

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 operates 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

Shelagh Mooney and Tracy Harkison

Kia ora koutou.

Once again, we bring you a new issue of Hospitality Insights in a time of important change for the hospitality industry. At present, there is great excitement, as our hospitality community welcomes the reopening of our borders and the dropping of Covid restrictions in many countries, including Aotearoa. As we make ongoing adjustments to new situations, we hope that our research will provide hopeful and helpful insights for hospitality practitioners. This issue centres on what is required to improve the wellbeing of employees and guests in our post pandemic industry. It includes an industry opinion piece about the importance of being open to new approaches to work-life balance to enable the next generation of hospitality professionals to thrive. Also included are research summaries on what happened to the mental health and wellbeing of chefs during the pandemic, responding to the different needs of customers with dementia, parallels between gendered food bias in domestic settings and gender bias in the hospitality industry, and finally, the onboarding of new managers in food and beverage operations.

Through knowledge comes understanding and growth, offering us new opportunities to create a more hospitable society.

Mā te huruhuru, ka rere te manu

Adorn the bird with feathers so it can fly

Industry perspective: A human resource manager's insights into hospitality in New Zealand: Lizzy Coughlan

Tracy Harkison and Lizzy Coughlan

Tracy Harkison is an associate professor, and programme leader of the Bachelor of International Hospitality Management at AUT. Her research passions are hospitality education and the co-creation of luxury accommodation experiences.



Lizzy Coughlan is the Human Resources Manager of the Hotel Britomart, Auckland.



The last two years have been incredibly challenging for the domestic and international hospitality industry. To gain insights from New Zealand hospitality professionals who are also AUT alumni, Lizzy Coughlan, Human Resource Manager of the Hotel Britomart, Auckland, was interviewed by AUT's Associate Professor Tracy Harkison.

When Coughlan was asked about working in hospitality, she responded:

I love hospitality because daily you encounter so many different types of people, it is a family feel industry. You meet people from around the world, so it gives you so much exposure to different life experiences. I am a people person, and it has been an industry I have loved ever since I started at AUT. I wanted to be in an industry where people are the main subject, and hospitality is that industry to a tee.

When asked about the unique aspects of the New Zealand hospitality industry, she explained:

We have a lot of history. Hotels are learning more about Māori heritage and incorporating it into their establishments. New Zealand is a unique travel destination, from the mountains and snow in Queenstown to the big city feel in Auckland. With such diversity we appeal to a wide range of travellers world-wide.

When Coughlan was asked why someone should start a career in hospitality and what advice she would give, her view was that:

People often don't realise that within hospitality it's not just the operational roles you can do, it's everything from revenue management through to HR. There are so many different things you can be exposed to within hospitality. It's not just waiting tables, cleaning dishes and being a chef; careers wise you can move up very quickly in hospitality into a different field that you may not have thought of before.

Coughlan stressed the importance of starting from the entry level.

Start in the industry at an entry position. It gives you the understanding of how a hotel operates; you can go through lots of different departments. It gives you the skills that you need in a management role, as you understand the facets of the business and you can be a very effective leader. Studying and gaining a degree will

serve your career very well. My best piece of advice is to just get in the door and work your way from there.

When Coughlan was asked about her greatest leadership challenge, the COVID-19 situation, and what she would change about the industry, she emphasised passion and being agile:

In hospitality you have a lot of very passionate people, and everyone has very different leadership styles. So, it is about understanding how best to lead when you have different personalities and styles to content with. So, my greatest leadership challenge has been understanding all the different leadership styles and then trying to figure out how to work with them, especially within a HR function role, because it can be challenging at times. But the more you understand them, the more you learn, and the easier it gets.

For COVID-19 our biggest decision was first and foremost the health and safety of our team and our guests. We took the stance that we need to take care of our people first, and then we made the business decisions from there. One thing remained throughout lockdown – taking care of our team and making sure they were supported. It was also about being really agile, as things were changing daily, and you have got to have a Plan A and a Plan B. So being agile and take it from there.

However, she also warned of the dangers of the industry, advising of ways to preserve one's work-life balance.

The industry is going through a huge transformation with a new generation of workers coming through. We are seeing a lot more people wanting, and rightfully so, more fair pay, more flexibility, more work life balance. Within traditional hospitality there is the mentality that you sometimes work long hours, so industry really needs to become more agile and open minded to different ways. We can approach work life balance by working from home, but within the parameters of an operational business, that is what I would like to see more of.

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POTS and PANdemic: Chef wellbeing amidst COVID-19

Richard N.S. Robinson, Shelagh K. Mooney, Matthew L. Brenner, and Tin Doan

Richard Robinson is an associate professor at the University of Queensland. His research focus is on sustainable hospitality and tourism workforce studies, and the occupational experiences of chefs.



Shelagh Mooney is an associate professor at the School of Hospitality and Tourism at AUT. Her research focuses on ethical leadership for a sustainable hospitality and tourism workforce.



As most developed nations emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic period, amid exceptionally high hospitality labour shortages, it is timely and important to understand the state of chefs and cooks' mental health and wellbeing (MH&W) and individual and organisational outcomes of the pandemic. A survey (pending publication) by this article's authors, of Australasian chefs during late-2021/early-2022, aimed to provide insights into these two interlinked factors.

Chefs' working conditions have been closely examined for many decades, yet only a few studies have considered their MH&W [1]. Nonetheless, there are indications in the literature that chefs can be vulnerable to harm due to negative workplace experiences, for example, by working in fear [2], enduring wage theft [3], and participating in habitual drug and alcohol abuse [4]. An unsettling piece of Australian research revealed that chefs are significantly more likely to commit suicide than are those in the general population [5], highlighting serious risks if their working conditions, and consequential triggers for harm, continue to be neglected by industry and policy makers.

Administered amid COVID conditions in late 2021 and early 2022, the survey yielded 260 usable responses from chefs in Australia, New Zealand, and Pacifica nations. The sample's mean age was 40 and comprised 69% men. The average occupational tenure was over 21 years, and 42% were not working in their home country. Surprisingly, given the skills and labour shortages, 15% of the sample were not working at all. A third were contingently employed, with the mean of their weekly hours at 48, and nearly 25% reported having no work breaks on shift. Disturbingly, given the health and safety protocols around COVID-19, 75% of the sample reported working while ill, on average, for nearly nine days per year.

In terms of drug and alcohol abuse, over 15% of the sample consumed alcohol five or more days weekly, with nearly 10% consuming hard drugs (e.g., "LSD, cocaine, heroin and/or ecstasy"). In terms of MH&W, the sample reported* high levels of physical exhaustion (e.g., "tired before starting work," "exhausted at work," and mental fatigue (e.g., "emotionally drained" and "becoming disconnected"). Workplace consequences included counterproductive workplace behaviours such as deviance [6] with a mean of 1.43**. Inferentially, psychological distress was positively and significantly

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related to dysfunctional workplace behaviour, burnout, and turnover intention.

The findings reveal disturbing implications for industry and policy makers. Working conditions for chefs appear to be deteriorating. Paradoxically, despite the highly publicised chef shortage [7], the evidence suggests that many chefs are hourly paid insecure workers, and are over-worked, yet regularly continue working when sick. Unsurprisingly, their poor working conditions have negative MH&W consequences for employers and chefs themselves, with negative organisational and individual occupational outcomes such as occupational attrition, which exacerbates skills shortages [8]. The rhetoric suggesting that COVID-19 would herald a reset of previous unsustainable workforce practices [9], based on this study's findings, appears to be a false dawn. A concerted, multi-pronged, and genuine approach involving myriad stakeholders, inter alia policy makers, educators, peak industry bodies, industry, chefs, and even customers, will be required to arrest the trends identified in the study, and develop a sustainable workforce [see 10]. Critically, an immediate response is recommended to ensure frontline MH&W resources are made available and widely promoted to chefs to help protect their wellbeing. (See help pages at Mental Health Australia and Mental Health New Zealand, and the RUOK? Hospitality "Mateship Manual").

* on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)

** on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or twice* etc.)

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Understanding dementia and its relevance for the hospitality industry

Sophie Hayden, Alison McIntosh, and Brielle Gillovic

Sophie Hayden is a doctoral researcher at AUT. She is a recipient of the 2021 AUT Summer Research Award. Her current research focuses on accessible tourism, beach access for tourists with disabilities, co-design, and critical tourism.



Alison McIntosh is Professor of Hospitality and Tourism at AUT and is supervisor of this project.



Using hospitality services can be a challenge for people with dementia. Dementia is “a progressive disorder where there is a decline in a variety of mental functions” [1, p. 1]. Forms of dementia, such as vascular dementia and Alzheimer’s, include symptoms such as memory loss, cognitive decline in speech, thinking, and understanding, disorientation, personality or mood changes, paranoia or hallucination, and reduced physical ability. Over 50 million people are currently living with dementia worldwide; a number forecast to double every 20 years (<https://alzheimers.org.nz/>). While dementia can add many challenges to an individual’s life, and that of their carers and/or companions, those affected should still be able to participate in hospitality experiences as part of their meaningful and active social lives, which are crucial to slowing the disease’s progression, especially in its early stages before more specialised care becomes essential.

Our study assessed the current research on dementia and hospitality, and the implications for the hospitality industry of catering to people with dementia. Specifically, the study had three aims: i) to reveal existing knowledge on dementia and hospitality/tourism; ii) identify current gaps in the knowledge; and iii) identify potential avenues for future consideration. A systematic literature review method was used [2]; the initial search found 1,362 sources of information. After applying filters to ensure only relevant peer-reviewed journal articles relating specifically to hospitality and/or tourism were included in the review, 16 eligible studies remained, which were then manually analysed using a content analysis [3]. The analysis surrendered information on a range of topics, including hospitality in healthcare accommodation, experiences of dining out, destination management and business perspectives, understanding the market, and carers’ experiences of travel. The studies selected for analysis were conducted largely in the United Kingdom, along with two from Taiwan, and others from the Netherlands, Canada, Russia, and the United States.

The analysis revealed important insights and implications for the hospitality industry, highlighting the importance for people with dementia to participate in social and leisure activities, in order to maintain their sense of normalcy, and derive meaning from their experiences [4]. Several barriers to participation in hospitality for people with dementia were revealed, such as access to facilities and amenities [5], ignorance and negative perceptions of dementia by staff [6], and the impact of a carer’s perception of the person

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with dementia's ability to participate in the activity [5]. For example, dining out was considered important for carers, who valued breaks from the busy and often demanding nature of caring for a person with dementia [6].

Only two of the 16 analysed articles related specifically to discussions of dementia and the hospitality industry, highlighting the importance of researching this area. The negative attitudes of hospitality staff towards those with dementia is argued to be a significant issue for the industry, and reported to arise from a lack of understanding of the needs and preferences of people with dementia, rather than from any deliberate intent to be unaccommodating [6]. As such, a key recommendation made by researchers is for hospitality providers to find ways to educate and train their staff on how they can provide positive experiences for customers with dementia. An understanding of dementia itself and how it can manifest, can be gleaned from local community support organisations.

There is also a need for future innovations, accommodations, and considerations of hospitality experiences and products to better cater to people with dementia. This may include modifications to hospitality environments to make them more accessible, such as through high contrast décor, safe payment options, or clear orientation and facilities layout. It may also include the development of specific products, such as memory cafés, dementia-friendly respite accommodation, or restaurants that cater to, or specifically raise awareness of dementia, such as the Restaurant of Mistaken Orders in Japan. Considering the global issue of population ageing, and the strong link between ageing and dementia, hospitality providers and scholars are recommended to begin the journey to understand how to better meet future demand, and importantly, improve the quality of life for customers with dementia, along with their carers and companions.

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Gendered food bias in central rural North Indian homes: Implications for hospitality in Aotearoa

Nishita Chandra, Christine Tui Hall and Shelagh Mooney

Nishita Chandra holds a Master's degree in gastronomy from AUT. Her research interests include food within various aspects of culture and society, along with a focus on women-centric issues



In most societies and organisations, gender plays an important role, strongly influencing how individuals are treated. It is common for women to experience bias in all spheres of life, and have limited access to opportunities and resources. While this does not suggest that men do not face prejudices, in most cases, male values are normally those privileged. In contrast, women must often conform to cultural ideologies of submission, appearance, approachability, and cooperation [1]. One thinks of hospitality, particularly in the home, as extending to all family members. However, a recent AUT study showed that in some cultures, there is a stark contrast between the hospitality extended to women, compared to that extended to men in domestic social settings. This is particularly evident around food.

The AUT study explored gendered food bias in central rural North Indian homes. The primary researcher took a feminist perspective, which intrinsically views women's disadvantage as a consequence of their subordinate societal position as women [2]. Data were collected from a series of YouTube food preparation videos that demonstrated the routines of the family lives of rural women in their domestic settings. These videos were purposively selected to provide detailed insights of everyday domestic activities around food preparation and consumption in the home, as carried out by women and girls. Although the data were from a contrasting culture and background, the findings mirror important equity issues faced by women in the Aotearoa hospitality industry.

The study highlighted three important themes: 1) male domination; 2) the roles of service for women; and 3) traditional behavioural norms for women. The data revealed a male-dominated hierarchy, in which men exerted authority over the women in their family, regardless of their ages or the relationships between them. In the food cycle of production, service, and consumption of food, there was evidence of a gender bias that disadvantaged women and privileged men. Women's subordinate roles in the family hierarchy involved hard labour over many hours, with little or no

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acknowledgement or appreciation from those at the apex, who consumed the products of the women's and girls' labour.

These themes are replicated in the gendered norms that limit women's careers in the hospitality industry. Women are horizontally and vertically segregated into jobs at the lowest levels of hospitality hierarchical structures [3]. Organisational practices reinforce the stereotypical roles for which women are deemed more suitable. At the highest levels of management, exclusionary processes limit women's career progressions compared to those of their male peers [1]. In North Indian society, traditional norms of behaviour were shown to dictate women's social roles as caretakers of the household, and pressurised them into ignoring their nutritional needs in favour of those of their fathers, husbands, and sons. In many hospitality organisations, women are still defined by their traditional biological role, and considered less flexible, and more emotional than are men [4], and therefore, less suitable for leadership positions.

The findings of the study suggest the norms that govern gender relations in the regional Indian rural society studied, and those of the hospitality industry, duplicate each other in fundamental ways. Women were concentrated at the lowest level of the hierarchy, accruing the social and economic penalties associated with low status roles. This study, although set in a different environment, has implications for hospitality practitioners and researchers in Aotearoa. A hospitable organisation offers equal opportunities to all employees, regardless of their gender, and a hospitable society extends hospitality to all its residents, regardless of their identity or social status. When the warmth and hospitality of hospitality establishments is offered to guests, it is important to be sensitive to the interests and needs of all individuals, regardless of their position in the social hierarchy. In the true spirit of hospitableness, the guest is queen, if only for a short while.

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The full research project can be accessed at <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/13268>

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Onboarding for new hospitality managers? Yeah-nah

Catherine Watkins and Shelagh Mooney

Catherine Watkins recently completed her Masters in International Hospitality Management at AUT. Her study focused on the onboarding of new managers in food and beverage operations and the influence of gender. She is now working as the Compass Group Lounge Manager for Air New Zealand's Auckland lounges.



We have all been the workplace “new kid” at one point or another, but how do you handle being not just the new person, but the new leader also? Little is known about the onboarding experience those new to leadership roles in a hospitality business; behaviours towards a new leader are thus an important area to investigate. The aim of our study was to explore how subordinates influence their new leader through socialisation behaviours.

Organisational socialisation refers to the processes and outcomes in relation to introducing a newcomer to an unknown work setting [1]. To become fully socialised in an organisation, new entrants will actively seek to understand its organisational politics, culture and processes, and to become accepted as insiders [1, 2, 3, 4]. Previous socialisation research has examined the newcomer experience in different professions, but has largely focused on general new entrant experiences, rather than those of new leaders, who face additional challenges due to their roles as potential changemakers. Various occupations have been studied in relation to organisational socialisation: for example, Van Maanen [5] explored the ways police officers become assimilated into their peer groups, and the associated expected behaviours of squad members.

To understand the new manager experience in hospitality, the primary researcher interviewed food and beverage industry professionals in New Zealand and the United States about their formative experiences when they joined a new organisation. Thematic analysis [6] identified key factors that influenced their perceptions about being accepted by current employees, and the impact of communication and trust during the newcomer processes in terms of gaining organisational knowledge.

The findings indicated a significant relationship between behaviours of existing organisational members and the experience of the new leaders. Informal training practices, frequently through on-the-job learning, were identified as the primary induction process for newcomers. Therefore, the new leaders depended on socialisation behaviours and their subordinates' support to gain vital institutional information. Learning was not confined to the operational role, but encompassed the company's political dimensions and the behavioural expectations.

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Utilising the knowledge of existing members is an excellent way for a newcomer to learn, however, they must first develop their “motivation, trustworthiness, ability, and loyalty” [5] potentially slowing the learning process and creating disadvantage.

A key component of leadership development is that of building a relationship based on trust with existing organisational members. Most participants reported that their human resources (HR) manager was responsible for recruitment - HR is the first point of communication for a newcomer. Although the induction process for newcomers sets the direction of their onboarding, there was evidence of a missing link in the HR management processes that regulated the period between accepting the job offer, and being acknowledged as an effective team leader. This period was described by one interview participant as “turbulent” for both the new leader and the existing team members. Part of this turbulence is attributed to the leader’s need to learn the organisation’s politics, which cannot be captured in a manual; therefore, the support of existing members is imperative.

While it is important to learn the important dimensions of organisational culture and the team dynamics through any means, having to ask subordinates for help can undermine the authority of any new leader. Conversely, this form of knowledge sharing could be beneficial to the new relationship, affording the subordinate the opportunity to feel empowered. However, if senior managers or peers are the main vectors of formal and informal socialisation processes, the risk of power imbalances can be prevented. Through effective onboarding practices based in knowledge sharing, organisations can change the way they introduce new leaders, affording them the opportunity to become effective change-makers more seamlessly.

The study on which the article is based can be accessed at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/15282>

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