere,

Ko te manu e kai ana i te matauranga nōnā te ao.

The bird who partakes of the miro berry owns the forest; the bird who partakes of education owns the world.

The Great Resignation: stopping the ‘bleed’

Oliver Horn

With 33 years of hospitality experience, across 13 locations in Western and Eastern Europe as well as in South East Asia and in Korea, Oliver is considered a specialist for hotel openings - he has six of those "under his belt". He has worked across the InterContinental, Crowne Plaza and Hotel Indigo brands and has brought several of those hotels to life. He loves to create the ideal environment for the business to thrive through the people who run it. Developing his team and focusing on creating the right environment has always been his key focus. He works in close alignment with owners and investors who share his love for hospitality. His core values of fairness, social responsibility and life-long learning shine through in his actions and translate into tangible deliveries.



As hospitality businesses open up ‘post-pandemic’, the unavailability of qualified staff has become one of the biggest obstacles to businesses’ ability to take maximum advantage of the pent-up desire and need for travel.

A study published by McKinsey in September 2021 under the headline “Great attrition or great attraction? The choice is yours”¹ verbalised and quantified for the first time something that the hospitality industry around the globe is experiencing as businesses start their return to the ‘next normal’. The article explained in detail a mindset that has become commonplace both for employers and employees, and that will be troubling the industry for a while if not properly addressed.

When Covid first brought the world to a standstill, the hospitality industry was one of the first and worst hit. Business came to a halt; many hotels and restaurants closed or decreased staffing levels as much as possible in order to cut expenses. In the developed world, this was done with the help of government programmes so that employees could access some kind of safety net. In developing countries, these safety nets often did not/do not exist. Many employers were ruthless, simply telling staff that they were no longer needed. ‘Thanks’ to many governments calling Covid-19 a “force majeure”, employers got around paying legally required compensation for terminating employees at short notice. Many of our colleagues, expatriate and local, found themselves literally ‘on the street’ within weeks of the pandemic ravaging the industry.

Employers’ social responsibility to the communities in which they do business was one of the first victims of the pandemic. The understanding that “our staff is our most valuable asset” turned into pure semantics.

Today, as these businesses celebrate that they are opening again, there is a surprising level of surprise among the most callous of employers that now they can’t find staff. The industry will have to come up with new ways of working if they want to attract colleagues back – the loss of trust and goodwill will have serious repercussions. To ‘make good’ on their actions, employers need to first understand how much they broke – initial observations show that they have not even started to understand what they did.

What about people still employed? Shouldn’t they be lucky to still have a job?

In the McKinsey study, 40% of participants who were still employed answered that they were at least somewhat likely to leave their job in the next 3–6 months; 64% of these claimed that they are planning to leave without a new job lined up.

At the core of this is, I believe (and the study suggests), is a general disconnect between what employees are looking for and what employers think that employees are looking for. The pandemic has sent many of us into a survival mode, forcing actions that were purely transactional. Yet the hospitality industry, at its core, depends on people who care for others. Employers need to ask employees questions that show they care and rebuild the trust that has been lost due to their actions when the pandemic hit.

As a member of a Vietnamese investment group that did exactly the opposite, that held on to employees at substantial cost to the enterprise and with employees at all levels ‘chipping in’ through unpaid leave to help keep everyone employed, I know first-hand that this has built a substantial amount of trust and our levels of attrition are substantially below the market average as other businesses reopen. Asking the right questions, listening to the answers and consistently responding with empathy and tangible action, not words, will be key to our success.

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Note

1. McKinsey & Company, September 8, 2021, study conducted with 4,294 participants in the US, UK, Australia, Singapore and Canada. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

Disability-inclusive workplaces provide greater value for the hospitality industry

Laura Upson, Alison McIntosh and Brielle Gillovic

Laura Upson is a postgraduate student at AUT. She is recipient of the 2020 AUT Summer Research Award. Her current research focuses on accessible tourism and hospitality for people with disabilities.



Dr Alison McIntosh is a professor of hospitality & tourism at AUT and is a supervisor of the project.



Dr Brielle Gillovic is a senior lecturer in tourism at AUT and is a co-supervisor of the project.

Scholars believe that people with disabilities are a largely untapped and under-utilised hospitality-industry employment pool. In 2020, it was estimated that only 22.5% of people with disabilities were in full-time employment, in comparison to 69.3% of people without disabilities [1]. With approximately one in four New Zealanders identifying as living with disability, there is an opportunity for New Zealand's hospitality industry to realise great value from having disability-inclusive workplaces.

Our study aimed to identify the benefits of, and barriers to, employing people with disabilities in the hospitality industry. The research was carried out by undertaking a systematic literature review, which can identify, evaluate and integrate an existing body of relevant scholarly literature [2]. In order to search for literature as widely as possible, keywords relevant to the study were entered into two internet browsers: Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. Keywords were then entered into Google Scholar and the Scopus database in order to filter for specific tourism and hospitality journals. In total, our search found 173 journal articles relevant to the topic.

The retrieved literature revealed a number of benefits related to the inclusive employment of people with disabilities in the hospitality industry. People with disabilities were found to be loyal employees; it has been shown that they are committed to their employing organisation, minimising their likelihood of leaving, and thus reducing the rate of staff turnover. People with disabilities were also found to be engaged employees; it has been shown that employing people with disabilities increases the level of productivity, efficiency and creativity within the workplace. Lower rates of absenteeism were recorded in comparison to employees without disabilities, as well as higher levels of customer satisfaction and a greater sense of corporate social responsibility.

Inclusive employment can highlight an organisation's dedication to social inclusion and be a key differentiation strategy that is highly regarded by internal and external stakeholders, thus promoting a positive organisational image and reputation. These benefits are achievable given there are few entry barriers to hospitality industry roles that do not require much previous work experience – for example, kitchenhand or housekeeping. Additionally, the nature of the tasks within the hospitality industry are considered more routine and repetitive.



A number of challenges and barriers to the employment of people with disabilities were found, mostly related to prejudice and discrimination by human resource managers, general management and existing employees. Documented concerns were related to the perceived skills and abilities of the potential employee with a disability, and whether they had the required knowledge for the role or the industry. Additionally, others in the organisation often (mis)perceived that people with disabilities are costly to accommodate. In fact, the opposite has been found to be true. The literature also revealed limited, or lack of, access to further training or education for human resource managers around how they could better support employees with disabilities.

To conclude, our research has revealed a broad and increasing body of scholarship on the employment of people with disabilities, identifying recommendations for the hospitality industry. Of particular note is the social value for hospitality employers of employing people with disabilities; there is a need to look beyond the disability at hand, and to instead view the individual's abilities and skills, and the positive characteristics that they could bring as a potential employee. The social value of employing people with disabilities includes an increased sense of acceptance, belonging and diversity within the workplace. It was also highlighted that any initial accrued costs from accommodations needed to support the ongoing performance of employees with disabilities would also likely benefit customers with disabilities and future employees with disabilities in the longer term. Moreover, relevant national and international legislation, such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006), Human Rights Act (1993), and the Bill of Rights (1990), provides a comprehensive framework that outlines the standard of accessibility and inclusivity that hospitality organisations should aim for, both now and in the future.

This research project was funded by an AUT Summer Research Award, 2020.

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Hospitable psychotherapy

Keith Tudor

Keith Tudor is a professor of psychotherapy at Auckland University of Technology, and a certified teaching and supervising transactional analyst. He is the author of over 500 publications, enjoys good food and wine, and both hosting and being a guest.



One of the things I notice when my wife and I go out for a meal in a restaurant is how the staff make contact, welcome us and see us to our table. For me, the quality of the contact (by eye contact, a smile, and an open manner), the welcome ('Kia ora'), and accompaniment to the table (which conveys a sense of being expected) are all crucial elements to setting the scene of what is to come. Similarly, in psychotherapy, practitioners meet, greet and seat their clients, and, as do restaurateurs, have different perspectives on how to do that.

During the last decade, some psychotherapists have been thinking about their practice in terms of what Donna Orange, clinician and a professor at New York University, refers to as 'clinical hospitality' [1]. In promoting this concept as a way of thinking about psychotherapeutic practice, she draws on the work of three French philosophers: Emanuel Lévinas (1906–1995), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) and Paul Ricœur (1915–2005), all of whom devoted themselves to the discourse of hospitality. From Lévinas [2], who drew on the story of Abraham's hospitality towards three Bedouin (*Genesis*, chapter 18), we derive the ethical view that the 'other' as a guest has a claim on my protection as a host. This view is reflected in the duty of care towards their clients practiced by psychotherapists and those in the helping professions. Much of Derrida's work examines the ambiguities of hospitality: that it is both unconditional in that, as hosts, we submit ourselves to the other; yet, at the same time, there are 'laws' of hospitality that subject both hosting and being a guest to certain social and cultural conventions [3]. Finally, from Ricœur, a philosopher who distinguished between a hermeneutics (or way in which something is interpreted or understood) of faith or trust and a hermeneutics of doubt or suspicion, we get the concept of 'linguistic hospitality' [4]: the recognition of genuine otherness, which cannot be translated so much as interpreted. In other words, at best, there is an understanding of our guest or client, *with* and *in* all our differences. In this sense, we may think of hospitality as orientated towards being contractual, open, accepting, non-judgmental, and empathic and, insofar as it enhances a person's mana, it is therapeutic. This is akin to the concept of manaakitanga "where[by] hospitality extends beyond commercial transactions and focusses on reciprocity and care" [5], the implication of which is mana-enhancing psychotherapy [6]. It is in this context that Orange, who is a psychoanalyst and a philosopher, describes her work in terms that she 'cares' for her patients [7, 8].

From this perspective, psychotherapy is all about being hospitable: there is – or should be – an openness, welcome, care, and attention that makes our client/guest feel good and that sets the scene for the ensuing therapeutic relationship through which the client resolves their problems and, ultimately, feels better. Just as psychotherapy is learning from hospitality, it may be that insights from psychotherapy may be useful to people in hospitality, not only in being able to analyse transactions and interpersonal communication, but also in understanding personal history and dynamics, especially when the host is feeling less than open, welcoming or gracious. Shabad [9] emphasises the importance for the therapist to be open, precisely so that the client (or patient) has the opportunity for what he refers to as the ‘dignity’ to give of themselves: “When an individual has attained a sense of belonging because of being received himself/herself by significant persons, he/she is better able to mobilize the graciousness of welcoming the gifts of others” (p. 359). In other words, one cannot be a host and offer hospitality (social, cultural, linguistic, clinical or nurturant) without first having experienced, taken in and integrated, both developmentally and psychologically, appropriate and generous hospitality.

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Hospitality education in New Zealand prisons

Madeleine Crouth, Alison McIntosh and Tracy Harkison

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Dr Alison McIntosh is a professor of hospitality & tourism at AUT and is supervisor to the project. Her research focuses on issues of social justice through tourism and hospitality leading to social change.



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New Zealand has one of the highest imprisonment rates per capita when compared to the rest of the developed world. People who offend in New Zealand have a 43% chance of reoffending within the first 24 months of their release [1]. It is estimated that approximately 60% of people who offend have literacy and numeracy skills lower than the NCEA Level 1 competency, and 66% of adults have no formal qualifications [2, 3]. A focus on literacy and numeracy, support through baseline education, and specific trades like hospitality, can start to refine the options of a person who offends, further enabling them to start developing goals that will support their futures [4].

Since 2014, the Department of Corrections/Ara Poutama Aotearoa has been upgrading the prison-based educational programmes available to people who offend to achieve this. Goals have been set to integrate the in-prison education with the nationally recognised level of education along with practical elements such as kitchen work, housekeeping and other service-based vocations such as hairdressing and customer service. The courses are relatively short, ranging from six to 12 weeks, and provide key skills and the foundations for further study. Evidence from overseas has found that hospitality and, specifically, catering programmes are a tool that positively impacts the way people who offend engage with their rehabilitation; creating an experience through the sharing and giving of food is seen as a way to reintegrate and regain a sense of achievement and being of service through meaningful social connections and employment.

Our study carried out a systematic literature review of the effectiveness of hospitality training and education in correctional facilities. Evidence was found of the effectiveness of educational programmes within prisons and their positive impact on recidivism. It was also found that hospitality training initiatives, such as those provided in prison training restaurants open to the public for dining, could offer a unique opportunity that allows people who offend to change the negative public perceptions held about them. In New Zealand, we have unique tikanga-based initiatives that support people who offend to reintegrate back into the public environment and their families, with reduced reoffending [5]. The literature showed, convincingly, that education leads to opportunities for post-release employment and the ability to manage work-life balance, reintegration into society, and gain skills that support long-term prosperity [3]. Czerniawski [6] sees education as a key step in making a positive change in the lives of people who offend, especially if followed by a period of post-release support.

leader for the Bachelor of International Hospitality Management at AUT. Her research passions are hospitality education and the co-creation of luxury accommodation experiences



Our study also revealed the challenges of providing hospitality education in prisons. Prison security risks, risk of lockdowns, student mental health, lack of educational resources and support services, and lack of set-up and sustainable funding for educational programmes were seen as hindrances to the success of prison education programmes. Lack of post-release support and the negative stigma of people who offend perceived by the public and employers were further noted issues of concern. Likewise, prison culture, staff retention, general misconduct and mistrust were also cited as aspects of concern [7]. Giousmpasoglou and colleagues [8] suggested that people who offend would prefer education programmes that were carried out by external facilitators over in-prison programmes. The importance of networks between educators, support workers and employers are important in this regard.

With the hospitality industry facing a skills shortage and with its low barriers to entry, there is potential to build upon the success of existing hospitality education programmes to build skills, pride and a second chance for those who are engaging in rehabilitation. There is also an opportunity to consider tertiary pathways for these hospitality graduates and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the Department of Corrections/Ara Poutama Aotearoa could consider the success of initiatives such as The Clink Charity training restaurants in the UK in supporting rehabilitation through hospitality training and work.

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Waiter, there's a fly in my coffee!

Lindsay Neill, Ayesha Taylor and Nigel Hemmington

Lindsay Neill is an AUT senior lecturer in hospitality management, with research interests in vernacular culture, food, identity, and popular culture. Lindsay has an extensive publishing portfolio, including the co-authorship of the award-winning text *The New Zealand Chef* and *The Great New Zealand Pie Cart*.



Ayesha Taylor is completing her diploma in screen production specialising in documentary directing at Yoobee South Seas Film and Television School. Ayesha's interest in documentary film making not only motivated the research for this paper but also provided the framework for her short documentary, *Tall Poppy Chopping*. As an emerging documentary film maker, Ayesha is aware of the importance of robust

The hospitality industry is under intense pressure. COVID-19 restrictions and limited trading opportunities have forced restaurateurs to consider their pricing structures. Reflecting those concerns, Richard Corney, MD of the Inigo Coffee Group, proposed that the retail price of a cup of coffee needed to rise to between \$6.50 and \$7.00 to “take into account all the other cost increases hospitality establishments have experienced in the last decade, not to mention the challenges of the pandemic in the last two years” [1]. Alongside these revenue issues, the industry also needs to move away from a tradition of low pay and low value [2], and perhaps towards the concept of a ‘hospitable wage’ [3]. However, laudable as these goals might be, upward price movement may be resisted by many customers.

So how can restaurateurs and hoteliers ‘sell’ revised-price-products to their customers? Clearly, increased revenue can be achieved through both marginal price increases and up-selling to increase average customer spend. We propose that both of these goals can be achieved if employers embrace the concept of hospitality as an experience [4, 5], where the performance of staff is central [6], and where the experience is delivered with ‘hospitality personality’.

Much has been written about the personality of hospitality staff. Most of that work can be traced back to the early work of Erving Goffman [7] who proposed that hospitality employees were playing roles, and acting out, by using their emotional intelligence. Goffman likened such workers to actors who literally ‘take on’ a character. The characteristics of the hospitality personality have been explored by many authors [8–10] and include, agreeableness, extroversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and emotional stability; although some research also reveals that neuroticism is also a hospitality characteristic in hotel receptionists. Alongside this research, other studies have identified the role of mood and personality in positive guest experiences, specifically service quality perception and customer satisfaction [11]. This supports our suggestion that the performance of staff can have a direct impact on customer experience and potentially revenue, and that Corney's price recommendation could be a realistic option for many businesses struggling economically.

But there's a ‘fly in the ointment’: the Tall Poppy Syndrome. Tall poppy syndrome originated around 500BC in ancient Rome, when King Tarquinius Superbus demonstrated how the nation should deal with its enemies. In an active display he lopped off the heads of the tallest poppies in his garden with

research. This paper is Ayeesha's first academic publication.



Nigel Hemmington is an active researcher in tourism and hospitality marketing with a particular interest in consumer behaviour, hospitality and tourism experience, and the concept of hospitality as a commercial phenomenon. He has published over 100 research papers and presented keynote speeches at over 50 international conferences.



a stick [12]. Today, tall poppies are conspicuously successful people, who may attract envy, resentment or hostility, and the Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) is the habit of others to diminish those who have attained excellence in a field – to cut them down to size [13]. While TPS is commonly associated with Australia and New Zealand, it is also part of other cultures. Within Scandinavian cultures, *janteloven*¹ promotes humility and conformity paralleling TPS [15]; in Japanese culture, ‘the nail that sticks up gets pounded down’ [16]; and within Filipino culture a crab mentality exists whereby crabs in a bucket tend to pull back any adventurous crabs trying to escape [17]. TPS is often described as being ingrained in New Zealand culture [18] and has been identified as a phenomenon in New Zealand entrepreneurship and business [19].

While TPS encourages conformist cultures, our research provides a valuable insight into how employers can spot potential employees who actively resist notions of TPS's conformity and are more likely to perform to the highest levels. Using Instagram, we interviewed 1000 young self-identifying New Zealanders to explore their qualitative experiences of TPS. They identified as 68% female and 32% male. Their age ranges were: 58% aged 18–24; 27% aged 25–34; 7% aged 35–44; 3% aged 45–54; and 2% aged 55 or above. Three percent of the respondents were excluded from our final sample because they were aged 17 or younger.

The respondents' feelings, victimhood, self-esteem, and knowledge about TPS provided our research with the largest amount of data. Of our 1000 participants, 50% knew what TPS was, while 50% did not. Similarly, 45% of our respondents claimed to be victims of TPS. Contrastingly, 55% had no experiences of TPS. Within those considerations, the data revealed clearly that TPS was perceived by participants as ‘something done to them’ and not as ‘something they do to other people’. Yet, and despite that difference, the pervasive nature of TPS within Kiwi socio-culture was noted by participants.

Several participants recounted the cost of TPS; for example, “*Definitely held me back. It can knock your confidence so much*” and “*Made me want to hide/play down my talents/my life.*” Other participants perceived TPS “put-downs” (belittling or humiliating remarks) as a challenge or motivating force. They commented, “*Uncomfortable but it pushed me harder to be even more successful*” and “*It motivated me. I realized people saw something in me and strived to continue improving.*”

For the 45% of our participants directly experiencing TPS, those experiences were grounded within two base reactions. Reflecting that, more than half of our participants adopted conformist behaviours, succumbing to the bullying pressures of others. However, 45% recognised TPS and its bullying as a motivator to create further behaviours and actions of excellence.

The role of social media in TPS was significant. Participants directly linked TPS to social media with 89% of respondents recognising the role of social media in TPS. Key to their views was the realisation that social media not only provided distance between people but also that people used social media to manipulate the image they projected to others. In those ways, social media was a mediating factor. As participants observed, “*Easier to be mean and cut someone down through a comment than to their face*” and “*Social media has made it easier to abuse and put down those that stand out.*”

Given the attributes of the hospitality personality, and Richard Corney's proposed pricing restructures in hospitality, the key is for employers to

consider the resilience of their staff to TPS and conformity. They should consider whether they can recruit and retain the 45% of staff that use TPS as inspiration to succeed – the staff who will rise the challenge of delivering exceptional customer experiences through their own performance of the ‘hospitality personality’. It is within the unique characteristics of these staff that hospitality businesses can generate that extra point of difference and experience that customers will be happy to pay a little more to enjoy; and perhaps hospitality businesses might go a step further by also considering the concept of the ‘hospitable wage’.

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Note

1. “Janteloven (the law of Jante) at its simplest describes the way that all Norwegians (and in fact, other Scandinavians too) behave: putting society ahead of the individual, not boasting about individual accomplishments, and not being jealous of others” [14].

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