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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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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

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**Tracy Harkison**

Kia ora koutou

Welcome to our first issue of 2023. It has once again been a turbulent start to the year, and our hearts are with the communities faced with rebuilding lives and livelihoods after the extreme weather events in Aotearoa. As the industry responds to ongoing change, we hope that our industry practitioners will find the articles relevant and helpful. Our first opinion piece bridges past and future; it addresses the disconnect between industry and hospitality training providers, and what is required to alter the status quo. The second contribution looks at the resilience of our wine industry and whether the trend of buying local will continue. Romance is the focus of the next article, which discusses how the popularity of speed dating can be beneficial for hospitality venues. Our fourth offering discusses the lack of accessibility information on New Zealand luxury lodges' websites, and explains how a few simple changes could support the access needs of different kinds of users. In the final article, we learn how hospitality studies have blossomed into new understandings of societal relations and structures - the boundaries of hospitality studies are expanding, and it is time to reimagine what hospitality could be.

*Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua.*

I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.

# A seat at the table: Can the hospitality industry work together to find a sustainable way forward?

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**Robert Richardson**

After working in some of New Zealand's leading restaurants over the past 25 years, Rob is now a lecturer at AUT's School of Hospitality and Tourism, teaching across both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. He is also Programme Leader of the Master in Gastronomy programme. Areas of research interest include exploring cultural and social identity through food, the evolution and adaptation of cuisines, and garden to table teaching principles.



The recent impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry – in particular, the acute shortage of workers – has highlighted the fractured nature of the industry's talent pipeline [1, 2, 3], and emphasised the longer-term issue of an increasing disconnect between industry training providers and the industry workplace. Whilst there remains some demand for trained industry professionals, that demand is declining as the hospitality industry increasingly seeks lower paid, part time, flexible, or temporary employees to fill employment gaps [4]. The hospitality industry is rapidly moving towards having a workforce of transient workers – young school leavers, or travellers on work visas who can be easily trained to accomplish simple hospitality or culinary tasks, but can also be quickly and easily replaced [5].

As COVID-19 exacerbated, or arguably, simply hastened the increasing trend of local job seekers to avoid hospitality work [6, 7], an acute worker shortage is now highlighting a divide that industry training providers are trying to straddle. In trying to respond to the needs of industry, student circumstances and expectations, traditional hospitality training styles, and the Tertiary Education Commission's educational requirements, the decreasing numbers of people seeking hospitality training, indicates that the training sector is not meeting industry's needs [8, 9]. Furthermore, at this critical time for industry connectivity between training providers and an under-pressure industry itself, the training sector is arguably now at its weakest.

Whilst highlighting various negative issues that have been slowly simmering within New Zealand's hospitality industry, COVID-19 could also be seen as an instigator of positive change. As a disconnected industry, the hospitality sector in New Zealand now has an opportunity to turn towards a more sustainable model, but this will require dialogue and honest reflection from all stakeholder parties. One attempt to begin bridging that gap was 2022's AUT Culinary & Gastronomy Winter Series – an event that brought academics, hospitality students, suppliers, and industry members together, to celebrate, debate,

discuss, and enjoy being a part of the industry (see <https://www.aut.ac.nz/events/winter-series-2022>). This was but a start.

The sector itself contains all the resources needed to make change that is positive and permanent, and in this current crisis, it should have the motivation. What it lacks however, is cohesiveness. Right now, the many parts that make up the sector are all frantically pulling in different directions, hoping to reach solid ground. But which direction is the right one, and who is going to lead the way? The ability to research both problems and their solutions is available – AUT has this capability, but it needs to walk alongside the industry, and not be viewed as preaching to it. There are still many kinks left to iron out, but in Te Pūkenga (the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology) there are the beginnings of a better, more connected tertiary training sector – it just needs to know what type of graduate the industry actually needs. The restaurant and hotel associations should have sufficient motivation to help implement sustainable change, and the New Zealand Chef's Association is seeking a role to play. It may take some reconsideration of their own organisation's priorities, but the potential benefits for each party far outweigh a continuation of the status quo. The real question is whether there is willingness among the different groups to sit at the table together, or will everyone select what they believe to be their portion, and leave?

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# Creating value in Aotearoa New Zealand's wine industry: Opportunities to capitalise on buying local?

Joanna Fountain

Jo is a rural social scientist with diverse research interests focused on the analysis of change and resilience in rural regions. Much of this research has agri-food products, including wine, at its core. Recent projects have included the analysis of regional wine industry resilience in the aftermath of natural hazard events and ongoing and intensifying climate variability, and an analysis of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on wine and food consumption behaviours.



The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe disruption to Aotearoa New Zealand's primary sector; global delays and increased shipping costs have impacted profit margins and cash flows, and caused logistical challenges. The impact of the pandemic on the wine industry has varied significantly, depending on wine production scale. For example, the wine sales of large producers, who have been able to benefit from supermarket distribution, have been largely unaffected, and in some cases, lockdown has had a net positive effect, with supermarkets and liquor stores being the only brick and mortar stores to remain open [1]. Over 90% of wines produced in New Zealand are exported [2], and despite the challenging year, in 2020, these exports continued to grow [3].

The majority of New Zealand's 731 wine producers, however, did not benefit during the pandemic period – in fact, changing consumption patterns caused substantial negative impacts. The country's wine sector is characterised by considerable diversity in enterprise scale, and a large majority of the country's wineries (87%), are classified as small producers [2], with more than half selling an average of just 4000 litres, which is less than 500 cases of wine per year. The majority of wine from these producers (75%) is sold domestically, primarily via restaurants, winery cellar doors, or online [4]. These small producers have borne the brunt of the pandemic's impact, which has led to concerns about their ongoing viability [1], with significant implications for regional economies and employment, as well as for New Zealand's global reputation as a producer of high-quality wines created by boutique producers.

A better understanding of consumer demand is fundamental for the New Zealand wine industry [5]. Given the proportion of wine exported, most research into consumer perceptions of the value of New Zealand wine has occurred in international markets [e.g., 6]; however, the fortunes of most small wine producers lie in the domestic market, and the domestic appeal of New Zealand wine has not yet been explored in any detail.



There is, however, reason for a degree of optimism in this market. Research indicates that global trends in food and drink consumption have seen local and authentic food producers and products prioritised by many consumers [e.g., 7, 8], but similar research has not yet been conducted on the value of, or desire for local wines. While some of the qualities valued in local foods would be comparable to those of local wines (e.g., perceptions of greater sustainability), other local food qualities (e.g., freshness) would be less relevant for wine products.

The pandemic experience has intensified the trend to buy local in New Zealand, as consumers seek to support the economy at a time of crisis [9], and there is evidence to suggest this trend is having an impact on wine consumption, with increased demand for local wine in restaurants [10]. Wine regions adjacent to major centres have also reported good wine tourism engagement by domestic visitors [11, 12], and research conducted with 500 New Zealanders during 2020 found that over half the respondents were purchasing more locally produced food and beverages, and buying more New Zealand wine [13]; whether this will be a long-term trend is unknown, but it is an important issue worthy of further research.

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# ***Marriage à la mode: The hospitality industry's connection to the dating services industry***

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**Hugues Séraphin and Anca Yallop**

Dr Hugues Séraphin is a Senior Lecturer in Tourism, Hospitality and Events at the Oxford Brookes Business School, Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom. His research interests include sustainable tourism and events, tourism in post-colonial and post-conflict destinations, children in tourism, hospitality and events, and tourism education.



Dr Anca C. Yallop is Interim Head of the International Business, Strategy and Entrepreneurship Department and Senior Lecturer in Strategy at the AUT Business School. Her research platform is interdisciplinary and reflects her passion for market research, strategic insights, and responsible and sustainable business strategies, with a particular focus

The dating services industry has grown strongly over the past five years worldwide, increasing in popularity despite the COVID-19 pandemic, which constrained its growth somewhat over 2020-2021. In the United Kingdom (UK), recent data suggest that dating services industry revenue grew at a compound annual rate of 3.8% over 2017-2022, including 1.3% growth in 2022, and is expected to reach GBP315.1 million in 2023 [1]. In New Zealand, the industry has seen similar steady revenue increases, with an expected annual growth rate of 3.04% and an estimated market volume of USD13.52 million by 2027 [2]. The growth of dating services has also been accelerated by the increasing numbers of people with access to the internet and smartphones. Dating applications and websites have radically transformed the way individuals are dating [3] and are extremely popular amongst individuals of all ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds, etc. [3, 4].

Research shows that each year, dating services contribute billions to the hospitality industry [1], as bars and restaurants have long been places where dating services, such as speed dating events, are hosted. The location and standard of these venues (including those for food and beverage) are used by speed dating event organisers as factors of appeal, as they are critical influences on customers' decisions about venue suitability [5, 6]. Entertainment is another factor connecting the dating and hospitality industries. Indeed, entertainment plays a significant role in the level of customer satisfaction with a hospitality organisation/venue, as customers' experiences rely partly on the quality of entertainment provided by the venues [7, 8]. For dating services, speed dating events are adult entertainment events in which the customer participants are the main actors [3].

However, even though speed dating events are organised in hospitality venues such as bars and restaurants, there is a dearth of research that captures the interactions and interplay between the dating services industry (planning and delivering speed dating events), and the hospitality industry (hosting speed dating events). We therefore conducted a pilot study as a

on the tourism and hospitality sectors.



platform for future research, and examined the connections between the dating and hospitality industries, aiming to conceptualise speed dating as a type of event, and explore speed dating services as an intersection between the dating, hospitality, and events industries. The study collected online feedback and comments on the TripAdvisor platform from 40 speed dating participants who had attended speed dating events organised by DateinaDash (a UK-based speed dating company). Our analysis revealed that the term “venue” was in the top tier of the most frequently mentioned words in the feedback and comments provided by participants in speed dating events.

*A great night out at great **venues** with great value for money. A good way to meet new people in London.*

The pilot study revealed that the venue plays a significant role in the experience of speed daters, and that the key service and event characteristics that mattered most to them were the atmosphere, entertainment, feeling of togetherness, and the planning and organisation.

*I attended the speed dating events which are **great fun!** Relaxed **atmosphere** and good to **meet people** from a variety of backgrounds. If you haven't attended before, give speed dating a try!*

*This was an organised and **well-run** event that was well-attended. The **venue** is a nice pub in Richmond. **Great way to meet people.***

These preliminary findings indicate that the dating services and hospitality industries are interconnected, and that entertainment, service interaction, and the hospitality venues' ambiance are central factors for both the dating and hospitality industries. Nevertheless, future research is needed to investigate further intersectional gaps, and specifically, to examine the synergies between business partners delivering products and services at the intersection between dating and hospitality.

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# Accessibility information on the websites of New Zealand luxury lodges

**Brielle Gillovic and Tracy Harkison**

Dr Brielle Gillovic is a Senior Lecturer in Tourism at AUT. Her research interests are in the areas of disability, access and inclusion, and care ethics. She is also the project leader of the Tourism For All New Zealand research cluster, which aspires to make tourism accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities and other access requirements.



Tracy Harkison is an associate professor, and Programme Leader



People with disabilities should be able to participate with equity and dignity in tourism and hospitality [1]. An essential aspect of this, is the provision of accurate, reliable, and detailed information that can enable travel participation, and ensure those with disabilities make informed decisions based on their individual needs, noting the heterogeneity of disability [2, 3]. This article is a snapshot of our wider study determining the provision of accessibility information on the websites of New Zealand luxury lodges.

The luxury tourism sector has experienced significant growth globally; while in 2019 it was worth USD891 billion, despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated to increase to USD1.6 trillion by 2026 [4]. Luxury tourism comprises a range of products and experiences that draw on extraordinary events, activities, and experiences, along with hospitality that provides innovative service and excellence [5]. In a post-COVID world, New Zealand is now seeing the return of tourists who are willing to pay a premium price for bespoke luxury experiences that cater to a wide range of preferences and interests, and which are therefore likely to include luxury accommodation.

In our study, we utilised the national tourism board’s dedicated “Inclusive and accessible travel” webpage to locate the sample, which was of Qualmark endorsed New Zealand luxury lodges. The Qualmark framework rating system makes it easy for tourists to determine the level of quality and service to expect, as does its categorisation of different accommodation types. New Zealand luxury lodges, for example, provide unique and inspired luxury experiences to domestic and international tourists. Our search generated an initial sample of 24 luxury lodges, however, this reduced to eight when we applied the “disabled access” filter. We then carried out a content analysis of each luxury lodge’s website to determine its provision of accessibility information [6].

Initial findings suggest that all eight luxury lodges were inaccessible to guests with disabilities. Beyond a simple statement by two providers confirming that they had an accessible room, minimal additional information was provided. Further information was therefore solicited via the “Contact us” function, and all eight providers responded, revealing that they did

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indeed have accessible rooms, bathrooms, and wider premises, which was promising. These responses were generally brief however, with most of the detail relating to the accessible bathrooms. Inherent in these responses was also the perception that accessibility is tied to physical access, and predominantly for wheelchair users and those with other mobility impairments, suggesting a narrow view of disability, access, and inclusion.

Our study highlights that there is minimal consideration of the importance, role, or requirements for website provision of accessibility information by New Zealand luxury lodges, and the wider hospitality sector generally [3]. The potential opportunities arising from website provision of accessibility information are notable, in terms of meeting the information needs of potential guests, obtaining a competitive advantage, and stimulating latent travel demand [7]. As a first step toward positive change, providers could explicitly include detailed information about the accessibility of their offerings on their websites. While beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that providers should also consider the mode and format of delivering accessibility information, and whether this aligns with standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) [2]. The useability of a website has implications for different users, as people with vision impairment, for example, might require screen reader compatibility [8]. Website accessibility and the provision of accessibility information is one avenue through which to provide an offering of equality [1], and contribute to the social sustainability of the accommodation sector [3, 7].

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# The expanding reach of hospitality studies: Embracing relational futures

**Tomas Pernecky**

Tomas Pernecky is Professor of Applied Philosophy, Tourism, and Event Studies in the Faculty of Culture and Society at AUT. He examines philosophical, theoretical, and methodological issues in the context of tourism, events, hospitality, and leisure.



The field of hospitality studies has blossomed into an exciting intellectual arena. What we once understood hospitality to be – mainly through business, managerial, and operational lenses – has been expanded by academics and industry pioneers, who now view it as a much more significant phenomenon than previously acknowledged. Ritzer [1] commented some time ago on the changing relational patterns within the hospitality industry, forewarning that the sole focus on commercial advantage by businesses can lead to increasingly dehumanised interactions. Four years later, the journal *Hospitality & Society* was launched, with the aim of re-imagining and broadening the scope of inquiry, with hospitality articulated by the editors “as a means of understanding society” [2, p. 14]. In their words:

Rather than assuming that hospitality entails a particular context (such as the home or hotel) or particular objects (such as food or beds) or particular actors (such as hosts and guests), we see hospitality as both a condition and an effect of social relations, spatial configurations and power structures. Hospitality is constructed by, but also productive of, certain contexts, spaces, politics, objects, social roles and relations. [2, p. 14]

It is worth noting that *Hospitality & Society* became the abode for daring provocations, such as Bell’s [3] article titled “Hospitality is society,” in which, while addressing fellow researchers, he maintained that to get “at the ‘stuff’ of hospitality” (p. 149), relational approaches were needed. For him, hospitality was to be understood as “doing”: “an affective doing, an interactional doing and a relational doing, whether in the space of the restaurant or the space of the city streets” (p. 149). The importance of these ideas, along with sympathetic publishing outlets, ought not to be underestimated, as they have created opportunities for nurturing new intelligences and understandings of hospitality.

In this regard, it is useful to point out that an analysis of the first decade of *Hospitality & Society* revealed that important research foci have emerged, including those of migration and labour, social hospitality, violence and exploitation, global citizenship and ethics, identity, and critical inquiries into

hospitality management and neoliberalism [4]. Furthermore, there are also signs that additional noteworthy themes are continuing to develop as part of the overarching goal of creating hospitable societies. These include global hospitable citizenship, the design and planning of hospitable cities, alternative economic and non-Western political systems, and the intersection of sustainable development goals and hospitality (especially SDG #2, “zero hunger,” and SDG #12, “responsible consumption and production” [5]).

Why is this important? What these developments underline, is a shift towards relational comprehensions and extensions of hospitality. Indeed, all of the themes noted above are either examinations of the relational structures and arrangements that can be studied in various hospitality contexts, or visions of new relationalities identified under the umbrella term “hospitable societies.” Moreover, to advance achievement of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., social justice, democracy, equality, climate action, and the reduction of poverty) is to think in terms of relationships: our relationship to food, to the planet, to other human beings, and to nonhumans. This has significant implications for the changing hospitality landscape. Put plainly, when we think relationally, we need to consider the ways in which we *are with* and *in* the world vis-à-vis hospitality. A good example of relational hospitality from Aotearoa is the Merge Café (<https://www.lifewise.org.nz/our-services/enterprises/merge-cafe/>), which has been supporting Auckland street whānau since 2010. The reimagination of what hospitality could be – i.e., in terms of just/ethical/caring/opportunity-building relations – is what makes the study of hospitality not only exciting but societally important. The fact that these changes are currently taking place in education and research promises more relationally aware and inspired champions of hospitality. The opportunities for hospitality practitioners lie in considering questions such as: how would what we do look like, when approached through the lens of relating and relationship building (as opposed to the notion of making goods and delivering services)? Would this not be an advantage and a long-term win-win prospect reverberating beyond the metaphorical walls of our business?

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