

# An inquiry into employees' experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

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A thesis submitted to  
Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of International Hospitality Management

2017

School of Hospitality and Tourism

## **Abstract**

Significant progress has been made in recent years towards understanding the nature of workplace sexual harassment. Useful theories have been developed to explain causality, response, tolerance, impact and prevention. Studies indicate that sexual harassment is widespread across all sectors of the workplace, but is particularly prevalent in the hospitality industry and that customers are, generally, the main perpetrators. However, despite extensive research into workplace sexual harassment, studies have focused predominantly on the United States, United Kingdom and Europe, creating a gap in the literature within the Pacific and in particular, Polynesia. Furthermore, while the hospitality industry worldwide has a reputation for a high incidence of sexual harassment, no knowledge exists on the phenomenon in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Tourism is the key economic driver and a major employment provider for the Cook Islands. Accordingly, the unexplored nature of sexual harassment in this location provided the rationale for this study.

The aim of the study was to investigate the sexual harassment experiences of Cook Islands hospitality employees, by customers, and to understand what social and environmental factors influence this behaviour. Employees' response and tolerance to customer harassment was also explored, as was the extent to which the harassment affected them. Furthermore, hospitality employers were also interviewed to identify incongruities in attitudes and perceptions to sexual harassment, between employees and employers.

The qualitative interpretive methodology adopted for the study involved a grounded theory approach incorporating a talanoa perspective. This approach was highly inductive, enabling in-depth understanding and insight into employees' experiences of customer harassment. The exploratory case study involved semi-structured interviews with 32 participants in the case location: Rarotonga, Cook Islands. An added dimension to the study was that the research included both male and female participants to identify gender differences in attitudes and perceptions to sexual harassment.

The findings suggest that customer harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry is not uncommon and can be attributed to several key factors, a number of which can be linked to existing causality models. The most significant outcome of this research are the four new themes and two overarching concepts that emerged on causality that are unique to this study and cannot be linked to the current body of knowledge. The four

new themes include cultural norms, the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders, destination marketing and cultural dance and costumes. The two overarching concepts are cultural commodification and '*mātaunga* Māori'. These emergent concepts and themes make a significant contribution to the literature as they provide new perspectives into the causality of sexual harassment by customers.

As this is the first study of its kind to be conducted in the Cook Islands, the study provides in-depth understanding into Cook Islands hospitality employees' experiences of sexual harassment by customers. While the study is situated within the hospitality industry, the findings identify some broader socio-cultural implications of tourism development in the case location. The study makes a significant contribution to the hospitality and tourism industry, both in the Cook Islands and the wider Pacific, offering unique insights into customer perpetrated harassment in the Pacific region.

Keywords:

Case study, Cook Islands, customers, visitors, employees, hospitality industry, sexual harassment, causality, impact, tolerance, response

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Sadaraka', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Lisa Sadaraka

## Acknowledgements

Ko te mea pu`apinga ko te ngutu`are tangata, te au taeake, aka `oki anga  
meitaki kite matakeinanga ma te kimi ite ora`anga tau tikai

*What is important is family, friends, giving back to your community and  
finding meaning in life – Adrian Grenier*

There are many people to acknowledge and thank for their contribution to the successful completion of this thesis. Firstly, to my primary academic supervisor, Dr Heike Schänzel, and secondary supervisor, Associate Professor Jill Poulston—Thank you for your support, encouragement and guidance and for always challenging me to reach my full potential. I have grown personally and professionally from the knowledge you imparted.

I also wish to express my appreciation to AUT University who have assisted me in various ways over the past few years. To my Head of School, Linda O'Neill and Head of Department, Warren Goodsir, my sincere gratitude to you both for your ongoing support and encouragement – you both rock! My appreciation also to David Parker, Postgraduate Learning Advisor— thank you for your invaluable feedback and the encouraging way it was always presented. To Fen Su, Liaison Librarian and the 'go to' person for my ongoing referencing queries—thank you so much for your patience.

To Andrew Lavery and the team at Academic Consulting, for your assistance with the final formatting and proofing of this thesis. Your knowledge and professionalism made a difficult period seem so much less daunting and overwhelming.

To the various stakeholders in the Cook Islands who were involved with this study in some way. Firstly, to the 32 participants who made this study possible. Sexual harassment is a sensitive issue, so I thank you sincerely for entrusting me to open your hearts and share your experiences. To Halatoa, Karla and the team at Tourism Cook Islands—thank you for supporting this research by providing the requested information in an open and timely manner. To Bredina Drollet, Secretary of Internal Affairs for assistance with relevant information on legislation, policies and frameworks. A special acknowledgment also to Punanga Tauturu Incorporated and Mereana Taikoko from Te Kainga O Pa Taunga for offering their services during the data collection phase of this research. To Gerrard Kaczmarek, past Secretary of the Cook Islands Restaurant Association, who was extremely helpful during the recruitment phase of this project—thank you for your support. To Mareta Katu at the Cook Islands Statistics Office who



provided the statistical information that was required for this research—thank you for your assistance and your professionalism. Meitkai maata also to the various organisations and individuals who supported this study by permitting the use of their images. Finally, to my new friend, Ma’ara Maeva—thank you for sharing your in-depth knowledge and understanding of our Cook Islands culture and language.

To my mother, Lois Sadaraka, thank you for your unwavering support and for always being there as my sounding board, despite your ill-health. You have been a key motivation to achieving this goal. To my late father, Cookie, who has always been at the forefront of my mind throughout this journey. Having travelled this road before me with your MBA, you were a key source of inspiration and will undoubtedly cross the stage with me at graduation. To my wonderful children, Levi and Zeke and my precious granddaughter Leniah—I am looking forward to spending some quality time with you, without the pressures and distractions of this thesis. To my sisters Susan, Tania and Lara—thank you for always being there for me and encouraging me through the many difficult times. Finally, to my partner Adrian who I first met when I embarked on this research journey. You have been beside me every step of the way and have not only been my strength and motivation, but my personal chef, chai-wallah, house cleaner, car groomer and doggy day-care. Thank you for always believing in me.

## **Disclaimer**

The photographic images used in this study have been selected by the researcher to support and illustrate the findings and discussions. The individuals pictured in these images are not the participants of this research. The researcher is extremely grateful to the organisations and individuals who supported her research by permitting the use of their images. A special acknowledgement and meitaki maata to:

- Bill Johnson
- Cook Island Ministry of Cultural Development
- Cook Islands Tourism
- Expedia New Zealand
- Island Photo
- Jane's Oceania
- Koka Lagoon Cruises
- Otago Daily Times Newspaper
- Pacific Resort Hotel Group
- The Rarotongan Beach Resort and Spa

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Chapter outline**

This chapter provides an introduction to this case study inquiry. The research objectives and rationale for the study are presented, with consideration given to the implications of this inquiry. Discussions then move to exploring the research design and methodology that will be adopted to conduct the study. Finally, as this is a case study inquiry, the research context will be presented, to set the scene for the study. The case location is Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

Background information is provided about the case setting, including geography, population, history, language, culture and governance. Relevant legislation, conventions and national frameworks on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands are discussed. An overview of the tourism industry in the Cook Islands is then provided, which is where the case study will be situated.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

Significant progress has been made in recent years towards understanding the nature of workplace sexual harassment. Useful models have been developed that explain harasser motives, target responses, impact and prevention (e.g., Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; McDonald, 2012). Studies indicate that sexual harassment is widespread across all sectors of the workplace but is particularly prevalent in the hospitality industry (Eller, 1991; Keith, Campbell, & Legg, 2010) and that customers are generally the main perpetrators (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

Despite the extensive body of knowledge on workplace sexual harassment, studies have focused predominantly on the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe (C. L. Williams, 2003), creating a gap in the literature on sexual harassment in the Pacific. Kate (2016) commented that while sexual harassment is a problem in the Pacific region, very scarce data exists to provide a true picture of the extent of the problem. Agrusa, Tanner and Coats (2000) investigated the sexual harassment experiences of restaurant employees in Oahu, Hawaii, a world-renowned holiday destination in the Pacific. They proposed that the problems evident with sexual harassment in the hospitality industry in Hawaii could be a serious warning sign for the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in destinations where there is rapid tourism growth.

Tourism in the South Pacific has seen significant growth in recent years and is now considered the largest and fastest growing sector in the region (The World Bank, 2016). Between 1990 and 2014, many Pacific Islands countries experienced a considerable increase in tourism's contribution to their national GDP, with GDP shares in some destinations doubling during this period (The World Bank, 2016). The South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) reported that "tourist arrivals (by air) in the Pacific ACP and SPTO member countries reached 2,030,529 in 2016 generating an estimated inflow of USD3 billion...with total visitor arrivals (both air and sea) to the region at 3,089,681" (p. 2). Tourism is also a "major employment provider" for most Pacific Island nations (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013, p. 3). Clearly, tourism plays a vital role in the economic growth and prosperity of Pacific Island countries. However, this growth has not come without its impacts and challenges. One area that has received little attention to date is the phenomenon of sexual harassment by customers in the tourism industry in this region. This case study inquiry aims to address this gap by exploring the phenomenon of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.

Like most Pacific Island countries, tourism is "the key economic driver in the Cook Islands, contributing 50% of the country's GDP" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011, p. 12). To date, however, no research has been conducted into the incidence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry, in this location (Cook Islands National Research Committee, 2012, 2016). Consequently, it is unknown whether sexual harassment by customers is a problem. Accordingly, it is the lack of knowledge and understanding on the phenomenon in this location that provided the rationale for this study.

Furthermore, the researchers' interest in customer-perpetrated harassment stems from her own experiences as a Cook Islands' woman working for many years in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga and encountering, on multiple occasions, sexual advances by customers. As a Pacific woman, the researcher feels a strong sense of obligation to bring this issue to the fore and shed light on a matter that, to date, has been overlooked in the tourism industry in the Cook Islands. As no previous research exists on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands, this study makes a significant contribution to the knowledge in this location and the wider Pacific.

### **1.3 Aims of this inquiry**

The aim of this study was to investigate the sexual harassment experiences of Cook Islands hospitality employees by customers and to understand what social and environmental factors influence this behaviour. The key questions to be answered were:

1. What understanding do Cook Islands hospitality employees and employers have of sexual harassment?
2. What sexual harassment experiences have employees encountered involving customers as perpetrators?
3. What factors have contributed to these experiences?
4. How do employees cope with sexual harassment by customers and how have these experiences affected them?
5. To what extent do hospitality employees and employers perceive sexual harassment by customers to be a problem?

### **1.4 Research design and methods**

A qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2014) was considered the most appropriate method of inquiry to undertake this research. Qualitative research focuses on experiences, and knowledge is obtained when the researcher interacts with the participants in an effort to understand their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Silverman, 2010). A qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable method to explore sexual harassment, as this approach would provide in-depth insight into participants' experiences, attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment. Furthermore, the research questions of the study could only be answered through a qualitative inquiry as they required the researcher to interact with the participants, building authentic relationships, to enable rich data. The grounded theory methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) adopted for the study was highly inductive and enabled theory that was ground in the data to emerge through constant comparison and analysis.

As no prior research exists on sexual harassment in the case location, an exploratory approach was required to conduct the study. An exploratory approach is appropriate when little or no knowledge exists on a research problem (Stebbins, 2001), as was the case with this inquiry. The key focus was to gain in-depth understanding and insight into the phenomenon in this location.

The method for the study involved semi-structured interviews with 32 participants. Participants included both men and women, to identify gender differences in attitudes and perceptions to sexual harassment. Adopting a talanoa open-style technique (Vaiolleti, 2006) during the interviews enabled the researcher to form genuine relationships with the participants, which allowed them to speak from their hearts, with no preconceptions. A comprehensive discussion of the methodological approach adopted to conduct this inquiry is provided in chapter three.

## **1.5 Research context: The Cook Islands**

Discussions in this section describe the research context for this inquiry. The case location is Rarotonga, Cook Islands, located in the South Pacific.

### **1.5.1 Geography**

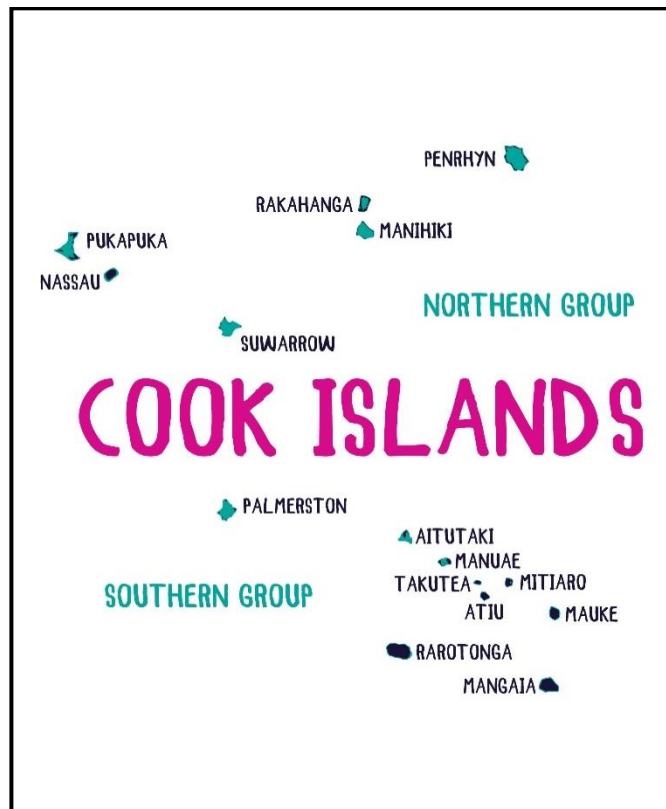
The 15 islands of the Cook Islands are spread out over 2.2 million square kilometres of ocean, located in the centre of the South Pacific, surrounded by French Polynesia, Samoa and Tonga (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Map of South Pacific highlighting location of the Cook Islands (Source: Matriki Beach Huts)

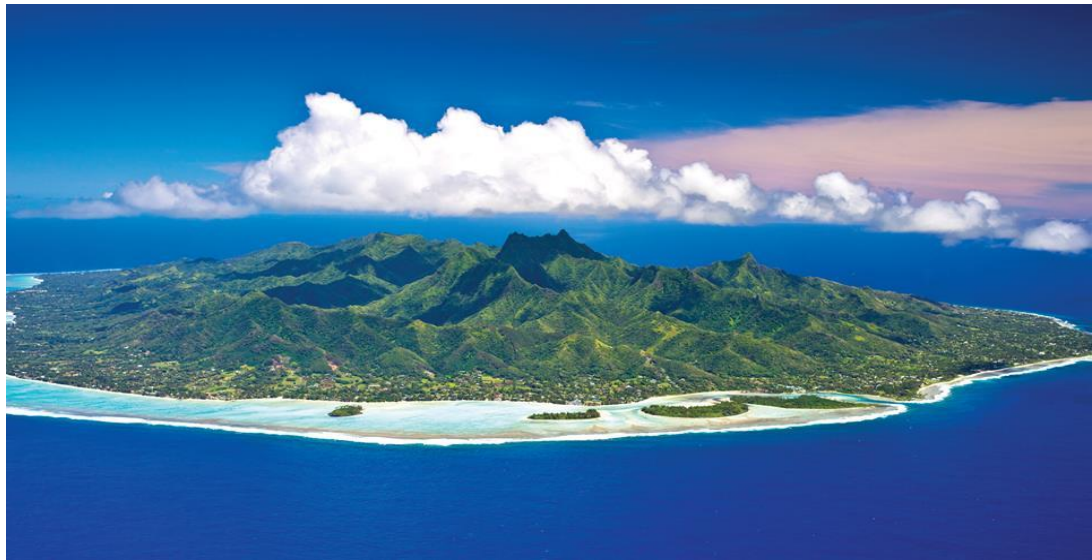
The 15 islands are divided into two main groups: The Southern Cook Islands and the Northern Cook Islands (see Figure 2). The seven islands in the Northern group are coral-based islands and are where the black pearl farming is done. Other economic

activities in the Northern Group Islands include off-shore fishing, fish processing and handicrafts (Sugden, Bosworth, Chung, & Tuara, 2008). The eight Southern Group Islands are a mixture of volcanic soil, coral and sand. The rich volcanic soils in the Southern Group provide a good environment for plant growth; hence, this is where most agriculture is done.



*Figure 2.* Map of the 15 islands in the Cook Islands (Source: Tourism Cook Islands)

Rarotonga (see Figure 3) is the main island of the Cook Islands, and Avarua, the main township, is the capital of the Cook Islands. Located in the Southern Group Islands, with a land area of 67 square kilometres, Rarotonga is the main hub of economic activity in the Cook Islands. Rarotonga is the gateway to the Cook Islands, as this is where the Cook Islands international airport is located.



*Figure 3. Rarotonga, Cook Islands (Source: Tourism Cook Islands)*

### **1.5.2 Population**

The Cook Islands resident population is estimated at 11,700 (Tangimetua, 2016b), with approximately 70% of the total population residing on the main island of Rarotonga. However, there are many Cook Islanders living abroad, mainly in New Zealand and Australia, for better employment opportunities, education and health care (Sugden et al., 2008). The 2013 New Zealand Census reported a Cook Islands population of 61,839 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The possession of NZ citizenship by Cook Islanders is the key explanation for this figure.

### **1.5.3 History**

The Cook Islands was named after British explorer Captain James Cook, although, notably, he was not the first British explorer to discover the islands. In 1595 and 1606 two Spanish explorers, Alvaro de Mendana and Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, travelled through the Northern Group Islands. Captain Cook did not arrive in the Cook Islands until 1773.

In 1821, the Cook Islands saw the arrival of Christianity with Reverend John Williams and his missionaries from the London Missionary Society in England. In 1888, the Cook Islands became a British protectorate; however, in 1901 the Cook Islands became annexed to New Zealand. It was then that Cook Islands nationals became New Zealand citizens. On 4 August 1965, the Cook Islands became self-governing under the leadership of Sir Albert Henry, the country's first premier. Today the Cook Islands remains self-governing in free association with New Zealand. New Zealand retains



primary responsibility for external affairs in consultation with the Cook Islands Government.

#### **1.5.4 Language**

Cook Islands Māori, known as Māori Kūki ‘Āirani, is the official language of the Cook Islands. However, on Rarotonga, English is predominantly used for everyday conversation. As Cook Islanders are bilingual and speak fluent English, interviews for this study were conducted in English.

#### **1.5.5 Culture**

The Cook Islands is renowned for its vibrant culture, and the traditional dance (‘ura), songs, legends and pulsating drums. Cook Islanders are proud of their culture, and various events are held throughout the year to showcase their cultural identity. The Te Maeva Nui Cultural Festival held annually in August to celebrate self-governance is the largest and most prominent cultural event in the Cook Islands. The four vakas (districts) on Rarotonga and representative groups from the outer islands come together and compete in a fierce cultural dance competition. Te Maeva Nui’s main focus is to retain the culture of the Cook Islands. Cultural dance shows are also held regularly for tourists at hotel ‘Island Night’ dinners featuring community dance groups. The performances include vibrant dancing, singing and drumming, and are a popular way for visitors to experience Cook Islands culture.

#### **1.5.6 Government of the Cook Islands**

The Cook Islands follows the Westminster system of government, and is governed by a prime minister and a cabinet of ministers (known as ‘Members of Parliament’) made up of 24 members. The current prime minister of the Cook Islands is the Hon. Henry Puna.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State of the Cook Islands and has an appointed representative “known as the Queen’s Representative”(Government of the Cook Islands, 2004, p. 6). The appointment of the Queen’s Representative is made by Her Majesty, upon recommendation of the Cook Islands Prime Minister. The current Queen’s Representative is Tom Masters.

The Legislative Assembly (Parliament of the Cook Islands) is located on the island of Rarotonga and is where parliamentary meetings take place. Bills passed by Parliament can only become law when the final vote and the votes preceding that final vote receive an affirmative vote “of not less than two-thirds of the total membership ...of

Parliament” (Government of the Cook Islands, 2004, p. 24) and “has been assented to by the Queen’s Representative” (Government of the Cook Islands, 2004, p. 25).

The Constitution provides for a House of Ariki comprising up to 14 ariki (traditional chiefs) appointed by the Queen’s Representative. The role of the House of Ariki is to represent the people of the Cook Islands and raise matters about their welfare. The House of Ariki holds no political power; they are appointed purely in an advisory role to make recommendations to Parliament (Government of the Cook Islands, 2004).

### **1.5.7 Legislation, conventions and frameworks on sexual harassment**

The Cook Islands Constitution (1964) is the supreme law of the Cook Islands (Government of the Cook Islands, 1964, p. 2). Noteworthy, however, is the apparent limited legislation on the issue of workplace sexual harassment. The only law relating to sexual harassment can be found in Part 5, Section 56, of the Cook Island Employment Relations Act 2012. This states that “an employer, or the representative of an employer must not sexually harass an employee in the employee’s employment” (Cook Islands Government, 2012, p. 20). Furthermore, “an employee is sexually harassed in the employee’s employment if the employee’s employer or a representative of the employer directly, or indirectly makes a request of that employee for sexual intercourse, sexual contact or other form of sexual activity” (Cook Islands Government, 2012, p. 20). Of concern, however, is that this clause offers no protection against ‘third-party harassment’ (i.e., customers).

Furthermore, a review conducted by Jivan and Forster (2009) on legislation and constitutions in 10 Pacific Island countries, including the Cook Islands, revealed that “protection from sexual harassment was absent in all 10 countries” (Jivan & Forster, 2009, p. 673). In addition, a gender review conducted in the Cook Islands by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (Treva, 2012) identified a gap in sexual harassment legislation.

#### **1.5.7.1 CEDAW**

The Cook Islands has ratified six core international human rights conventions of particular significance to women. The country has also endorsed a number of key international and regional policy frameworks supporting the advancement of women and gender equality (Treva, 2012). In 2006, the Cook Islands Government affirmed its commitment to gender equality and non-discrimination when it acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (UN General

Assembly, 1979). Article 11(1) of CEDAW obligates ratified countries to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in employment and identifies a range of guarantees to be incorporated into employment legislation, including “the right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction”(Jivan & Forster, 2009, p. 4). Nevertheless, Hilyard (2014) found that there has been little effort made by the Cook Islands Government to raise awareness of the recommendations of CEDAW. Furthermore, research by Francis-Rongokea (2015) to identify policy gaps on gender equality and anti-harassment policies concluded that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding on gender issues, gender equality and women’s empowerment. Legal and policy frameworks including CEDAW (UN General Assembly, 1979) and the Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE, 2011–2016) have not been circulated widely.

#### *1.5.7.2 Cook Islands National Policy on Women*

The Cook Islands National Policy on Women was introduced by the National Council of Women in 1995. The policy incorporates seven key objectives, including upholding the human rights of women. Furthermore, on 21 June 2011, Cabinet passed GEWE. “The goal of the policy is to advance gender equality and enhance women’s empowerment ensuring the active contribution and meaningful participation of both Cook Islands women and men in all spheres, and at all levels, of development and decision making” (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2011, p. 8). One action proposed in the policy is to “initiate research on relevant issues related to gender equality and women’s human rights” (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2011, p. 10). However, a lack of awareness of GEWE was identified by Francis-Rongokea (2015).

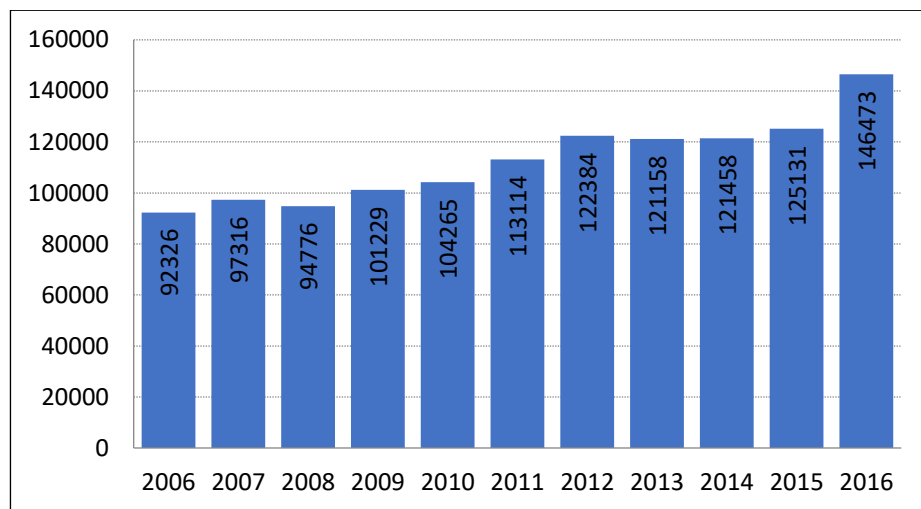
### **1.5.8 Tourism industry**

In 1973, the Cook Islands international airport was completed and was officially opened a year later by the Cook Islands Head of State, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Since its opening, the Cook Islands has seen rapid tourism growth, with total visitor arrivals increasing by almost 93,000 (+173%) in the period between 1993 and 2016 (Tangimetua, 2016a).

Tourism remains the key economic driver of the Cook Islands economy. “Direct receipts account for 50% of GDP but indirectly, tourism is driving the demand and activity of over 90% of the economy” (Office of the Prime Minister, 2011, p. 12). Three international airlines service the Cook Islands destination: Air New Zealand, Virgin

Airlines and JetStar. All three airlines have several flights a week from Auckland, New Zealand. Air New Zealand also operates direct flights from Sydney and Los Angeles once a week.

Total visitor arrivals to the Cook Islands in 2016 was 146,473 (Tangimetua, 2017), an increase of approximately 17% on 2015 total arrivals (see Figure 4). The main visitor market for the Cook Islands is New Zealand, accounting for 69% of the total visitor arrivals in 2016, followed by Australia with 17% and other markets including Europe, the United States and Canada. The main purpose of visit is vacation with the average length of stay being 9.4 days (Milne, Sun, Li, Potter, & Kaalam, 2017).



*Figure 4.* Total visitor arrivals 2006–2016 (Source: Tourism Cook Islands)

Economic growth is private sector driven with sixty-five per cent of all employment in the Cook Islands being in the private sector and predominantly in tourism. Furthermore, it is reported that 84% of all employment is in the services sector, of which accommodation and restaurants are the biggest employment providers (Tangimetua, 2015). The Cook Islands Social and Economic Report (2008) also acknowledged the growth in accommodation and restaurants, reporting a “63% increase in these sectors between 1995 to 2005, which accounted for 15.2% of GDP” (Sugden et al., 2008, p. 19). Business operators in accommodation range from hotels, resorts, motels, budget accommodation, holiday homes and self-catering properties. An estimated 80 food and beverage outlets are operating on Rarotonga, including restaurants, bars, cafés, ethnic restaurants and fast-food takeaways (TripAdvisor, 2017).

Tourism has also stimulated the growth of other commercial ventures, including tour operations, retail, car and bike rentals and small businesses. Tours and attractions

include lagoon tours, fishing charters, cultural heritage attractions, guided land-based tours, lagoon cruises, fishing, diving, guided mountain hikes, buggies, quadbikes and 4WD trips inland (Milne & Sun, 2016).

Despite this positive growth, the industry is faced with a number of challenges. One of the biggest challenges at present is the significant labour shortage due to the continuing decline in the population of native Cook Islanders. To address the labour shortage, the Cook Islands has seen an increase of migrant workers in recent years, predominately from Fiji, New Zealand and the Philippines. It is estimated that foreign workers and investment now account for “10% of the total population”, with a prediction that this trend is likely to continue (Sugden et al., 2008, p. xix). While the employment of foreign workers offers a solution to the staffing challenges faced by tourism operators, the rising number of migrant workers has raised concerns by some residents about the “erosion of the Cook Islands identity and loss of Cook Islands culture and community networks” (Sugden et al., 2008, p. 223).

However, while tourism is likely to continue to be the key driver of economic growth (Sugden et al., 2008) providing prosperity to the livelihood of Cook Islanders, the impacts of this growth on the host country and residents must also be considered (Gjerald, 2005; Hsiao & Chuang, 2016; C. Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). This study aims to explore the socio-cultural impacts of tourism by investigating the extent to which visitor behaviour impact on the attitudes and perceptions of residents.

## **1.6 Thesis outline**

This thesis is divided into six chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussions and conclusions. Academic references and appendices are also included. Chapter two provides an extensive analysis of the existing literature around the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace, with particular attention to customer-perpetrated harassment in the hospitality industry. A conceptual framework (see Figure 5) is presented to provide a theoretical overview and inform the literature researched in the literature review.

Chapter three provides a discussion of the comprehensive methodological approach adopted to conduct this case study inquiry. The research objectives and rationale for the study are discussed, following which the design and methods used to conduct the inquiry are described. The rationale for a constructivist grounded theory methodology is explained and supported with in-depth discussion of the data analysis process. A

thematic framework is presented incorporating the key categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis process. Ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are also considered.

Chapter four presents the key findings obtained from the 32 interviews conducted for this case study inquiry. Findings are presented using direct quotes to authentically reflect participants' voices. Tables and figures are used to support the presentation of data. Discussions of the core categories and themes are presented in a manner that is directly aligned to the thematic framework presented in the methodology chapter.

The key findings of the study, presented in chapter four, are explored in chapter five, using the current body of knowledge. In particular, in-depth discussions consider the unique concepts and themes that emerged on causality of customer harassment in the case location. A thematic model on causality is presented, incorporating these new concepts and themes to illustrate their relationships.

To conclude, chapter six provides a synthesis of the key research findings and demonstrates how the findings have addressed the five key research objectives of the study. Recommendations are then proposed based on the key findings of the study. The contributions and limitations of the study are discussed with recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection from the researcher.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The source of sexual harassment behaviour by customers is inherent in the service interaction because employees are expected to please the customer and treat the customer in a polite and friendly manner, even in the face of harassment and abuse. (Yagil, 2008, p. 143)

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter investigates literature around the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace, with particular attention to customer-perpetrated harassment in the hospitality industry. A conceptual framework (see Figure 5) has been developed to provide a theoretical overview and inform this literature review. Accordingly, the discussions in this chapter are presented in a manner that corresponds or assimilates with the conceptual framework. The chapter begins with an overview of the various definitions and perspectives of sexual harassment. Discussions then explore the incidence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry, identifying the main victims and perpetrators. Sexual harassment has multiple interacting causes and can be viewed from different perspectives, such as organisational behaviour, sociocultural and industrial theories (Alexander, Alexander, & Warner, 2005). Various theories are explored, with specific emphasis on the inherent characteristics of the hospitality industry. Discussions then move to identifying the multiple coping strategies that victims adopt, and the negative impact of sexual harassment on both victims and organisations. The chapter concludes by investigating the high level of tolerance to sexual harassment that exists in the hospitality industry (Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

### **2.2 Conceptual framework for sexual harassment by customers in the hospitality industry**

As mentioned, a conceptual framework was developed to identify the underlying concepts and assumptions that supported and informed this study. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 18) define a conceptual framework as a visual or written product that “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them”

The conceptual framework (see Figure 5) developed for this study identified the key factors to be investigated on sexual harassment. Six main categories were identified from the literature and formed the key themes of the framework. These categories are highlighted in blue in the framework and include incidence, causality, response, impact

and tolerance. To gain better understanding and insight into each conceptual category, themes were then created to represent the key findings in the literature. Studies suggest, for example, that industry characteristics, organisational climate and personal characteristics can affect an individual's tolerance to sexual harassment (see Poulston, 2008a; Reilly, Lott, & Gallogly, 1986; Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982). Accordingly, these factors have been incorporated in the conceptual framework under the main category 'tolerance'. Furthermore, sexual harassment has multiple interacting causes and can be viewed from different perspectives, including organisational, sociocultural, sex-role spillover, biological and industrial characteristics. These models are represented under the main category 'causality'. To enable a better understanding of the six conceptual categories, a brief description of each category is provided below. The comprehensive literature review that follows is presented in an order that is aligned to the categorical structure of the conceptual framework.

*Table 1.* Defining the key categories in the conceptual framework

<b>Conceptual category</b>	<b>Defining the conceptual category</b>
Defining sexual harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition and dimensions of sexual harassment</li> <li>• The impact of social, gender and cultural influences on defining sexual harassment</li> </ul>
Incidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry</li> <li>• Who are the main victims and perpetrators?</li> </ul>
Causality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key contributing factors to sexual harassment by customers</li> </ul>
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies adopted to cope with sexual harassment</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of sexual harassment on the victim, workplace and organisation</li> </ul>
Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons for tolerance of sexual harassment by customers</li> </ul>



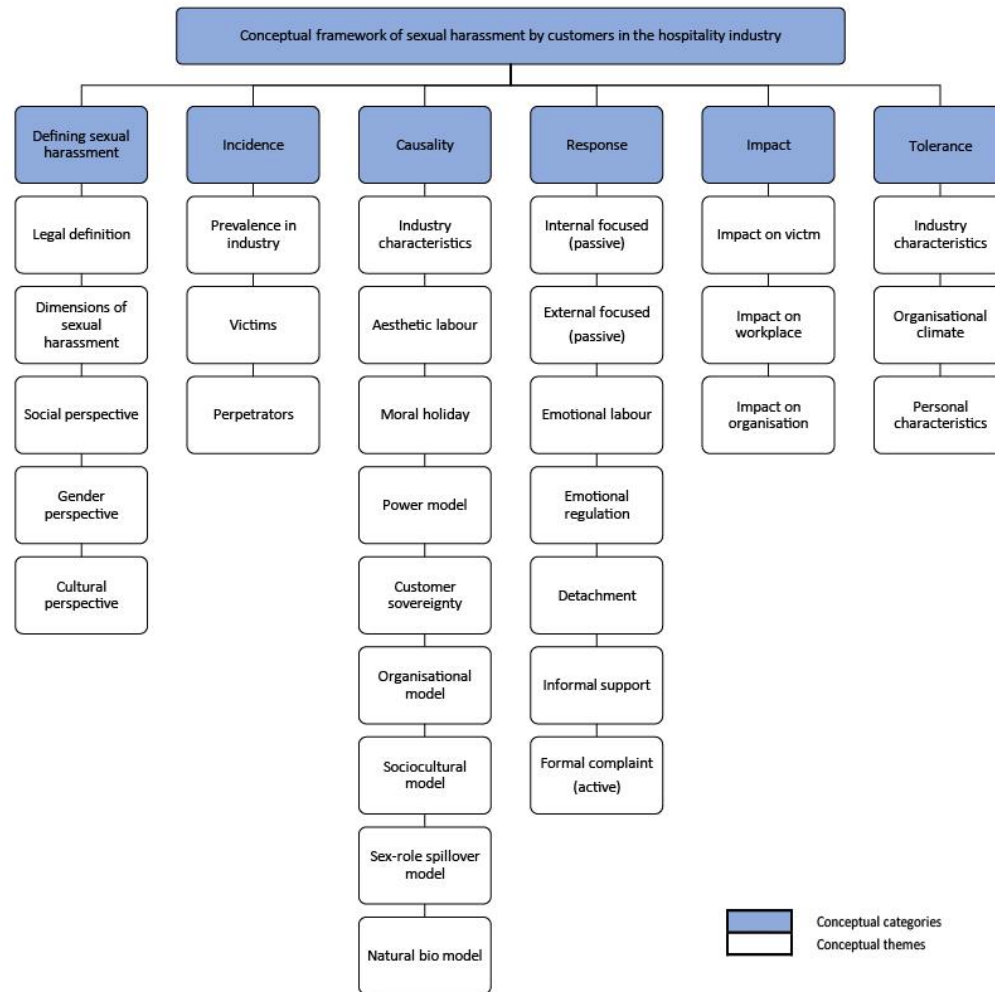


Figure 5. Conceptual framework of sexual harassment by customers in the hospitality industry

## **2.3 Defining sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is illegal in New Zealand workplaces and a breach of the Employment Relations Act (2000). Sexual harassment is defined as

Sexual behaviour using physical, verbal or visual means, that is unwelcome or offensive to that employee (whether or not that is conveyed to the employer or representative) and that, either by its nature or through repetition, has a detrimental effect on that employee's employment, job performance, or job satisfaction. (New Zealand Government, 2000, p. 156)

Despite widespread global research, scholars have been unable to agree on a single all-inclusive definition (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; McDonald, 2012; Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009). Opposing views exist, in particular, on the specific behaviours indicative of sexual harassment (Pina et al., 2009). Notwithstanding this debate, most statutes and legislation contain similar elements, such as “descriptions of the conduct being unwanted or unwelcome, with the purpose of being intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive” (McDonald, 2012, p. 2).

### **2.3.1 Legal and psychological definitions of sexual harassment**

Scholars discuss two main definitions of sexual harassment—legal and psychological—and there is debate about whether researchers should use the legal or the psychological definition to study its prevalence (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, et al., 1995). The New Zealand legal definition of sexual harassment refers to two types of behaviour—quid pro quo and hostile work environment (C. L. Williams, 2003). Quid pro quo harassment involves “sexual threats or bribes that are made a condition of employment or used as the basis for employment decisions”, and a hostile work environment refers to “behaviours such as sexual jokes, comments, and touching that interfere with an individual's ability to do their job or that create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment” (Welsh, 1999, p. 170). The psychological definition of sexual harassment refers to “unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being” (McDonald, 2012, p. 2).

Researchers further propose three main dimensions of sexual harassment: “gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion” (McDonald, 2012, p. 4). Gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention are behaviours that legally constitute a hostile work environment, whereas sexual coercion includes behaviours under the

legal definition of quid pro quo (Cogin & Fish, 2009; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, et al., 1995; O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998).

### **2.3.2 Dimensions of sexual harassment**

Extensive research has been done to identify the various forms of sexual harassment in the workplace. To facilitate a better understanding of these behaviours, a comprehensive analysis of the literature was undertaken.

Table 2 provides a synthesis of literature pertaining to the dimensions and forms of sexual harassment. Studies were reviewed and categorised into the main dimensions of sexual harassment identified in section 2.3: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion (column one). The various forms of harassment identified in each study, including physical, verbal, non-verbal and visual (column two), were then categorised into the three main dimensions. Column three provides evidence of the literature that was reviewed in this analysis. It is apparent that various forms of harassment can be identified within a single study. For example, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) identified up to seven types of sexual harassment including physical (i.e., touching, brushing, grabbing) and non-physical (i.e., staring, suggestive looks, sexual jokes, sexual advances).

*Table 2. Dimensions of sexual harassment*

Dimension	Type of harassment	Supporting literature
1. Gender harassment	Verbal: crude sexual remarks, jokes & innuendos	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Barak (1997); Bridges (2011); Chamberlain, Crowley, Tope, & Hodson (2008); Cho (2002); Cogin & Fish (2007); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Giuffre & Williams (1994); Gruber (1992, 1997); Ineson et al. (2013); Johnson (2010); Joychild (2000); Keith et al. (2010); Mkono (2010); Pina et al. (2009); Poulston (2008a); Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett (2001); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Williams (2003); Willness, Steel, & Lee (2007); Worsfold & McCann (2000)
	Verbal: sexual remarks about physical appearance	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Gruber (1992); Ineson et al. (2013); Johnson (2010); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Williams (2003)
	Staring, leering, ogling	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Barak (1997); Cho (2002); Cogin & Fish (2007); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Giuffre & Williams (1994); Gruber (1992, 1997); Pina et al. (2009); Ramsaroop & Parumasur (2007); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009)
	Non-verbal gestures, suggestive looks	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Chamberlin et al. (2008); Cho (2002); Eller (1991); Gruber (1992, 1997); Johnson (2010); Mkono (2010); Rotundo et al. (2001); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Williams (2003); Worsfold & McCann (2000)
2. Unwanted sexual attention	Verbal: sexual advances, propositions	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Barak (1997); Bridges (2011); Chamberlin et al. (2008); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1991); Fitzgerald et al. (1988); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Gruber (1992, 1997); Joychild (2000); Powell (1983); Ramsaroop & Parumasur (2007); Rotundo et al. (2001); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Williams (2003); Willness et al. (2007); Worsfold & McCann (2000)
	Physical contact: touching, brushing, grabbing, fondling	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Barak (1997); Bridges (2011); Cho (2002); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Chamberlin et al. (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007); Eller (1991); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Gruber (1992, 1997); Ineson et al. (2013); Johnson (2010); Joychild (2000); Keith et al. (2010); Pina et al. (2009); Poulston (2008a); Powell (1983); Ramsaroop & Parumasur (2007); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Willness et al. (2007); Williams (2003); Worsfold & McCann (2000)
3. Sexual coercion	Quid pro quo, bribery	Barak (1997); Bridges (2011); Cogin & Fish (2007); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1991); Fitzgerald et al. (1988); Gruber (1992); Ineson et al. (2013); Keith et al. (2010); McCann (2005); Rotundo et al. (2001); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009)
	Sexual assault/rape	Australian Human Rights Commission (2008); Barak (1997); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Fitzgerald et al. (1988); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Gruber (1992, 1997); Joychild (2000); Pina et al. (2009); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009)
	Masturbation	Joychild (2000)

### **2.3.3 Social perspectives on sexual harassment**

The judgement of sexually harassing behaviours is known to vary across cultures (H. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2007; Merkin, 2008a), as what may be considered harassment by one culture, might be viewed differently by another (Barak, 1997). Perceptions also vary between individuals (Agrusa, Coats, Tanner, & Leong, 2002; Blackstone, Houle, & Uggen, 2014; Pryor, 1995) as sexual behaviour considered offensive by one individual may be considered harmless, or even flattering, by another (Crow, Hartman, Hammond, & Fok, 1995). Giuffre & Williams (1994, p. 380) suggested that “whether a particular interaction is considered sexual harassment will depend on the intention of the harasser, interpretation by the victim, and the workplace culture or social context in which the incident occurred”. Their study on sexual harassment in restaurants found that employees interpreted sexual harassment differently depending on the context of the interaction. Double standards were revealed in that identical behaviours experienced by an employee were considered sexual harassment in some contexts, but not in others. For example, “sexual banter and innuendo, as well as physical jostling”, amongst colleagues was considered harmless, creating an environment “compulsory jocularity” in many restaurants” (p. 381). Conversely, similar behaviours perpetrated by someone in a “position of power”, such as a customer, was labelled sexual harassment by the same respondents (Giuffre & Williams, 1994, p. 386). Subsequent studies report identical findings (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008; Mohipp & Senn, 2008; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001), which suggests that sexual harassment is highly subjective and an individual’s perceptions can vary, depending on who the harassment is perpetrated by and in what context. What may be considered flirting in one situation may be considered harassment in another. For example, things a partner may say or do may be similar to behaviours by another individual but are not viewed as harassing.

### **2.3.4 Gender perspectives on sexual harassment**

More women view sexual harassment as a serious social problem than do men, and women have broader definitions of what constitutes unacceptable sexual behaviour than do men (Cogin & Fish, 2009; Johnson, 2010; McCabe & Hardman, 2005; Salin, 2008; Sigal et al., 2005). Women are less tolerant of sexual harassment, reacting to harassment more severely than men, who generally view their experience more positively (Bourgeois & Perkins, 2003; Ford & Donis, 1996; Timmerman & Bajema, 2000), and some men describe sexual behaviour as ‘welcoming’ or ‘fun and flattering’ (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008). (Konrad & Gutek, 1986, p. 340) found that men were “four times more

likely than women to be flattered by sexual overtures at work”. Quinn (2002) further proposed that where women may view sexual behaviour by men as sexual harassment, men see harmless fun, viewing their behaviour as an expression of masculinity. As women are less tolerant of sexual harassment and are harassed more often than men (Ram, Tribe, & Biran, 2016; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007), it is not surprising that most incidents of sexual harassment reported in the workplace are by women.

### **2.3.5 Cultural perspectives on sexual harassment**

Although sexual harassment affects many cultures, it appears in each culture differently (Barak, 1997). Hofstede (1991, p. 4) defined culture as the “training or refining of one’s mind from social environments in which one grew up. Hofstede (1980) proposed that culture is based on five dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism–collectivism, masculinity–femininity and long-term orientation. Individuals’ perceptions about what behaviour is appropriate in the workplace is often influenced by their culture, suggesting that “sexual behaviour and perceptions are to an extent, rooted in a cultural context” (V. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2002, p. 269). Cultural values and beliefs are significant factors influencing perceptions of sexual harassment. What is considered acceptable in some cultures may be deemed inappropriate in others (Cortina & Wasti, 2005; Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002; V. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2002; Merkin, 2008a; Zimbardo, 2007). The degree of physical contact considered acceptable by individuals will vary considerably across cultures (McCann, 2005). Empirical research exploring cross-cultural perspectives indicates that gender differences in perceptions of what is considered inappropriate sexual behaviour are less pronounced in Australia, Germany and the United States (McCabe & Hardman, 2005; Pryor et al., 1997) and may be the result of different cultural values (Hofstede, 1980; H. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2007).

Signal et al. (2005) suggested that individuals from individualist countries (see Hofstede, 1991) are more assertive and more negative in their attitudes to sexual harassment than those from collective countries (Hofstede) because individualist cultures are concerned with individual rights, whereas collective cultures focus on preserving harmony and valuing societal needs above the rights of the individual (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Merkin, 2009). V. K. Luthar and Luthar (2002) suggested that whereas people in individualist countries may question ethical standards in society, those from collective cultures are inclined to be more accepting. Similarly, Gudykunst et al. (1996) claimed that members of collectivist cultures are more concerned with

avoiding hurting others than are members of individualistic cultures. Accordingly, individuals from collective societies may react negatively towards the whistle-blower (Cortina & Wasti, 2005; O’Leary-Kelly, Tiedt, & Bowes-Sperry, 2004; Sigal & Jacobsen, 1999). Therefore, this is a likely reason why individuals from collective societies are perceived to be more tolerant of sexual harassment. The Cook Islands, like most Pacific Island nations, is based on high collectivism (Hofstede, 2009), where maintaining strong relationships and caring for and respecting those around you is paramount (Schänzel, Brocx, & Sadaraka, 2014; Tuagalu, 2008). The high collectivism and cultural values of Cook Islanders could influence their attitudes to sexual harassment. This study will explore the extent to which cultural values and norms affect participants’ perceptions of sexual harassment.

Furthermore, studies suggest that individuals from cultures strong in power distance are more accepting of those in authority and thus are less likely to disrupt organisational order by reporting sexual harassment (Cortina, 2004; H. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2008). Power distance refers to “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.... It suggests that a society’s level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders” (Hofstede, 2009, p. 5). H. K. Luthar and Luthar (2007) found that women from high power distance and high collective societies that value hierarchy (Schwartz, 1999) are more likely to endure sexual harassment than women from egalitarian (Schwartz, 1999), low power distance and highly individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Furthermore, men are more likely to harass in cultures that are based on high power distance and high collectivism (H. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2007). Applying Hofstede’s model to a multicultural workplace suggests that multiple perspectives on sexual harassment will exist because of the diverse cultures of employees. Managers should therefore be mindful of these varying perspectives when implementing sexual harassment policies, as there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

In summary, the literature acknowledges multiple perspectives on sexual harassment, including individual, social, gender and cultural. These diverse views make it difficult for managers, who, when establishing sexual harassment policies, must carefully consider the widespread perspectives of their employees. To better understand sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry, this study explores the extent to which cultural, gender and social factors influence participants’ attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment.

## **2.4 Incidence**

### **2.4.1 Prevalence in hospitality industry**

Sexual harassment in the hospitality industry is endemic, and studies indicate that hospitality employees experience sexual harassment significantly more than workers in other private sector industries (Blackstone, Uggen, & McLaughlin, 2009; Ram et al., 2016; Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009; Weber et al., 2002). A study of sexual harassment in the workplace conducted by the NZ Human Rights Commission between 1995 and 2000 found that sexual harassment complaints were predominately from employees in the hospitality industry. These cases accounted for 19% of all complaints, which was concerning, given that the industry employed only 4.5% of the workforce during that period (Joychild, 2000). Similarly, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) found that the hospitality industry had the second highest sexual harassment incident rates, despite employing only 5% of the workforce at the time.

Multiple studies have been conducted investigating the incidence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry. Table 3 provides an analysis of incident rates on sexual harassment reported in some key hospitality studies. Clearly evident is the significant variation in findings across the studies. For example, the hospitality study conducted in Denmark by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (2003) revealed a modest 6% incident rate, a contrast to the study by Kensbock, Bailey, Jennings and Patiar (2015) revealing 96% (see Table 3). Kensbock et al. (Kensbock et al., 2015) investigated the sexual harassment experiences of 46 room attendants working in five-star hotels in Queensland, Australia. They attributed the high incident rate to job gender context (see section 2.3.4) based on three notable features: the attendants' uniforms; the sexualised workspace, which requires attendants to enter the guests' personal space (i.e., the guests' bedroom), where they generally work alone; and the impact of gender, age and ethnicity. While housekeeping staff are known to be particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment because of the nature of their work and because they are generally women from ethnic minorities (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Yagil, 2008), other factors could also influence these results. For example, what level of understanding did participants have about sexual harassment and what behaviours did they consider to be harassment? Would these behaviours be considered sexual harassment by someone else?

The disparities evident in Table 3 raise the question of why some studies reveal considerably lower rates of sexual harassment than others. Further investigation is



needed into each study to understand and contextualise the results. Consideration should be given to various factors, including sample size, sample demographics and method. Furthermore, what criteria were used to define sexual harassment? Were broader definitions used in some studies than in others? Did participants tell the truth or did they ‘save face’ to protect themselves, or because of cultural values and beliefs?

Agrusa et al.’s (2002) comparative study (see Table 3) investigating the perceptions and attitudes of restaurant employees to sexual harassment in New Orleans and Hong Kong revealed some significant differences:

- Certain behaviours that New Orleans employees considered sexual harassment were not viewed as harassment by the Hong Kong employees.
- A larger number of New Orleans employees said that they had been sexually harassed by a customer, manager or co-worker than did the Hong Kong employees. This finding revealed “a significant discrepancy by almost a three-to-one margin” (Agrusa et al., 2002, p. 28).
- Considerably more New Orleans employees worked in establishments that had sexual harassment policies than did the Hong Kong employees.

Agrusa et al. (2002) suggested that the large disparity could be due to culture, which can influence perceptions and attitudes to sexual harassment (see section 2.3.5). Most of the New Orleans respondents were Caucasian, and the Hong Kong participants were Chinese. Individuals from individualist countries (Hofstede, 2009), such as the residents of New Orleans, are known to be more assertive and more negative in their attitudes to sexual harassment than those from collective countries, such as Hong Kong. Furthermore, what is perceived as sexual harassment by individuals can vary based on gender, age and experience (see section 2.3).

Nevertheless, despite the apparent inconsistencies identified above, the analysis in Table 3 suggests that high levels of sexual harassment exist in the hospitality industry worldwide. Furthermore, scholars suggest that the incidence of sexual harassment in the industry is, in fact, likely to be underestimated, as many victims do not report the harassment (Ram et al., 2016; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

*Table 3. Incident rates of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry*

<b>Author and year</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Country</b>
Agrusa et al. (2002)	25	Hong Kong
Agrusa et al. (2002)	75	New Orleans
Aslan & Kozak (2012)	32	Turkey
Australian Human Rights Commission (2008)	22	Australia
Cho (2002)	33	Korea
Coats, Agrusa, & Tanner (2004)	66	Hong Kong
Einarsen, Raknes & Matthies (1993)	18	Norway
European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (2003)	6	Denmark
Gettman & Gelfand (2007)	50	USA
Guerrier & Adib (2000)	73	Britain
Hoel (2002)	25	Britain
Human Rights Commission (2001)	26	New Zealand
Kensbock et al. (2015)	96	Australia
Lin (2006)	91	Taiwan
Poulston (2008b)	24	New Zealand
Theocharous & Philaretou (2009)	56	Cyprus
Timmerman & Bajema (2000)	72	Germany
Tseng & Kang (2015)	15	China
Worsfold & McCann (2000)	29	Britain

#### **2.4.2 Victims**

The overwhelming majority of sexual harassment victims in the workplace are women (Agrusa et al., 2002; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008; Cogan & Fish, 2009; Ineson, Yap, & Whiting, 2013; Ram et al., 2016; Willness et al., 2007) and targets are usually vulnerable: young women in junior positions, divorced or separated women (McCann, 2005; Tangri et al., 1982), and women from ethnic minorities (Chamberlain, Crowley, Tope, & Hodson, 2008; Gruber & Bjorn, 1986; Merkin, 2008a; O'Neill & Payne, 2007). Poulston (2008b) found that women working as waitresses or barmaids were more likely to be harassed because they were young, inexperienced and had little formal education. Their position in the workplace is often weak, making them more vulnerable than other employees (Folgerø & Fjeldstad, 1995; O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Bates, & Lean, 2009).

Conversely, McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone (2012) found that women in supervisory positions are more likely to be harassed because when a woman's power is

viewed as threatening or intimidating, customers may employ harassment as an equaliser against them. Overall, there appear to be conflicting views on the demographic data of female victims; however, a recent study by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) found that women were four times more likely to experience sexual harassment in the workplace than men.

Despite overwhelming evidence indicating women are the main victims, Fine, Shepherd and Josephs (1999) suggested that the incidence of sexual harassment of men may be understated because men do not report sexual behaviour as they are less likely to view the behaviour as harassment (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008). Notably, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) found that 15% of sexual harassment incidences reported in the workplace involved a male victim. This finding might suggest that males are in fact victims of sexual harassment somewhat more than has been reported. McCann (2005) reported an increase in the number of sexual harassment complaints lodged by men in recent years, suggesting that the most vulnerable men include young men, gay men and men from ethnic minorities. Other scholars have also acknowledged the increasing number of men being subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace (e.g. Holland, Rabelo, Gustafson, Seabrook, & Cortina, 2016; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2016; Waldo, Berdahl, & Fitzgerald, 1998). This study includes male participants and will therefore offer valuable insight into men's attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment.

There are few studies on the sexual harassment of women of colour, and results are inconclusive. Some studies found no difference in the occurrence of sexual harassment between coloured and white women (Gutek, 1985; Hendrix, 2000; Keith et al., 2010), while other studies report that women of ethnic minorities, or non-white employees, are more vulnerable than white women (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). Muliawan & Kleiner's (2001) study on sexual harassment suggested that of all women, African-American are the most susceptible to sexual harassment because of the perception that they are "sexually accessible" and because they are "the most economically at risk" (p. 57). Mkono's (2010) study on the sexual harassment of Zimbabwean hospitality students revealed a high incidence of sexual harassment in the Zimbabwean hospitality industry, and customers were the main perpetrators. The study also identified a significantly high level of tolerance to harassment, caused largely by cultural norms that normalise the harassment of women. Similarly, earlier studies by Adams (1997) and Barak (1997) suggested that the sexual harassment of coloured

women is high because of the general perception that coloured women are sexually available and sexually promiscuous. Nevertheless, the fact that the above-mentioned studies are dated identifies a need for further research. If these claims are valid, however, then the incident rate and severity of sexual harassment experienced by Polynesian women are likely to be significantly higher than they are for European women (Keith et al., 2010). This study explores this assumption by investigating the extent to which Polynesian women (i.e., Cook Islanders) experience sexual harassment by customers.

### **2.4.3 Perpetrators**

Previous studies indicate that customers in the hospitality industry are the main perpetrators of sexual harassment (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007; Good & Cooper, 2014; Poulston, 2008c; Reynolds & Harris, 2009; Vaughn, 2002). Worsfold & McCann, (2000, p. 253) suggested that “sexual harassment of female employees by male customers in the tourism industry was not only common, but largely tolerated”. More recently, a comprehensive study on the occurrence of sexual harassment in restaurants in the US found an overwhelming 80% of female employees and 55% of male employees experienced sexual harassment by customers (The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United Forward Together, 2014). Furthermore, 10% of respondents in a study by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) reported that their harasser was a customer. These findings indicate a need for hospitality organisations to ensure that the sexual harassment policies and procedures implemented in their workplace also offer employees protection from third-party harassment (i.e., customers).

## **2.5 Causality**

Extensive research has been conducted into the various causes of sexual harassment in the workplace. This section considers some of the key theories found in the literature to explain sexual harassment, as shown under the category of ‘causality’ in the conceptual framework (see section 2.2).

### **2.5.1 Industry characteristics**

Studies suggest that the inherent nature and characteristics of the hospitality industry, strong social relationships, long hours and close involvement with customers make it a ‘prime breeding ground’ (Gilbert, Guerrier, & Guy, 1998, p. 49) for sexual harassment (Eller, 1991; Keith et al., 2010; Poulston, 2010; Ram et al., 2016). Hospitality’s links with sexuality extend back to 1700 BC when early taverns were brothels in which the

landlady was both a barmaid and a prostitute (Poulston, 2008a; Whyte, 1948). This “provision of sexual favours by barmaids, once a sign of good hospitality, has somehow persisted as a tradition within the industry” (Poulston, 2008a, p. 234). Poulston proposed that these perceptions can influence the implicit expectations of customers as misunderstandings may arise regarding what exactly a service offering should include. It is these misconceptions that can influence customers’ behaviour, causing sexual harassment.

The personalities of hospitality workers are another likely cause of sexual harassment (Keith et al., 2010; Whyte, 1948). Hospitality employees are usually outgoing, personable and energetic individuals who thrive in animated environments (Agrusa et al., 2002; Poulston, 2008a). As a result, their vivacious, outgoing personalities are likely to attract sexual attention (Poulston, 2008a). Weber (2002) observed that customers do not just go to a restaurant for the food, but also to be entertained by the service employees.

Hospitality workers are also vulnerable to harassment because of the low status attributed to them by customers (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Food service staff, housekeepers and receptionists are often unskilled, poorly educated employees, women, from disadvantaged ethnic groups or adolescents with perceived low status (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Yagil, 2008). Consequently, customers may believe they can abuse these employees (Shamir, 1980). Korczynski (2002) noted that ‘service’ shares etymological roots with ‘servant’ or ‘servitude’, which may be why service workers are considered by some to be inferior to customers. Rothman (1998) also suggested that service work has historically been considered low-status work largely because of the connotations of servitude and inferiority.

Restaurant employees are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment because of the informal environment whereby “the line between work and social interaction can be blurred” (Agrusa et al., 2002, p. 30). Restaurants are informal workplaces, often encouraging, or at least tolerating, sexual banter (Agrusa et al., 2002). The absence of formality in the service process means that boundaries can sometimes become blurred, which may encourage customer misbehaviour (Yagil, 2008). Additionally, in restaurants, service staff move intimately among customers, providing an opportunity for physical contact (Guerrier & Adib, 2000).

Inappropriate behaviour may also arise if customers' inhibitions have been affected by alcohol as customers may behave in a manner in which they would not normally behave (Eller, 1991; Worsfold & McCann, 2000; Yagil, 2008). Furthermore, restaurants are highly sexualised environments (Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Yagil, 2008) where flirting can be considered part of the service offering (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Pratten & Lovatt, 2003). Studies suggest that some hospitality businesses deliberately encourage flirtatious behaviour and sexy dress to increase revenue (Gilbert et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). In these environments, service employees are obligated to 'job flirt' and are of the attitude that sexual behaviour is part of 'their job' (Hall, 1993, p. 464). Guerrier & Adib (2000) suggested that "the sexy uniforms and 'job flirt'...may imply that rather more friendliness is on offer" (p. 691). The assertions made in the aforementioned studies, that is, that sexualised behaviour and job flirt is a requirement of the job role, are controversial, as they raise the question of exactly whose views they represent. Are they implicit or explicit expectations of the employer, or merely unsubstantiated assumptions made by the employee? Furthermore, given that the studies by Hall (1993) and Gilbert et al. (1998) are dated, further research is needed to investigate the nature of 'job flirt' in modern hospitality. This study will investigate the extent to which Cook Islands hospitality employees view 'sexualisation' as part of their job role. 'Sexualisation' is the perception by an individual that they are expected or required to look "hot" and "sexy" (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 10). In this case, the employee perceives an expectation by their employer that they sexualise themselves in order to attract customers and increase sales.

Furthermore, hotel staff may be particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment. Guerrier and Adib (2000) suggested that the role of housekeeping staff requires them to "enter the guests' domestic space", making them vulnerable to sexual abuse (Guerrier & Adib, 2000, p. 693). Furthermore, a distinct characteristic of service encounters in hotels is the blurriness between "public and private, leisure and work" (Guerrier & Adib, 2000, p. 696). Hotels operate 24 hours a day, so guests and customers interact day and night. Andrews, Roberts, & Selwyn, (2007) explored the role of eroticism in hospitality spaces, suggesting that in hotels, "eroticism functions as a socially-binding mode of social intercourse in guest-host interactions" (p. 257). Furthermore, Pritchard and Morgan (2006) suggested that discourses of sexual encounters and sensuality frequently frame the marketing of hotels and resorts, implying risk and excitement, in eroticised language. The Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas used the play on words "buck all night" to appeal to a largely adult male audience of a rodeo event. The Nevada Gaming

Commission objected to the billboard's overt sexual content and required it to be removed (O'Barr, 2011). Provocative marketing messages of this nature, overt or implicit, could provoke inappropriate behaviour by guests.

### **2.5.2 Aesthetic labour**

Some hospitality organisations use the aesthetic labour of their employees to attract customers and positively influence their service experience (Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005; Pratten & Lovatt, 2003). Coined by Warhurst, Nickson, Witz and Cullen (2000), aesthetic labour is a management strategy intended to create a distinctive, prescribed look as a style of service and to differentiate an organisation's services from other businesses to obtain a competitive advantage (Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, & Cullen, 2000; Warhurst, van den Broek, Hall, & Nickson, 2009). Employers want employees with the 'right look' and, quite often, also want them to be attractive looking (Biswas & Cassell, 1996; Karlsson, 2012; Keith et al., 2010).

Exploring the concept of aesthetic labour, Ziethaml, Bitner and Gremler (2013) likened employees to the 'walking billboards' of an organisation. Employees are often hired because of the way they look, and employers use recruitment and selection processes as opportunities to filter out applicants who are not suitable for the company's image (Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Warhurst et al., 2009; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003). Once employed, these employees are deliberately aestheticised into becoming walking billboards for their organisation (Ziethaml et al., 2013) and are often instructed about what to say to customers, what to wear and how to wear it (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Hence, employers demand not just emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) from service employees, but also aesthetic labour. These claims by Warhurst and his scholars are contentious as they raise the issue of whether these implicit expectations are, in fact, discriminatory, based on appearance.

Furthermore, some hospitality organisations have strict dress codes and presentation standards. A survey by Nickson et al. (2005) revealed that 80% of hospitality respondents had a uniform policy and 90% had dress codes around hair, make-up and jewellery. While hospitality employers can enforce dress codes regulating clothing, hair, make-up, nails, piercings and tattoos, for the most part, these dress codes are legal, so long as they are not discriminatory. Nevertheless, to what extent do employers leverage off their legal rights to maximise a competitive advantage?

The findings of Nickson et al.'s (2005) study above suggests that having aesthetic labour upon employment is not enough, as employers then endeavour to mould their employees' aesthetic skills to best portray their company's image. The emphasis placed on appearance and looks focuses attention on employees as sexual beings (Gilbert et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000) so that there is often a fine line between selling 'service' and selling 'sexuality' (Filby, 1992; Hall, 1993). The expectations to dress and behave in a certain manner place employees in a vulnerable position, making employees prime targets for sexual harassment by customers.

Hakim (2010) suggested that erotic capital is a major asset, particularly for women in the workforce. Erotic capital is a combination of aesthetic, visual (i.e., beauty, sexual attractiveness and personality), physical (i.e., physical fitness), social (i.e., the ability to make people like, desire and want to know others) and sexual attractiveness (i.e., presentation, personal style, dress, hairstyle and make-up). Hakim (2010) maintained that good looks, intelligence, personality and confidence all determine income for men and women to such an extent that the effect of facial attractiveness on income is almost equal to that of educational qualifications. Similarly, other studies suggest that employment, career and pay are influenced by an employee's appearance inasmuch that employees who are perceived as attractive have better pay and job prospects (Harper, 2000; Warhurst et al., 2000). These findings suggest that some employees may be disadvantaged because of their physical appearance, raising the issue of employment discrimination based on 'lookism'. Lookism is a prejudice towards or against people based on their appearance, whereby attractive people are given preferential treatment and those considered unattractive are denied opportunities (Tietje & Cresap, 2005). Warhurst and Nickson (2009) suggested that hospitality employers may discriminate in favour of people who are perceived to be more attractive. They caution that lookism is the next frontier in the struggle against discrimination in the workplace.

Additionally, Worsfold and McCann (2000, p. 253) posited that women in the hospitality industry are "required to look attractive and focus on themselves as sexual beings". They are expected to sexualise themselves through their dress, maintain an attractive appearance and "be glamorous and seductive for the benefit of male customers" (Worsfold & McCann, 2000, p. 254). Women are also expected to appear sexually available (Giuffre & Williams, 1994), to wear revealing uniforms and have male customers stare at their breasts (Hall, 1993). Regardless of how they are feeling, they must smile and respond politely to sexual advances by customers (Adkins, 1995;



Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Filby (1992) described how some employees are also required to engage in “sexy chat” (p. 29) in which customers are encouraged to “talk dirty” to waitresses by ordering drinks whose names have sexual connotations, such as “screaming orgasm” (Giuffre & Williams, 1994, p. 387). Hence, employees are expected to entice customers and increase sales by dressing and behaving in a certain manner, even at the expense of harassment and abuse.

Notably, several of the above-mentioned studies are outdated, thus identifying a need for future research. Significant changes to employment legislation and policies including health and safety, protected disclosure and anti-bullying harassment and discrimination (see <https://www.employment.govt.nz/about/employment-law/legislation/>) as well as unionisation (Weiler, 1983) mean there are now stronger protections to ensure employees’ rights in today’s workplace. It is unlikely, therefore, that the overt sexualisation of hospitality employees by employers would be tolerated in today’s environment. This study contributes to the existing literature on aesthetic labour through its exploration into the extent to which hospitality employers require aesthetic labour from their employees and the impact of aesthetic labour on customer behaviour.

### **2.5.3 Moral holiday**

“Tourists behave like pigs, they respect nothing” (Diken & Laustsen, 2004, p. 100)

Studies reveal that some customers behave inappropriately when they are away on holiday because they are freed from the constraints of being at home (Hayner, 1928; Vivancos, Abubakar, & Hunter, 2010; Wood, 1992). Hayner (1928) suggested that travellers become detached and have a sense of anonymity when away from home. According to Hayner, upright citizens often take a ‘moral holiday’ leaving their manners and morals behind when they travel. Hayner (1928) further suggested that the behaviour of a traveller ranges in nature from a “good time” to “explosive blowout” (p. 79). Other theories supporting Hayner have emerged more recently.

Weichselbaumer (2012) suggested that holidays are typically construed as temporary escapes from the daily norms of life, in which normal responsibilities are suspended and norms can deliberately be transgressed. Diken and Laustsen (2004) suggested that when going abroad, tourists enter a ‘duty-free’ zone, removed from home and everyday routine, with no constraints or obligations. Similarly, Berdychevsky and Gibson (2015) suggested that tourism is associated with ‘feeling out of space, out of time, out of mind’, thus distorting people’s risk perceptions and normative inhibitions and triggering sexual

risk-taking behaviour. Studies by Handy (2006), Lashley (2000) and Wood (1992) also support Hayner's (1928) original theory. These theories may provide valuable insight into the cause of sexual harassment by customers.

Moreover, hotels are also considered sexualised environments because they are liminal places where "everyday obligations and conventions seem out of mind" (Pritchard & Morgan, 2006, p. 770). The sexualisation of hotel spaces may lead to the sexualisation of hotel workers (Guerrier & Adib, 2000), where some guests may seek to engage in sexual encounters with employees (Aslan & Kozak, 2012; Yarnal, 2004). Some travellers are strongly motivated by desires for sexual experiences, as they are by desires for cultural experiences (Littlewood, 2001). Engaging in sexual experiences while abroad is considered by some a significant part of a holiday (Weichselbaumer, 2012). Littlewood (2001, p. 1) suggested that "as the summer holidays approach, get ready to shed your clothes—and your inhibitions. For when the temperature rises, so does the libido. Investigating the sexual risk behaviour of women on holiday, Thomas (2005) suggested that most women consider a holiday to be enjoyable if it provides sun, sea, sand and sex. Hence, scholars suggest that the discourse of sun, sea, sand and sex (Crick, 1989) is often used in mass tourism to promote sexual adventures and exotic experiences (Aslan & Kozak, 2012; Pritchard & Morgan, 2006). These marketing strategies may be sexually provocative, arousing a traveller's sexual inhibitions and triggering inappropriate sexual behaviour.

The Cook Islands is a popular tourist destination, attracting increasing numbers of visitors each year. The extent to which the moral holiday perspective influences visitors' behaviour at this destination is currently unknown. This study addresses this gap by providing in-depth insight into visitors' behaviour, with an emphasis on sexual harassment.

#### **2.5.4 Power model**

The power-dominance model views sexual harassment as an abuse of power whereby power inequality enables a harasser to sexually coerce and objectify someone below them in the hierarchy (Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979; Pryor, 1995). Gettman and Gelfand's (2007) theoretical model of client sexual harassment found that customer power is significantly related to sexual harassment. As customers become aware of their power, they may perceive themselves as superior and take advantage of the situation (Korczynski, 2007; Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Vaughn, 2002). Handy (2006) found that when dependence on customers is high, service providers are more tolerant of customer

misbehaviour. In sales situations, customers have power because they can control whether or not they choose to do business with the organisation (Fine et al., 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Yagil, 2008). Similarly, Vaughn (2002) suggested that third-party sexual harassment is about 'power and dominance', in which customers leverage their implied power to engage in harassing behaviour that goes beyond acceptable customer–employee interactions.

Additionally, male dominance theories of sexual harassment (e.g., Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009) focus on power, and argue that men use sexual harassment to dominate and maintain supremacy over women in the workplace. Jones, Boocock and Underhill-Sem (2013) suggested that sexual harassment may not necessarily be related to sexual desire, but can be an act of defending or maintaining a dominant version of masculinity. Sexualising relationships with female co-workers “diminishes their role as colleagues to sexual objects, thus reinforcing power and privilege” (Lopez et al., 2009, p. 5). Prekel (2001) suggested that one cause of sexual harassment is 'power games', whereby some men try to exert their masculinity by harassing women subordinates. Uggen and Blackstone (2004) tested MacKinnon's (1979) sociocultural theory (see section 2.5.7) of sexual harassment in the workplace. Their findings supported MacKinnon's basic proposition that sexual harassment is derived from power and masculinity. The various power models that exist, as discussed in the foregoing, may be relevant to this study and provide insight into why customers treat employees in a derogatory manner. That is, power may be a contributing factor to sexual harassment by customers in the case location.

### **2.5.5 Customer sovereignty**

Hospitality employees are particularly vulnerable to abuse because they serve customers who are in a position to abuse their power (Goodboy & Brann, 2010; Hutt, 1940; Yagil, 2008). In the service process, behavioural norms revolve around satisfying customer expectations. Power is an important sign value for customers (Korczynski, 2002) as customers want to be sovereign (Gay & Salaman, 1992) and to feel they are in control. Service employees are therefore required to be compliant and submissive, and to obey customers (Keith et al., 2010). Korczynski (2002) refers to this as the “enchanted myth of customer sovereignty” (p. 63)

During service interactions, managers expect employees to retain a positive attitude, even when confronted with harassment, thereby conveying a message that customers have a right to “abuse employees with impunity” (Yagil, 2008, p. 145). Misbehaviour

by customers is consequently inherent in the service interaction because employees are expected to satisfy customers, which places them in an inferior and vulnerable position (X.-Y. Liu, Kwan, & Chiu, 2014; Yagil, 2008). This imbalance of power is maintained through the ideology that the ‘customer is king’ (Bishop & Hoel, 2008) or the ‘customer is always right’, even when the customer is wrong (Aslan & Kozak, 2012; Shamir, 1980). Korczynski & Evans (2013) suggested that customer abuse is caused by the promotion of customer sovereignty inasmuch that service employees are often expected to just “take the crap” (p. 781). Thus, when sexual harassment by a customer is ignored or dismissed, the behaviour is perpetuated (Folgerø & Fjeldstad, 1995; Gilbert et al., 1998; Guerrier & Adib, 2000). This passive response suggests to customers that their behaviour is acceptable, thus reinforcing the myth of customer sovereignty.

### **2.5.6 Organisational model**

Proposed by Tangri et al. (1982), the organisational model argues that sexual harassment is the result of an organisation’s cultural climate, hierarchy and relationships, and that norms exist within a workplace that either inhibit or facilitate sexual harassment. The organisational model proposes that organisations facilitate sexual harassment through power imbalance created by hierarchical structures. Those in legitimate positions of authority (i.e., customers) may abuse their power for their own sexual gratification and to intimidate and control subordinates (i.e., employee) (Cogin & Fish, 2007). However, this model disregards individuals holding positions of power (i.e., managers) who may also be victims of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The model further proposes that other organisational characteristics such as gender ratio, job function and the existence of anti-harassment procedures also contribute to sexual harassment (Chamberlain et al., 2008; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998). Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand and Magley (1997) proposed that:

sexual harassment in organizations is a function of two conditions: organizational climate and job gender context. Organizational climate refers to organizational characteristics that communicate tolerance of sexual harassment, whereas job gender context denotes the gendered nature of the workgroup, for example, group gender ratio and the nature of job duties and tasks (i.e., gender traditional or non-traditional) (pp. 578–579).

Organisational climate is considered the main single predictor of sexual harassment in organisations (Pina et al., 2009; Pryor, 1995; Welsh, 1999; C. L. Williams, 2003).

Studies indicate that employees who perceive their organisation to be tolerant of sexual

harassment (i.e., it is risky to complain and complaints are not taken seriously) experience significantly higher levels of harassment (Chamberlain et al., 2008; Cagin & Fish, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 1997). McCabe and Hardman (2005) further suggested that employees who perceive their organisation to be tolerant of sexual harassment are less likely to label behaviour as sexual harassment and become acclimatised to the environment.

Job gender context is also known to affect the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace. For example, female employees may experience higher levels of sexual harassment in male-dominated work environments because of gender imbalance (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). A meta-analysis by Willness et al. (2007) revealed a significant relationship between organisational climate, job gender context and sexual harassment. Similarly, O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) argued that the strongest organisational risk factors for sexual harassment are sexist attitudes in the workplace and a lack of knowledge by employees about sexual harassment complaint procedures.

A key strength of the organisational model is that it acknowledges several organisational factors in its explanation of sexual harassment. Furthermore, the model "does not focus on power differentials being gender specific" (Pina et al., 2009, p. 131), as harassment could also be perpetrated by women in positions of power (Samoluk & Pretty, 1994). A common criticism, however, is that the model does not acknowledge individual differences and how these can influence the occurrence of sexual harassment (Pina et al., 2009). Tangri et al. (1982) found no clear support for the organisational model. Barak, Piiterman and Yitzhaki (1995) also refuted the model, arguing that power differential does not lead to an abuse of organisational position.

### **2.5.7 Sociocultural model**

Proposed by Farley (1978) and MacKinnon (1979), the sociocultural model posits that "sexual harassment in the workplace is a manifestation of general male dominance and that harassment is a means by which males maintain dominance over women, occupationally and economically, by limiting their growth or intimidating them to leave the workplace" (Cagin & Fish, 2007, p. 337). Unlike the organisational model (Tangri et al., 1982), the sociocultural model focuses on power differentials rather than organisational characteristics. The model assumes that sexual harassment at work is an extension of the male dominance that thrives in wider society, a social system defined by patriarchy in which "men rule and social beliefs legitimise their rule" (Tangri et al., 1982, p40). Sexual harassment is thus "linked to the socialised sexist ideology of male

dominance and superiority” (Pina et al., 2009, p.131) in which women are regarded as inferior (Samoluk & Pretty, 1994; Vaux, 1993). Tangri et al. (1982) further suggested that societal norms influence behaviour whereby men are expected to be aggressive and women are required to be passive and submissive. However, as the model is now four decades old, and in light of feminist movements and ideologies that have developed in recent years, more debate is needed to establish the extent to which this model is valid in contemporary hospitality.

### **2.5.8 Sex-role spillover model**

Sex-role spill over (SRS) theory is one of the main theories found in the literature explaining sexual harassment (Tangri & Hayes, 1997; Welsh, 1999). Proposed by Gutek and Morasch (1982), the theory maintains that “the sexual harassment of women at work is a product of SRS, which is defined as the carryover into the workplace of gender-based expectations for behaviours that are relevant or appropriate at work”(p. 55) . The extent to which a job is considered to have traditionally male (e.g., construction worker) or female (e.g., receptionist) characteristics is a fundamental factor of the SRS model.

The model proposes that when the sex ratio at work is skewed in either direction, SRS occurs. Thus, women in male-dominated work (i.e., construction) experience SRS because of the numerical dominance of men in their work environment. Women in these non-traditional work roles are treated differently and the behaviours by their male colleagues is deliberate because of the perceived threat they bring to male dominated job roles (Lopez et al., 2009). Consequently, these women are likely to experience increased incidents of sexual harassment because men perceive that women working in these environments have infringed on their male power and threatened their masculinity (Handy, 2006; Wasti, Bergman, Glomb, & Drasgow, 2000).

Conversely, women in female-dominated work, such as receptionists or waitresses, also experience SRS because their sex role and work role overlap, involving aspects of sexuality in the job itself. The feminine aspects of the job role are emphasized causing an increased risk of for sexual harassment because women in these roles are regarded as ‘sex objects’ (Lopez et al., 2009). Thus, sexual harassment occurs in male-dominated workplaces because “a woman’s gender is a distinctive feature, while in a female dominated work environment, her sex role becomes a more salient feature than her work role” because she is expected to project sexuality through her behaviour, appearance and dress (McDonald, 2012, p. 6).

A fundamental assumption of the SRS theory is that “men and women bring to work their pre-existing beliefs and gender-based expectations for behaviour in the workplace, even though these expectations may not be applicable in the working environment” (Pina et al., 2009, p. 132). The submissive role of the women in the home is perpetuated into the workplace, creating norms about how men and women should behave (Lopez et al., 2009). Consequently, gender equality beliefs become the dominant factor influencing workplace behaviour, prevailing over worker equality (Fine et al., 1999; Gutek, 1985; Pina et al., 2009). Gutek and Morasch (1982) claimed that the SRS theory explains sexual harassment in a more holistic manner than the sociocultural and organisational theories, making it a more comprehensive tool to understand harassment behaviour.

Subsequent studies have supported the SRS theory, revealing that sexual harassment is more prominent in organisations where there are imbalanced sex ratios, high power balance differentials between men and women and the workplace is highly sexualised (Barak et al., 1995; Bell, Quick, & Cacyota, 2002; Burgess & Borgida, 1997; Gutek & Koss, 1993; Konrad & Gutek, 1986). These studies indicate that women in male-dominated environments experience the highest levels of sexual harassment. However, some scholars discard the SRS model, maintaining that women in integrated and predominately female work groups experience more sexual harassment than women working in male-dominated environments (Fain & Anderton, 1987; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998).

Criticisms have also been made that the theory ignores the characteristics of the perpetrator and other organisational variables (O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998). Similarly to the sociocultural model, the SRS model is now somewhat dated and although women are known to be the main victims of sexual harassment, there are now increasing incidents of sexual harassment involving male victims in a workplace (Holland et al., 2016; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2016; Waldo et al., 1998) (see section 2.3.4). This study determines the extent to which SRS is perceived to trigger inappropriate sexual behaviour by customers.

#### **2.5.9 Natural-bio model**

The natural-bio model posits that sexual harassment represents “an expression of sexual attraction, and is a natural part of human behaviour” (Pina et al., 2009, p.132). Proposed by Tangri et al. (1982), the model suggests that “men and women are naturally attracted to each other, that both sexes participate in sexually-oriented behaviour in the

workplace” (p. 35). Men have a stronger inner drive to be sexually aggressive (Hakim, 2010) and to find a mate and, consequently, behave in a sexually aggressive manner (Barak et al., 1995; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998; Samoluk & Pretty, 1994). The intention in their behaviour, therefore, is not to harass, but is an expression of sexual attraction and a natural consequence of their sexual assertiveness (Barak et al., 1995).

A key strength of the model is that it “acknowledges the innate human instincts potentially driving sexually aggressive behaviour” (Pina et al., 2009, p. 132).

Furthermore, it provides an explanation for sexual harassment as it takes into account why women flirt and why men express power. However, Tangri et al. (1982) argued that it treats sexual harassment in a simplistic way, trivialising it and implying that such behaviour is normal and harmless. Furthermore, Tangri and Hayes (1997) argued that the natural-bio model is weak because if hormone sex-drives were the cause of sexual harassment, studies would reveal younger men and older women, whose sex drives are at their peak, to be the main perpetrators, however the reverse is more prevalent. There is little empirical evidence supporting the natural-bio model, and most scholars including Tangri et al. (1982), have dismissed the natural perspective, claiming that harassment is not about sexual intimacy, but rather about the degradation of a victim (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; O’Hare & O’Donohue, 1998).

This section has discussed various theories on the causality of sexual harassment, including power, and the organisational, sociocultural and natural-bio models. The extent to which these theories influence the sexual behaviour of customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry is investigated in this study. The influence of industrial characteristics and the aesthetic labour of employees is also considered, to determine their impact on customer behaviour in the case location.

## **2.6 Response**

I was the good girl who always thanked people for their rudeness and put a gloss on everything. On the outside I was a picture of poise, but on the inside, I was paralysed. (Goodsell, 1997, p. 22)

Extensive studies have investigated how employees cope with stress in the workplace (Lazarus, 2000; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003). ‘Coping’ is defined as a process concerned with what is actually said or done in a specific situation (Lazarus, 2000). Studies indicate that victims of sexual harassment adopt multiple coping strategies, including internally and externally focused approaches (Cox, Dorfman, & Stephan, 2005; Roumeliotis & Kleiner, 2005). Common coping strategies identified in



the literature are discussed in this section, as presented under the main category ‘response’ in the conceptual framework (see Figure 5, p. 15).

Victims of sexual harassment are known to adopt four main coping strategies: “avoidance/denial (dismissing the behaviour as a joke), social coping (discussing with friends), confrontation/negotiation (asking the harasser to stop) and advocacy seeking (making a formal complaint)” (O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2009, p. 511). Research suggests that individuals each have a preferred set of coping strategies. Some individuals may directly confront their harasser, and others may engage in avoidance or denial tactics. Addressing sexual harassment is an extremely complex, sensitive issue; hence, there is no single solution.

### **2.6.1 Internal-focused responses (passive)**

Internally focused responses, known also as passive/indirect responses (Yagil, Karnieli-Miller, Eisikovits, & Enosh, 2006), are those strategies used by victims to internally manage their emotions and thoughts (Reeves, 2010; Sigal, Braden-Maguire, Patt, Goodrich, & Perrino, 2003). The most common emotional strategy used by sexual harassment victims is denial (Yagil, 2008), which involves “putting on a brave face” in the hope that the experience will be forgotten (Bishop & Hoel, 2008, p. 148). Denial also occurs when employees normalise sexual behaviour by customers (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Folgerø & Fjeldstad, 1995; Handy, 2006), interpreting it as a trivial, everyday inconvenience (Sigal et al., 2003).

Other internally focused responses include tolerating a situation (endurance), detachment or self-blame, in which victims attribute harassment to their own behaviours (Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Reeves, 2010). Hence, employees not only physically remove themselves from a difficult situation but also mentally disengage using emotional coping strategies (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995; E. A. Skinner et al., 2003). Although destructive to individuals, internally focused strategies are intended to help victims cope with harassment (Reeves, 2010). These strategies, however, are the least effective, because they do not stop harassment and are costly to organisations because they decrease productivity and increase turnover (Gruber & Smith, 1995; Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Dubois, 1997). The impact of sexual harassment on the employee personally also has significant negative consequences, including a deterioration of their health and mental well-being (Collinsworth, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 2009).

### **2.6.2 External focused responses (passive)**

Externally focused strategies are responses that focus on actively solving a problem (Reeves, 2010). The most common externally focused strategy used by employees to cope with sexual harassment is avoidance (Fitzgerald, Swan, et al., 1995; Sigal et al., 2003; Welsh & Gruber, 1999). Avoidance strategies are particularly common with women in low-skill, low-status jobs (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Samoluk & Pretty, 1994) and young female employees who are inexperienced and lack confidence (Folgerø & Fjeldstad, 1995; Gruber & Bjorn, 1986). Humour is also used to deflect harassment by joking about it with colleagues (Welsh, 1999; Yagil, 2008). Assertive or direct responses (i.e., directly confronting the harasser or lodging a formal complaint) are the least frequent responses used by sexual harassment victims (Reeves, 2010; Sigal et al., 2003). Scholars claim that a direct response is more effective (Hunt, Davidson, Fielden, & Hoel, 2010; Thacker, 1994; Wilkinson & Campbell, 1997), as a passive response indicates that the behaviour is welcome, and encourages the perpetrator to continue, which is not desirable.

### **2.6.3 Emotional labour**

Hospitality service encounters have been described as performances or drama, with the participants as actors and audience (Grove, Fisk, & Dorsch, 1998; Hemmington, 2007; Morgan, Watson, & Hemmington, 2008). Customers (audience) have different expectations, making each service interaction a different performance (Folgerø & Fjeldstad, 1995). Employers not only expect their staff (actors) to “act out their role by appearing welcoming, friendly and pleased to serve the customer, but they are also expected to genuinely feel this way” (Worsfold & McCann, 2000, p.254).

During a service encounter, employees may be expected to engage in emotional labour to act out their roles. Coined by Hochschild (1983), ‘emotional labour’ refers to “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p. 7). The emotional labour perspective assumes that management proscribes the display rules of employees, whereby employees must exhibit only positive emotions regardless of how they may be feeling or are being treated by a customer. Service employees may be expected to create the impression that they enjoy performing their role (Shamir, 1980), by using their bodies, emotions and personalities to create a pleasant experience for customers (Hall, 1993). They may feel they must provide ‘service with a smile’ and always be friendly, polite and cheerful, irrespective of a customer’s behaviour towards them (Aslan & Kozak, 2012; Grandey et al., 2004; Johanson & Woods, 2008). Watt

(2007) and (Kensbock et al., 2015) found that hotel employees are expected to enact emotional labour for prolonged periods of time despite being subjected to inappropriate customer behaviour, such as sexual harassment. Many employees experience job stress, causing “burnout” due to the impact of emotional labour (Lashley, 2008, p. 78).

#### **2.6.4 Emotional regulation**

Service employees also use ‘emotional regulation’ through surface acting (engaging in behaviour change) and deep acting (engaging in cognitive change) (Grandey et al., 2004; Hochschild, 1983) to cope with sexual harassment. ‘Emotional regulation’ refers to an individual’s capacity to self-regulate or suppress emotions and exhibit positive emotions (Gross, 1998; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Lazarus, 2000; Naqvi, 2013). When interacting with customers, service employees may be required to maintain emotional regulation, regardless of how a customer may be behaving (Grandey, 2003; Snyder, 1974). This becomes particularly difficult for employees who experience sexual harassment by customers. The conflict employees experience between genuinely felt emotions and expected exhibited emotions is what Middleton (1989) referred to as ‘emotional dissonance’. Emotional dissonance requires employees to use more emotional labour to regulate their emotions (Middleton, 1989). Liu et al. (2014) found that sexual harassment by customers significantly affected an employee’s ability to maintain display rules (i.e., emotional regulation and emotional dissonance). The concept of emotional dissonance coined by Middleton (1989) is comparable to the emotional labour model developed by Hochschild (1983). Both theories suggest that employees actively engage in deep emotional behaviour when interacting with customers.

#### **2.6.5 Detachment**

Detachment or self-estrangement (Mills, 1951), whereby employees attempt to “disconnect or detach themselves from a difficult situation as a way of protecting themselves” (Guerrier & Adib, 2000, p. 701), may also be used. Shamir (1980) proposed that employees become alienated from their role, performing the role in an automatic, robotic manner to help them cope with person–role conflict (Reynolds & Harris, 2006). Employees may also respond to sexual harassment by psychologically distancing themselves from a situation, adopting a separate persona at work and hiding behind this façade, then leaving their role behind when they leave the workplace (Folgerø & Fjeldstad, 1995; Larsen & Aske, 1992). Respondents in a study by Folgerø and Fjeldstad (1995) described wearing a metaphorical *cloak* at work to protect

themselves from customer abuse, then removing the cloak as they leave work. This suggests a sort of functional schizophrenia, in which a harasser is perceived to assault only the cloak, and not the person behind it.

#### **2.6.6 Informal support**

Service employees may also seek assistance from colleagues, such as asking a colleague to cover, so they can remove themselves from a situation (Blackstone et al., 2009; Gettman & Gelfand, 2007; Handy, 2006). Employees may also seek mutual support by sharing experiences and coping in a collaborative manner (Carver et al., 1989; Hochschild, 1983; Reynolds & Harris, 2006). Korczynski (2003) suggested that this approach creates a 'community of coping' and may potentially reduce staff turnover. Naqvi (2013) further suggested that the impact of emotional labour and emotional exhaustion is reduced when employees receive co-worker support.

#### **2.6.7 Formal complaint (active)**

Tseng and Kang (2015) found that whistleblowing intention is closely associated with employees' perception of the organisations' anti-harassment policies, as well as the perceived integrity of management. Employees with a high perception of anti-harassment policy who feel supported by management are more likely to complain about customers because they feel protected. However, victims who report sexual harassment are known to experience negative outcomes, including a worsening of their work situation (Dansky & Kilpatrick, 1997; Yagil et al., 2006) or being dismissed from their jobs (McCann, 2005; Sigal et al., 2003). These are key reasons why most victims do not report harassment and instead ignore it (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008; Rogers & Henson, 1997; Welsh & Gruber, 1999), despite feeling anger and disgust (Gutek, 1985).

Fitzgerald, Swan, et al. (1995) claimed that reporting harassment leads to negative emotional and unfavourable job-related outcomes for at least half of all women who complain. Additionally, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2008) found that 22% of victims who made a formal complaint experienced negative outcomes, as a result of their complaint. The study also found that 84% of victims did not report harassment, mainly because they did not perceive the behaviour to be serious enough. Victims are also known to not report sexual harassment for fear of blame, disbelief, humiliation or damage to their careers (Cortina, 2004; Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Mkono, 2010).

It is evident from the foregoing discussions that victims of sexual harassment adopt multiple coping strategies. A key objective of this research was to gain insight into how Cook Islands hospitality employees respond to sexual harassment by customers. Do they adopt a preferred set of coping strategies? Do they respond assertively by confronting the customer, or resort to emotional responses such as avoidance, denial and detachment? Why do they respond this way? These questions have been explored through one-to-one in-depth interviews with hospitality employees.

## **2.7 Impact**

Extensive research has been done into understanding that sexual harassment has a significant negative impact on victims, as well as organisations (Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Collinsworth et al., 2009; Merkin, 2008b; Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2016; Willness, 2005).

### **2.7.1 Impact on victims**

Employees who experience sexual harassment are known to experience a deterioration in their emotional and psychological well-being, suffering feelings of anxiety and depression, lowered self-esteem (Hunt et al., 2010; Salin, 2008; Vijayasiri, 2008) or post-traumatic stress disorder (Dansky & Kilpatrick, 1997; Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009). Furthermore, victims may suffer a deterioration in their physical health, experiencing headaches, sleeplessness, fatigue, nausea, shortness of breath or weight loss/gain (Cho, 2002; X.-Y. Liu et al., 2014; Lockwood & Marda, 2014; McCann, 2005).

In the workplace, harassed employees are likely to show a decline in their work performance and may engage in withdrawal behaviour (i.e., absenteeism) (Chan et al., 2008; Hunt et al., 2010; Roumeliotis & Kleiner, 2005) or may even leave their jobs (Bridges, 2011; Cogin & Fish, 2009; Merkin, 2008b). Some victims are also known to experience a negative effect on relationships with family and friends (Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007; Stein, 2007). Despite the significant negative impacts of sexual harassment on the employee, most employees will tolerate the behaviour rather than confront the harasser (see section 2.8).

### **2.7.2 Impact on workplace**

Sexual harassment can have adverse effects on the workplace environment, including low morale, employee turnover and decreased job satisfaction and productivity (Poulston, 2008a; Tangri et al., 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Sexual harassment

can also negatively affect the employees' organisational commitment and their attitude towards their employer (Chan et al., 2008; Gettman & Gelfand, 2007; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). Victims may engage in 'work withdrawal' strategies (i.e., absenteeism, lateness, task avoidance) or 'job withdrawal' (quitting) (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Gruber, 1989; C. L. Williams, 2003). Work withdrawal behaviour such as purposefully neglecting work, lowering productivity and sabotage may be considered a form of retaliation by some victims (Willness et al., 2007). Fitzgerald et al. (1997) found that victims of sexual harassment experience an average productivity decline of about 10%, 24% take leave to avoid their harasser and 10% leave their jobs, partly because of harassment. While the findings of Fitzgerald's study are concerning, they are somewhat dated. Further research is therefore needed to establish the extent to which these findings would be valid in contemporary hospitality.

### **2.7.3 Impact on organisations**

There are also significant financial costs for organisations, including through absenteeism, staff turnover, increased training and hiring costs, reduced productivity, lost revenue, legal costs and medical costs for victims. Other organisational problems include workplace conflict, decreased organisational commitment and a negative reputation of the company (Dansky & Kilpatrick, 1997; Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Ineson et al., 2013; Joychild, 2000; Prekel, 2001; Vijayasiri, 2008). Despite the significant costs associated with sexual harassment in the workplace, most organisations ignore the issue.

### **2.7.4 Overview: Impacts of sexual harassment in the workplace**

To facilitate a better understanding of the impact of sexual harassment, a comprehensive analysis of the literature was undertaken. Table 4 provides a synthesis of literature pertaining to the impact of sexual harassment on individuals and on organisations. Studies were reviewed and classified into two main categories: 'impact on individual' and 'impact on organisation'. Upon further analysis of the two categories, sub-themes began to emerge. For example, depression, decreased self-esteem and health problems were emerging sub-themes within the category 'impact on individual', while decreased organisational commitment, decreased productivity and employee turnover were the consequences of sexual harassment for an organisation. Furthermore, it is evident that some sub-themes merge across the two categories. For example, absenteeism and turnover negatively affect the individual as well as the organisation. In addition, decreased job satisfaction (impact on an individual) results in decreased organisational

commitment and decreased productivity (impact on an organisation).

*Table 4.* Overview on impact of sexual harassment

<b>Impact on individual (see section 2.7.1)</b>	
	Literature
Withdrawal behaviour (absenteeism)	Aaron & Dry (1992); Alexander et al. (2005); Bridges, (2011); Chan et al. (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007, 2009); Colquitt & Kleiner (1996); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1991, 1992); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Grandey et al. (Grandey, 2003); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Joychild (2000); Kleiner & Takeyama (1998); Lockwood & Marda (2014); McCann (2005); McDonald, (2012); Merkin (2009); O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); Poulston 2008a); Prekel (2001); Roumeliotis & Kleiner (2005); Thacker (1994); Welsh (1999); Vijayasiri (2008)
Emotional distress and burnout	Collinsworth et al. (2009); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1995); Grandey (2003); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Liu et al. (2014); Salin (2008); Tangri et al. (1982); Thacker (1994); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009)
Decreased self-esteem and self-morale	Aslan & Kozak (2012); Collinsworth et al. (2009); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1992); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Harris & Reynolds (2003); Jones et al. (2013); Joychild (2000); Karatepe & Tizabi (2011); Keith et al. (2010); Liu et al. (2014); V. K. Luthar & Luthar (2002); McDonald, (2012); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009)
Psychological (depression and anxiety)	Alexander et al. (2005); Bishop & Hoel (2008); Bland & Stalcup (2001); Cho (2002); Cogin & Fish (2007); Collinsworth et al. (2014); Cortina & Berdahl (2008); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Fitzgerald et al. (1997); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Harris & Reynolds (2003); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Jones et al. (2013); Kleiner & Takeyama (1998); Lockwood & Marda (2014); McCann (2005); McDonald (2012); Merkin (2009); O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United Forward Together (2014); Salin (2008); Shamir (1980); Thacker (1994); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Vijayasiri (2008); Welsh (1999); Welsh & Gruber (1999); Willness et al. (2007); Worsfold & McCann (2000)
PTSD	Alexander et al. (2005); Bergman et al., (2002); Chan et al. (2008); Collinsworth et al. (2009); Cortina & Berdahl (2008); Crocker & Kalembara (1999); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); McDonald, (2012) 'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998; Reeves, (2010); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Welsh (1999) Willness et al. (2007)
Decreased job satisfaction	Alexander et al. (2005); Aslan & Kozak (2012); Bishop & Hoel (2008); Chan et al. (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007, 2009); Collinsworth et al. (2009); Colquitt & Kleiner (1996); Cortina & Berdahl (2008); Crocker & Kalembara (1999); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1991, 1992); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Grandy et al. (2004); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Gutek (1993); Harris & Reynolds (2003); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Karatepe & Tizabi (2011); Keith et al. (2010); Konrad & Gutek (1986); Liu et al. (2014); Lockwood & Marda (2014); V. K. Luthar & Luthar (2002); McCann (2005); McDonald, (2012) Merkin (2009); O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); Reeves (2010); Roumeliotis & Kleiner (2005); Sojo et al. (2016); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Welsh (1999); Welsh & Gruber (1999); Willness et al. (2007)
Employee turnover	Aaron & Dry (1992); Alexander et al. (2005); Bridges (2011); Cho (2002); Cogin & Fish (2007, 2009); Colquitt & Kleiner (1996); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); (Eller, 1991); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1994); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Gutek & Morasch (1982); Harris & Reynolds (2003); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Konrad & Gutek (1986); Liu et al. (2014); McCann (2005); McDonald, (2012); Merkin (2008b); O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); Poulston 2007; Prekel (2001); Roumeliotis & Kleiner (2005); The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United Forward Together (2014); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Vijayasiri (2008); Welsh (1999);

Impact on personal life and relationships	Alexander et al. (2005); Joychild (2000); Ramsaroop & Parumasur (2007); Stein (2007); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009) Welsh (1999); Willness et al. (2007)
Health problems	Alexander et al. (2005); Cho (2002); Cogin & Fish (2007); Cortina & Berdahl (2008); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1994); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Harris & Reynolds (2003); Ineson et al. (2013); Jones et al. (2013); Keith et al. (2010); Liu, et al., 2013; Lockwood & Marda (2014); Magley, et al., 1997; McCann (2005); O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); Shamir (1980); Sojo et al. (2016); Tangri et al. (1982); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Vijayasiri (2008); Welsh (1999); Willness et al. (2007)
<b>Impact on organisation (refer to section 2.7.2 and 2.7.3)</b>	
Decreased organisational commitment by employees	Alexander et al. (2005); Chan et al. (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007); Cortina & Berdahl (2008); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); McCann (2005); Merkin (2009); Miner-Rubino & Cortina (2004) McDonald (2012); O'Leary-Kelly et al. (2009); Ramsaroop & Parumasur (2007); Tangri et al. (1982); Willness et al. (2007)
Decreased productivity by employees	Aaron & Dry (1992); Alexander et al. (2005); Bland & Stalcup (2001); Bridges (2011); Chan et al. (2008); Cho (2002); Colquitt & Kleiner (1996); Cortina & Berdahl (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007, 2009); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1991, 1992); Gutek (1993); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Joychild (2000); Keith et al. (2010); Kleiner & Takeyama (1998); Liu et al. (2014); V. K. Luthar & Luthar (2002); McCann (2005); McDonald, (2012) O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); Poulston (2008a); Poulston, (2008b) Ramsaroop & Parumasur (2007); Reeves (2010); Roumeliotis & Kleiner (2005); Tangri et al. (1982); Thacker (1994); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Vijayasiri (2008); Welsh & Gruber (1999); Willness et al. (2007)
Withdrawal behaviour (absenteeism)	Aaron & Dry (1992); Alexander et al. (2005); Bridges (2011); Chan et al. (2008); Cogin & Fish (2007, 2009); Colquitt & Kleiner (1996); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Eller (1991, 1992); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1994); Grandey et al. (2004); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Joychild (2000); Kleiner & Takeyama (1998); Lockwood & Marda (2014); McCann (2005); McDonald, (2012); Merkin (2009); O'Hare & O'Donohue (1998); Poulston (2008a); Poulston, (2008b); Prekel (2001); Roumeliotis & Kleiner (2005); Thacker (1994); Welsh (1999); Vijayasiri (2008)
Employee turnover	Aaron & Dry (1992); Alexander et al. (2005); Bridges (2011); Cho (2002); Cogin & Fish (2007, 2009); Colquitt & Kleiner (1996); Dansky & Kilpatrick (1997); Folgerø & Fjeldstad (1994); Gettman & Gelfand (2007); Gruber & Bjorn (1986); Gutek & Morasch (1982); Harris & Reynolds (2003); Hunt et al. (2010); Ineson et al. (2013); Konrad & Gutek (1986); Liu et al. (2014); McCann (2005); McDonald (2012) Merkin (2008b); O'Hare & O'Donohue; Poulston (2008a, 2008b); Prekel (2001); Roumeliotis & Kleiner (2005); The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United Forward Together (2014); Theocharous & Philaretou (2009); Vijayasiri (2008); Welsh (1999)

## 2.8 Tolerance

Hospitality employees perceive theft as a more serious ethical issue than sexual harassment. (Poulston, 2008a, p. 234).

Sexual harassment is tolerated more in the hospitality industry than in any other industry (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Weber et al., 2002; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

While this high perceived level of tolerance is predominantly attributed to the inherent nature of the industry, other contributing factors exist. These perspectives are presented



as themes under the main category ‘tolerance’ in the conceptual framework (see Figure 5, p. 15) and are considered below.

### **2.8.1 Characteristics of hospitality industry**

Studies indicate that those who are attracted to hospitality tend to have personalities that are more tolerant of antisocial behaviour (Crow et al., 1995; Poulston, 2008a). This is an industry that is highly sexualised and flirtatious behaviour is considered part of the service exchange (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Jostling, flirting and sexual banter is prevalent in the industry (Agrusa et al., 2002; Uggen & Blackstone, 2004), and some employees enjoy this behaviour because it helps relieve stress and make the workplace less austere (Pina et al., 2009; C. L. Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999).

Furthermore, service employees are expected to keep guests happy, to put aside their morals and values, and accept behaviours they would not normally condone in other situations (Bishop & Hoel, 2008; Yagil, 2008). In particular, they are known to trivialise sexual harassment by customers, viewing it as a workplace norm (Bishop & Hoel, 2008; Grandey et al., 2004) and part of working in the industry (Giuffre & Williams, 1994; Massey University, n.d.). In a study by Agrusa, Tanner and Coats (2000) investigating the perceptions and attitudes of restaurant employees, of sexual harassment, all participants agreed that certain behaviours that would be considered sexual harassment in other industries would not be viewed as such in the restaurant industry. The normalisation of sexual behaviour in hospitality creates a culture and environment that is tolerant of sexual harassment.

This study explores tolerance to sexual harassment by customers and identifies the key reasons that hospitality employees tolerate inappropriate sexual behaviour by customers.

### **2.8.2 Organisational climate**

The organisational climate influences an employee’s tolerance of sexual harassment. Fitzgerald et al.’s (1997) theory on ‘organisational tolerance for sexual harassment’ (OTSH) proposed that in organisations characterised by strong OTSH, employees are more tolerant of sexual harassment and less likely to report an incident because they believe complaints will not be taken seriously and perpetrators will not be disciplined (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996; O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2009; Wasti et al., 2000). Furthermore, many victims may tolerate sexual harassment because they fear negative

outcomes such as being blamed, being labelled a whistle-blower, not being believed or losing their jobs (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gutek, 1993; Murphy, Samples, Morales, & Shadbeh, 2015; C. Williams, 2003). Employers are also known to tolerate sexual harassment in a workplace and ignore the issue because of the expense associated with establishing prevention programmes (Vijayasiri, 2008; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). This approach is negligent and short-sighted as the costs associated with the occurrence of sexual harassment are often significantly higher (see section 2.7.3). The significant impact of sexual harassment on employees should also not be ignored (see section 2.7.1).

### **2.8.3 Personal characteristics**

Personal characteristics such as age may also influence tolerance of sexual harassment. Young female employees, for example, are considered more tolerant (Reilly et al., 1986) and less likely to report sexual harassment by customers because they lack confidence (Ineson et al., 2013) and perceive customers to be important (Tseng & Kang, 2015). Conversely, other studies suggest older women are more tolerant of sexual harassment because they have more at stake and are likely to have a family to support (Barak, Fisher, & Houston, 1992; Cortina & Wasti, 2005). Blackstone et al. (2014) found that age, maturity and experience influenced tolerance of sexual harassment, which suggests that behaviours deemed acceptable during adolescent years are often later redefined as harassment.

Participants in this study were of varying demographic characteristics, that is, gender, age and job role. A diverse sample allowed the researcher to identify personal characteristics that influenced the participants' tolerance to sexual harassment. Particular attention was given to identifying gender differences in attitudes and perceptions to sexual harassment. Other factors known to affect tolerance, such as industry characteristics and organisational climate, were also considered.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a theoretical overview of the existing literature on sexual harassment in the workplace, with emphasis on customer-perpetrated harassment in the hospitality industry. A conceptual framework was developed (see Figure 5, p. 15), identifying the key categories and themes to be explored in the literature. Previous research on sexual harassment has focused predominantly on these six key categories, namely, definition and dimensions, incidence, causality, response, impact and tolerance.

This literature review has explored the incidence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry and identified the key causality factors, with particular attention to the inherent characteristics of the industry. However, the incidence of customer-perpetrated harassment and the extent to which these causality models are relevant in the Cook Islands hospitality industry are yet to be established.

Hospitality employees possess a high level of tolerance to sexual harassment, despite the significant negative effects they experience, both personally and professionally. Employees adopt multiple coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment by customers. Currently unknown, however, is the extent to which Cook Islands hospitality employees tolerate sexual harassment by customers, their response to this behaviour and the impact of the harassment on them.

It is these gaps, identified from this literature review that provided a strong rationale for this study and formed the research questions to be explored. As no prior knowledge exists on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands, an exploratory approach was deemed most appropriate to conduct this study. Furthermore, the research questions that emerged from this literature review could not be answered through a quantitative inquiry as they required in-depth understanding and insight into participants' experiences of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a sensitive matter and must be researched in a manner that will treat participants with dignity and respect and build a trusting relationship with the researcher. Only a qualitative approach would achieve these outcomes and generate rich data that would provide authentic insight into participants' experiences, perceptions and emotions. Finally, the discussions presented in this chapter offer a theoretical perspective to the chapters that follow.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Research methodologies that were designed to identify issues in a dominant culture and provide solutions are not necessarily suitable in searching for solutions for Pacific peoples, whose knowledge and ways of being have unique epistemologies (Vaiote, 2006, p. 22)

### **3.1 Chapter outline**

In this chapter, the research design and methods used to conduct this qualitative inquiry are discussed. An exploratory case study (see Yin, 2014) was undertaken in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, to investigate the sexual harassment experiences of hospitality employees by customers. The chapter begins by outlining the rationale for this study and the research aims and objectives. The research paradigm is then discussed, to explain the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach of the study. Primary data collection comprising semi-structured interviews is outlined in conjunction with the sample criteria and sample profile. The rationale for adopting a grounded theory methodology is justified, as are the thematic analysis and coding techniques employed during the analysis phase. The chapter concludes by highlighting the limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

### **3.2 Rationale for the study**

Extensive research has been conducted investigating the incidence, cause, response, impact and tolerance of sexual harassment in the hospitality workplace (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Keith et al., 2010; Poulston, 2008a). Despite the vast amount of knowledge, studies have focused predominantly on Western countries, creating a gap in the literature on sexual harassment in developing countries in the South Pacific. In particular, no research has been conducted on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry (Cook Islands National Research Committee, 2016). Consequently, it is unknown whether sexual harassment by customers is a problem in this location. Accordingly, the lack of knowledge of the phenomenon in this setting provides the rationale for this study.

#### **3.2.1 Research questions**

The aim of this study was to investigate the sexual harassment experiences of Cook Islands hospitality employees by customers, and to understand what social and environmental factors influence this behaviour. The comprehensive review of the literature, presented in chapter two, raised questions relating to sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. In particular, these questions relate

to incidence, causality, response, impact and tolerance. Accordingly, it is these unanswered questions that form the research objectives of this study. The key questions to be answered are:

1. What understanding do Cook Islands hospitality employees and employers have, of sexual harassment?
2. What sexual harassment experiences have employees encountered involving customers as perpetrators?
3. What factors have contributed to these experiences?
4. How do employees cope with sexual harassment by customers and how have these experiences affected them?
5. To what extent do hospitality employees and employers perceive sexual harassment by customers to be a problem?

The above research questions address the gaps in the literature identified from the literature review in chapter two (see section 2.9). The correlation between each research question and the gap being addressed is illustrated in Table 5.

*Table 5.* Addressing the literature gaps: Correlation between research question and literature gaps

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Gap in literature (Category)</b>
1. What understanding do Cook Islands hospitality employees and employers have of sexual harassment?	Defining sexual harassment
2. What sexual harassment experiences have employees encountered involving customers as perpetrators?	Incidence
3. What factors have contributed to these experiences?	Causality
4. How do employees cope with sexual harassment by customers and how have these experiences affected them?	Response/impact/tolerance
5. To what extent do hospitality employees and employers perceive sexual harassment by customers to be a problem?	Incidence/tolerance

An exploratory approach (Stebbins, 2001) was required to undertake this study as an exploratory method would provide in-depth understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon. The rationale for an exploratory approach using a qualitative methodology is discussed in section 3.4.

### 3.3 The research paradigm

Integral to undertaking this research was gaining an understanding of my philosophical stance and identifying the research paradigm with which I felt most comfortable in conducting this study. In particular, I needed to understand my ontological and epistemological position in order to recognise how I best obtain knowledge. Individuals possess unique values and beliefs that significantly influence how they view the world (Hart, 1971). We form opinions based on our assumptions and perceptions and on preconceived ideas of what we consider right and wrong. The views that we hold help us to understand life and define our sense of reality. They are our philosophical paradigms and what Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) refer to as “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator. The philosophical paradigms that we possess significantly influence how we as individuals seek to acquire knowledge and undertake research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our philosophical paradigm also has implications for the methodological approach that we adopt as researchers, including our data collection techniques. Guba and Lincoln (1994) claimed that our approach to acquiring knowledge is influenced by our philosophical paradigms and therefore, as researchers, we must reflect on our position and gain clarity about what paradigm best informs and guides us. We must also seek to understand the values and beliefs that we hold as researchers (Grant & Giddings, 2002).

Upon reflecting on my own philosophical stance, values and beliefs, I realised that the paradigm to which I relate most clearly is the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. The constructivist-interpretivist approach is inherently aligned with my identity because it embraces the cultural values and traditions embedded in Pacific Islands communication (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Halapua, 2000; Vaoleti, 2006). Constructivist-interpretivists seek to gain an understanding of a phenomenon by adopting a *theory building* approach whereby meanings *emerge* from the data, in contrast to the *theory testing* approach of positivists, who adopt a position of objectivity based on law-like generalisations (Smythe & Giddings, 2007).

In consideration of my philosophical positioning and the current gap in the literature, a theory building approach was deemed most appropriate to conduct this study. Methods aligned to the interpretive approach are mainly qualitative, generating rich data from which the researcher proposes new concepts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Common qualitative strategies include case studies (Yin, 2014), grounded theory methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) and participative inquiry methods, such as interviews

(Smythe & Giddings, 2007). These techniques and methodological approaches were all adopted in this study and are discussed further in this chapter.

### **3.3.1 Ontological paradigm**

‘Ontology’ refers to the basic beliefs about the nature of reality and the assumptions we make about the social world (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). The ontological position of an interpretivist is one of constructivism (Patton, 2002). Interpretivists view the world based on the assumption that reality is made up of multiple constructions and that because we each have different perspectives and perceptions, there will be multiple realities of a given situation. Additionally, our values, beliefs and experiences significantly influence our world view and our interpretation of reality. It is as if we wear glasses, and the lens through which we look shapes the way in which we choose to view the world. Realising my ontological position enabled me to understand that, just like me, my participants would each possess *their* own unique construct of the phenomenon I was exploring. My aim, as the researcher, was to understand their perspectives and perceptions and to make sense of their experiences.

As constructive-interpretivists, the lens through which we view life experiences is influenced by multiple factors including our culture and upbringing. Having been born and raised in the Cook Islands, I am conscious of the fact that I view the world from a Pacific Islands perspective. Consequently, I believe that these cultural dimensions positively influenced my approach and behaviour, when undertaking this study. For example, the Cook Islands society is perceived as a highly collective environment (Hofstede, 2009) with relatively low power distance (Berno 1999; Schnazel et al. 2014; Tuagalu, 2008). With this understanding, it was essential, prior to commencing each interview, that I established a genuine rapport, removed barriers and connected with my participants. (Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 30) advocates the concept of mata’ofa when undertaking Pacific research. “Mata’ofa, directly translated as a face that radiates love, encourages the researcher to be inclusive, generous, positive, warm and perceptive”.

Being a native Cook Islander was a significant advantage to the study as I felt I was able to build a genuine sense of trust with participants. Furthermore, because I possessed first-hand knowledge of the cultural mores, I was mindful of issues that I knew would cause offence.

Sexual harassment is a difficult topic to research because of its sensitive nature (Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009). Questions can potentially be intrusive and probe

emotional and distressing issues. Furthermore, in Pacific communities, sex is a taboo or forbidden subject and, as such, cultural mores discourage open dialogue (S. Ali, 2006; Veukiso-Ulugia, 2013). With this knowledge, it was important that I approached each interview with careful consideration, to prevent embarrassment and discomfort.

Throughout my research, every effort was made to maintain social and cultural sensitivity and to ensure that the professional integrity of the study was maintained.

That I had worked extensively in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga was an added advantage, as I was also familiar with the business environment. Although my close connection to the location is acknowledged as a potential limitation to the study, because of researchers' bias (refer section 3.7.2), it is worth noting that I have been residing in New Zealand for over a decade, so I am no longer completely immersed in Cook Islands society. My time abroad has exposed me to many diverse experiences that have allowed me to gain different perspectives and, consequently, maintain a level of criticality throughout the study.

### **3.3.2 Epistemological paradigm**

'Epistemology' originates from the Greek word *epistome* and refers to knowledge (Myers, 2013). It relates to assumptions about knowledge and how it can be acquired. To a researcher, it concerns the nature of our relationship with reality and how we interpret the social world. My epistemological stance as a constructivist-interpretivist is that knowledge is socially constructed, relationships are intersubjective and learning occurs through the interaction of people (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In light of my lifelong career in the hospitality industry, it is not surprising that I relate to the constructivist-interpretivist approach because of the socially constructed environment that is an inherent characteristic of the hospitality industry. This is an industry based on strong social relationships (Lashley, 2008), in which knowledge and learning are gained through interaction with people such as customers and colleagues. Similarly, in interpretive research, knowledge is obtained when researchers interact with their participants in an effort to understand their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them. In other words, the viewpoint of an interpretivist, as suggested by Patton (2002, p. 96), is that "what is defined or perceived by people as real is real in its consequences". Constructivist-interpretivists therefore aim to enter inside the world of their research subjects, to *see* the world through *their* eyes and to understand *their* perspectives (Crotty, 1998).



Constructivist-interpretivists also claim that multiple knowledges can coexist because differing social, cultural, political and gender factors influence individual interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I agree with this claim and therefore support the ‘best fit’ approach recommended by Boxall and Purcell (2011), who maintain that when working within an environment, one must consider the sociocultural factors that exist and adapt accordingly. Similarly, adopting a ‘best fit’ approach was crucial to the success of this study. Having first-hand knowledge of the sociocultural factors in this location was a significant benefit, as it enabled me to contextualise the information I obtained through interviews and gain authentic insight into the experiences of my participants.

### **3.3.3 Adopting a talanoa perspective**

Talanoa embodies our understanding of the inner feelings and experience of who we are, what we want, and what we do as members of a shared community. (Halapua, 2000, p. 1)

Any form of research involving the Pacific Islands needs to take into account a number of factors, including Pacific people’s attitudes towards and perceptions of research, participants’ values, culture, education and language, and their relationship with the researcher (Prescott, 2008). Scholars claim that when undertaking Pacific research, a talanoa approach is a culturally appropriate method as it embraces the cultural values and traditions embedded in Pacific Islands communication (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Halapua, 2000; Vaioleti, 2006). Accordingly, when conducting this study, my epistemological stance as a constructivist-interpretivist allowed me to adopt a talanoa perspective.

Talanoa is “to talk in an informal way, to tell stories or relate experiences, interacting without a rigid framework” (Vaioleti, 2006, p23). It is a personal encounter, an open dialogue, in which people can speak from their heart and tell their stories, their realities and the world they see. Talanoa requires trust and respect from both parties and a willingness to be open minded (Nabobo-Baba, 2012). According to Vaioleti (2006), the talanoa approach allows for “more *mo’oni* (pure, real, authentic) information to be available for Pacific research than data derived from other research methods” (p. 21). Vaioleti (2006) cautions against assuming that all Western Eastern and Pacific knowledges have the same origins and that the same methodologies can be used for conducting research to obtain new knowledge. He proposed that “researchers whose knowing is derived from Western origins are unlikely to have values and lived realities that allow understanding of issues pertaining to knowledge and ways of being that originated from...the Pacific nations”. Traditional research methods which often do not

involve a relationship between the researcher and the participant “are based on different thinking from that of Pacific people” (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 22).

The ontological and epistemological roots of talanoa are closely linked to the constructivist-interpretivist approach (Prescott, 2008), to which I clearly align myself. The talanoa perspective is comparable to the grounded theory method (see section 3.4.1) in which major themes are identified, developed and explained (Vaiotele, 2006). An open style approach is adopted enabling questions to emerge naturally as part of the Talanoa discussions. A talanoa approach cannot take place if the researcher takes a distant position. The researcher and participant are regarded as being equal and inseparable. Both contribute to the discussion and therefore both benefit from the understanding gained from the experience (Prescott, 2008). It is an appropriate form of research because relationships form the underlying foundation upon which Pacific communities exist. “Rooted in oratory tradition, talanoa is a concept recognised in many island nations across the Pacific including Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Niue, Hawaii, the Cook Islands, and Tonga” (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p.2). Findings from a Talanoa approach should be more trustworthy and relevant, because the Pacific participants will feel that they have made a genuine contribution to the research (Vaiotele, 2006). Because I am a Pacific Islander, born and raised, the talanoa perspective is inherently embedded in my cultural values and beliefs. My intimate understanding of talanoa was beneficial to this study as it enabled me to develop authentic relationships with my participants whereby they could share their experiences and speak from their hearts with no preconceptions.

### **3.4 Qualitative strategies and method of inquiry**

Research shows that qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry have strengths and limitations (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003; Dörnyei, 2007) and that these approaches must be carefully considered in relation to the research questions being investigated. As no prior research exists on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry, an exploratory approach was required to conduct this study. An exploratory approach is used when little or no knowledge exists on a research problem (Stebbins, 2001). The focus is on gaining in-depth understanding and insight into the issue, in this case, into the phenomenon of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.

Furthermore, the research questions that arose from the literature review could only be answered through a qualitative inquiry as they required the researcher to interact intimately with the participants, to enter ‘their’ world, to listen to their stories and understand their perceptions. Qualitative research focuses on experiences, whereby knowledge is produced through social interaction. A qualitative approach is the most appropriate method to explore sexual harassment experiences and obtain rich data. Accordingly, a grounded theory methodology encompassing a talanoa perspective was applied to the study, and is discussed below.

### **3.4.1 Grounded theory methodology**

Grounded theory is a qualitative method of research involving a systematic, inductive and comparative approach to the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2006). Contrary to the deductive, theory testing approach inherent in quantitative research, grounded theory is used when conducting an inquiry with the purpose of generating theory. Grounded theory is a highly inductive method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) and assumes that theory is grounded in the data and will emerge through analysis. The development of such theory evolves through an iterative and systematic process that involves coding, categorising and comparing data without the guidance of a preconceived theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In grounded theory, the analysis of data is undertaken by means of a process called ‘constant comparison’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This process of constant comparison allows for the data to be broken down into manageable pieces, with each piece of data then being compared for similarities and differences. It is this constant comparative method, unique to the grounded theory approach that allows for the development of theory that is grounded in the data.

The grounded theory method was founded in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, and has seen several shifts since its inception, with the emergence of other grounded theories (Birks & Mills, 2011; Holton, 2007). The main cause for a move away from Glaser and Strauss’s traditional, classic approach is the differing philosophical positioning of subsequent grounded theorists. Since its origins, grounded theory has evolved and experienced some major milestones leading to a second-generation school by theorists, including Bowers and Schatzman (2009), Corbin and Strauss (1990), Charmaz (1995), Stern (1980), Clarke (2005) and Morse et al. (2009). Much debate exists around what version of grounded theory is correct and what direction the method should take. Irrespective of this controversy, when selecting a grounded theory approach, researchers must carefully consider their philosophical stance and ensure there is congruence with

their chosen methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). In light of this statement, a constructivist grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2006) was considered the most suitable approach for this study. Constructivist grounded theory was developed by Kathy Charmaz in the mid-1990s (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 1995) during the ‘fourth moment’ of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Charmaz decided to move away from the positivist approach of the Glaserian and Straussian grounded theory schools, approaching grounded theory instead through a constructivist lens (Charmaz, 2006). It is the constructivist approach to the grounded theory method that clearly aligns with my philosophical stance, hence justifying the rationale for this method. Constructivist grounded theory assumes that knowledge is socially produced through interaction and acknowledges the multiple perspectives of the participants and the researcher (Charmaz, 2009; Lauridsen & Higginbottom, 2014). Constructivist grounded theory is a profoundly interactive method (Charmaz, 2009) as it can take the researchers deep into the phenomenon, enabling them to gain an intimate knowledge by entering the participant’s world and trying to get as close to the empirical realities as possible. When undertaking this study, a key objective, as the researcher, was to enter the ‘real world’ of my participants and gain authentic insight into their experiences.

The pragmatist standpoint (Charmaz, 2009; Locke, 2001) that epistemologically underpins constructivist grounded theory further justified the use of this method. Pragmatism assumes a problem-solving approach and involves studying people’s actions to determine how individuals solve problems in their world. Pragmatism maintains that researchers enter the empirical world of their respondents and that findings are interpretations of multiple realities constructed by both the researcher and the researched (Wertz, 2011). The pragmatist perspective resonates deeply with my ontological and epistemological positioning. Charmaz further proposes that constructivist grounded theory is founded on a relativist epistemology, claiming that researchers cannot separate themselves and their experiences from their research. Hence, researchers must adopt reflexivity to create an awareness of their personal presuppositions and interpretations (Charmaz, 2009). Reflexivity involves the researcher “thinking consciously about the implications of their methods, values, bias and decisions from the known of the social world they generate and try to be aware of how personal idiosyncrasies and implicit assumptions affect their approach to study” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 700). Green, Creswell, Shope and Clark (2007) emphasise the importance of adopting positionality and self-reflection when undertaking grounded theory research. Accordingly, when undertaking this study, I did not push aside

acknowledging my intimate connection to the case location, but instead, used it to help contextualise and understand participants' experiences.

Although constructivist grounded theory is considered a second-generation, contemporary version (Morse et al., 2009) of grounded theory, this approach still adopts the traditional inductive, comparative emergent and open-ended style of Glaser and Strauss's 1967 classic version. The main features of constructivist grounded theory are constant data–theory interplay, constant comparisons between transcripts to identify conceptual themes, memoing, theoretical interpretation and coding, and the development of theory that has credibility, originality and usefulness (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The iterative processes inherent to constructivist grounded theory, including coding, constant comparison and categorising, were applied to this study and are discussed in section 3.6.

### **3.4.2 Case study strategy**

A qualitative case study approach was considered the most appropriate method of inquiry to use in this research. There are various meanings to the term 'case study', and the most relevant in this context is the definition by Yin (2014, p.16) who proposed that "a case study is an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in its real-world context". A case study methodology was considered the most appropriate approach, for several reasons. Firstly, a case study method of inquiry is advantageous when the research goal is to describe the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon. A case study approach is usually favoured when 'how', 'why', 'what' and 'when' questions are being asked (Yin, 2014), as was the case in this research. The underlying aim of the study was to identify 'what', 'when' and 'why' in relation to the incidence of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Yin (2014) further proposed that a case study approach is also relevant when the research questions require an extensive and in-depth description of the social phenomenon being explored. In light of the current gap identified by the researcher, this claim further justified the rationale for a case study approach. Case study research also offers the advantage of identifying similarities and differences in the perspectives of participants (Cohen et al., 2003). To better understand the phenomenon in this location, both male and female participants were recruited to identify gender differences in attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment. Furthermore, both employees and employers were interviewed to highlight incongruities in their attitudes to sexual harassment. Assuming a case study approach enabled these comparisons to be made.

Qualitative case studies are exploratory and allow researchers to delve deeply into the minds of their research subjects in order to discover and understand *their* beliefs. The data generated through a case study approach are rich because meanings emerge from the data (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). Case studies are ‘units of analysis’ and can be single or multiple cases involving individuals, groups, organisations or communities (Patton, 2002). The case, in this instance, was Rarotonga, Cook Islands, and involved an investigation of sexual harassment by customers in the hospitality industry. The bounding of the case in its context (Wells, Hirshberg, Lipton, & Oakes, 1995; Yin, 2014) is shown in Table 6.

*Table 6.* Bounding the case: Case study details

Case type	Location	Unit of analysis	Case issue	Case sample
Single case study	Rarotonga, Cook Islands	Hospitality industry	Sexual harassment by customers	Individual employees & employers

### 3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Data collection was undertaken over a three-week period from 27 June to 18 July 2014. Interviews were conducted in a private office at the satellite campus for the University of the South Pacific (USP). The talanoa perspective adopted for this study enabled an open-style technique during the interview process. Although interviews were semi-structured using a preformulated interview guide (Bryman & Bell, 2011), a flexible approach was adopted with no strict adherence to the questions. Questions depended on the way in which the discussions developed. Sexual harassment is a delicate subject as individual experiences and perspectives are highly subjective. The use of a semi-structured technique (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Myers, 2013), inherent in the talanoa approach (Vaiotei, 2006), allowed for discussions to emerge, which would have been unlikely had a structured approach been followed.

Vaiotei (2006) advocates that a researcher must be grateful for their participants' kindness and willingness to participate in the research. Participants must feel that their contributions are worthwhile and helpful; otherwise, they may not contribute freely. To welcome participants and create a comfortable environment, light refreshments were offered on arrival. This strategy was an effective ice-breaker as it allowed for some informal interaction before the interview process commenced.

Ribbens (1989) advocates ‘empathetic listening’, explaining that this involves entering the participants’ social world and seeing things from their point of view. She further

proposed that empathy itself may be a projection; thus, if interviewees believe the interviewer is feeling warmly towards them, they in turn will reciprocate. Showing a genuine sense of empathy was particularly important during the interview process because sexual harassment can create feelings of anxiety and vulnerability (Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009).

Employee interviews commenced with some general questions including how participants, in *their* own words, defined sexual harassment. Employees answered this question by giving specific examples of what they considered inappropriate sexual behaviour by customers. Employees were then asked if they had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment by customers and, if so, what they thought may have caused this behaviour. Those who had been harassed were asked how they felt at the time, how they responded and how the experience had affected them. Discussions then moved to what training, policies and procedures existed in their respective workplace. To conclude the interview, employees were asked whether they felt sexual harassment by customers was a problem in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. A copy of the 'Employee Interview Guide' is included as Appendix E.

Employers were asked similar questions to those asked of employees to highlight any parallelisms and inconsistencies in their responses. In addition, employers were asked what experiences they had witnessed involving the sexual harassment of their staff by customers and what action, if any, they had taken. A copy of the 'Employer Interview Guide' is included as Appendix F.

The questions asked during the participant interviews were directly aligned to the research questions of this study. The correlation between the interview questions and the research questions is shown in Table 7 to illustrate how the research objectives were achieved.

*Table 7. Correlation between research questions and participant interview questions*

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Interview question</b>
1. What understanding do Cook Islands hospitality employees and employers have of sexual harassment?	1. In your own words can you tell me what your understanding is of sexual harassment? 2. Can you give me some examples of what you might consider to be sexual harassment by a customer?
2. What sexual harassment experiences have employees encountered involving customers as perpetrators?	1. Have you ever been sexually harassed by a customer? If so, can you please tell me what happened? 2. Have you ever witnessed a colleague being sexually harassed by a customer? If so, can you tell me what happened?
3. What factors have contributed to these experiences?	1. Can you think of anything that may have contributed to or caused this behaviour?
4. How do employees cope with sexual harassment by customers and how have these experiences affected them?	1. How did you cope/respond? Did you do anything at the time or tell anyone? If not, do you know why? 2. How did you feel at the time? How do you feel about it now?
5. To what extent do hospitality employees and employers perceive sexual harassment by customers to be a problem?	1. Does your workplace have policies or procedures on sexual harassment? 2. In your opinion, do you think that sexual harassment by customers is a problem in the Cook Islands hospitality industry? Can you explain why you think this? 3. If yes to above (2), what do you think can be done to address this issue?

Participant interviews took 24 hours in total, and each interview lasted an average of 40 minutes. The shortest interview was 24 minutes and involved a female participant, and the longest interview lasted 70 minutes and was with a male participant. Interviews were recorded with participant consent using two audio recording devices. Upon completion of all interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed with the assistance of a professional transcriber and then data analysis commenced.

#### **3.4.4 Field notes**

Because of the limitations of human memory, Foddy (1993) recommended that researchers make field notes during data collection based on their observations, ideas and reflections. Accordingly, following each interview, field notes were written to capture any thoughts, observations and emergent ideas that I deemed important. These notes became a second primary source of data and were used during the analysis phase to help contextualise data. Smythe and Giddings (2007) also emphasised the importance



of field notes, suggesting that while audio recordings capture the conversation, they miss a lot, because they miss the non-verbal. For example, the youngest female participant I interviewed was distressed when I asked her if she thought that sexual harassment by customers was a problem. Overcome with emotion and with tears in her eyes, she paused to gather herself before she responded. Following this interview, it was important that I captured my reflections on our interview in my field notes, noting her emotions and also that she was the youngest female participant. This information would help contextualise her statement when I later wrote the findings of the study.

### **3.5 Sampling**

#### **3.5.1 Sample criteria**

Patton (2002) posited that the careful selection of participants in a study is fundamental to obtaining information rich data. He refers to this calculated selection technique as ‘purposeful sampling’. Purposeful sampling attempts to “select research participants according to criteria determined by the research purpose” (Tuckett, 2004, p. 53). To ensure the study would be valuable to Cook Islanders, participants for this study were carefully and purposefully recruited (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The sample criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) required participants to be a Cook Islander or permanent resident, *or* have worked in the hospitality industry in the Cook Islands for a minimum period of two years.

Various strategies were adopted to recruit the required participants. Convenience sampling (Oppong, 2013) was used in the first instance, whereby direct contact was made by the researcher with potential participants to explain the research objectives and invite their participation. This initial contact was done by email as the researcher at that time was residing in Auckland, New Zealand. The fact that the researcher was a native Cook Islander with previous experience in the local industry was a significant advantage during the recruitment phase of the study. Snowball sampling techniques (Oppong, 2013) were adopted, using industry-wide contacts to distribute the research information to individuals who met the eligibility criteria of the study.

As mentioned, the sample criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) required participants to be a Cook Islander, be a permanent resident or have worked in the hospitality industry in the Cook Islands for a minimum period of two years. Green et al. (2007) highlighted the importance of diversity in theory development, suggesting that researchers incorporate a racial/ethnic focus when undertaking grounded theory research. They further

emphasised the importance of diversity when the research questions focus on a specific group of people, as was the case in this study. Green et al. (2007) claimed that in these settings, the researcher must endeavour to present a narrative that authentically represents the participant's voice and exposes the cultural conditions under which the data were created.

An added dimension to better understand the phenomenon was that the research was not gender specific; thus, participants were both male and female. This sampling criterion enabled the researcher to identify gender differences in attitudes to sexual harassment and to ascertain what variables influenced these perceptions. Another unique aspect of the study was that both employees *and* employers were interviewed, to identify incongruities in perceptions and attitudes to sexual harassment.

The level of interest in participating in the study was extremely positive and far surpassed expectations. Because sexual harassment is a delicate topic, individuals are often hesitant to discuss this issue. Compounding this problem, as previously mentioned, is the fact that sex in Pacific communities is considered a taboo subject (S. Ali, 2006; Veukiso-Ulugia, 2013). In light of these concerns, a conservative approach was used when contemplating sample size, establishing a target of seven employees and seven employers, respectively. Surprisingly, however, there was overwhelming interest to participate in the study, which was very reassuring. It is the researcher's view that the positive response was because the study provided participants with an opportunity, for the first time, to have a voice and to share their experiences on an issue that was being overlooked. The fact that the researcher was a Cook Islander was also a contributing factor, as participants felt a genuine sense of trust and were able to share their experiences and speak from their heart. A total of 32 participants took part in the study. Data collection ceased once theoretical saturation had been reached (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) had been reached. Theoretical saturation of data occurs when researchers reach a point in the data collection process at which no new information about the subject seems to be emerging (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Tuckett, 2004).

### **3.5.2 Sample profile**

As mentioned, 32 participants, comprising 21 employees and 11 employers, provided data for this case study. Participants were purposively recruited (section 3.5.1) from a range of workplaces across the industry, including restaurants, bars, hotels and tour operators. Participants were both male and female, aged between 25 and 60 years. Table 8 and Table 9 provide details on participant demographics. Pseudonyms have been used

to maintain participant confidentiality as required by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC; see Appendix A) and European names have been used instead of ethnic names to avoid speculation. To distinguish between participant groups, all employee names commence with the letter ‘R’, and employer names start with the letter ‘M’. Pseudonyms are listed in alphabetical order, by gender.

*Table 8.* Demographic profile of employee participants

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Rachel	Spa therapist	Hotel	36	Female
Raelene	Barmaid	Bar	27	Female
Rebecca	Waitress	Café	25	Female
Renata	Supervisor	Café	32	Female
Renee	Waitress	Café	25	Female
Rhianna	Manager	Café	37	Female
Richelle	Wedding coordinator	Hotel	54	Female
Ricki	Receptionist	Hotel	30	Female
Rita	Bar manager	Hotel	42	Female
Roberta	HR assistant	Hotel	43	Female
Rosana	Housekeeping manager	Hotel	49	Female
Rosemary	Front office manager	Hotel	27	Female
Rosie	Guest relations manager	Hotel	69	Female
Roxy	Waitress	Café	43	Female
Ruby	Supervisor	Restaurant/bar	30	Female
Ruth	Manager	Café	36	Female
Remy	Tour guide	Tour operator	40	Male
Reuben	Manager	Restaurant/bar	32	Male
Richard	Tour guide	Tour operator	45	Male
Robert	Tour guide	Tour operator	42	Male
Ronald	Front office supervisor	Hotel	31	Male

*Table 9.* Demographic profile of employer participants

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Margaret	General manager	Hotel	53	Female
Mariah	General manager	Hotel	40	Female
Marissa	Owner/operator	Restaurant/bar	38	Female
May	Manager	Backpackers	31	Female
Monica	General manager	Bar	36	Female
Monique	Owner/operator	Café	37	Female
Marcus	CEO	Hotel	56	Male
Max	Owner/operator	Café	60	Male
Michael	Owner/operator	Restaurant/bar	46	Male
Mitch	Owner/operator	Hotel	41	Male
Moses	Owner/operator	Restaurant/bar	47	Male

### **3.6 Data analysis**

This section explains the comprehensive data analysis process undertaken following the completion of data collection. The grounded theory techniques employed during the data analysis phase are explained to show the emergence of the core categories and themes.

#### **3.6.1 Grounded theory techniques**

Grounded theory techniques comprising theoretical coding (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006) and constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) were used during the data analysis phase. The coding process involved the constant analysis of transcripts to identify similarities and differences, and to provide a means for comparison so that new conceptual categories and themes could emerge. Coding also enabled the systematic reduction of the very large amount of data obtained from participant interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Charmaz, 2006).

The method of analysis considered most appropriate for this study was thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is used in the grounded theory method and involves analysing transcripts to identify themes within the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; G. W. Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The process of coding is an inherent characteristic of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis in grounded theory adopts an inductive approach in which data are coded without trying to fit them into a pre-existing coding frame or preconception (Braun &

Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). It is through this inductive coding process that concepts begin to emerge from the data (Burnard et al., 2008). This qualitative method of analysis enables researchers to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the group or situation they are researching. The coding process applied to this study involved reviewing the 32 transcripts and assigning codes to sections of data to describe or summarise the main theme in that segment of data (see Weston et al., 2001). This process enabled the condensing of the large quantity of data obtained from the 32 interviews. The analysis of participant transcripts was undertaken using QSR NVivo 7 (NVivo) qualitative research software. NVivo is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software program that helps researchers analyse and categorise large and cumbersome amounts of data, reducing it to a manageable size. The software allows users to classify, sort and arrange information, and to identify congruities or similarities in the data.

### 3.6.2 The coding process

The iterative process involved in preparing and analysing the large volume of data is outlined in Figure 6 and discussed below.

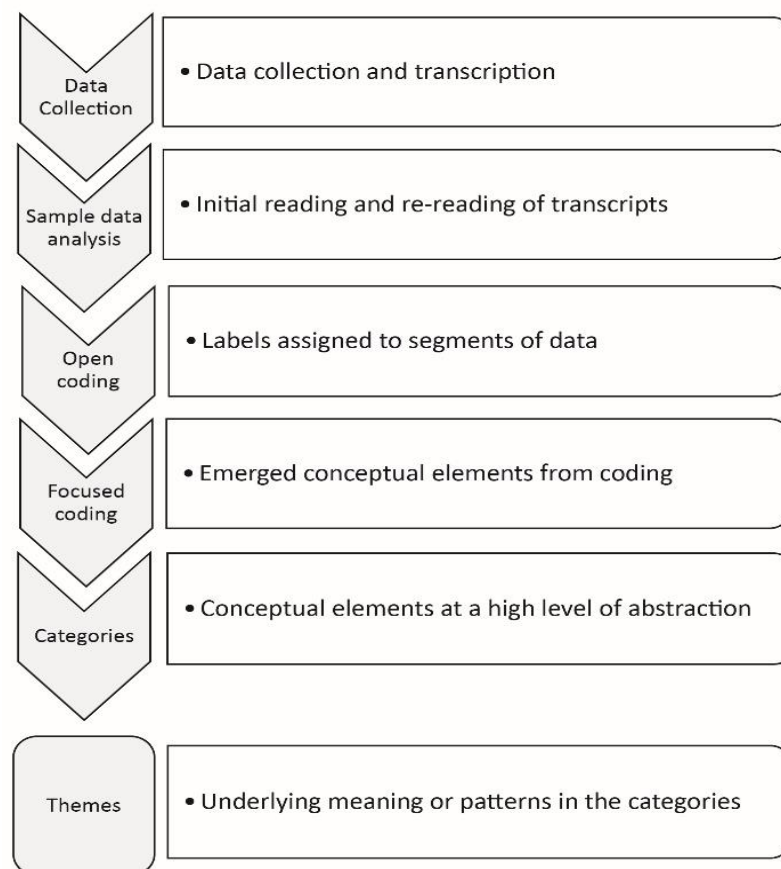


Figure 6. The coding process

#### *3.6.2.1 Step 1: Data collection and transcription*

Data collection was undertaken over a three-week period using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded using two audio devices; these recordings were then fully transcribed. A professional transcriber was employed, and the transcriptions were carefully checked for accuracy against the recordings. The verification of transcripts involved repeatedly reading the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings. Although this process was extremely time consuming and repetitive, it provided a sense of intimate familiarity with the data. This process also enabled the cleaning of data by removing unnecessary filler words, such as “um” and “ah” and colloquial terms such as “dunno” or “you know”. Transcripts were saved as Microsoft Word documents and then uploaded to the NVivo program for analysis.

#### *3.6.2.2 Step 2: Sample data analysis*

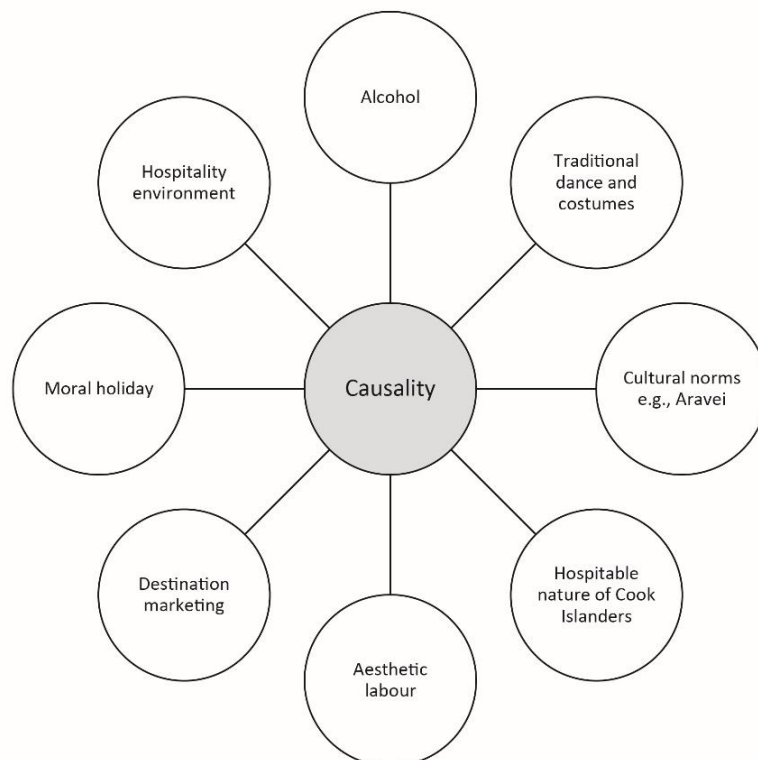
This stage involved the initial reading and re-reading of transcripts to gain further familiarity with the data. All transcripts were carefully read through, commencing with the 21 employee transcripts. The aim was to gain in-depth understanding into the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of respondents. At this point, exploratory questions were considered such as, what was their experience? Why did this happen to them? What did they do? How has this impacted them? (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Every effort was made at this point to become immersed in the data in an active way, searching for meanings and patterns and asking questions (see Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### *3.6.2.3 Step 3: Open coding*

The coding of the data commenced at this stage and involved generating initial codes through an ‘open coding’ process (see Burnard et al., 2008; Coyne & Cowley, 2006; DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011; Richards, 2015). Open coding was done using NVivo software, which enabled the data to be organised into meaningful groups (see Tuckett, 2004). Transcripts were carefully read numerous times. Headings were created using ‘nodes’ in the Nvivo programme. Codes were freely generated at this stage. Each line was read and assigned a label based on interpretation and understanding of the text. In some situations, segments of text were coded more than once. As a result of this process, 94 codes were initially generated during the open coding phase. This large number of codes is not unusual at the outset of grounded theory when the researcher is trying to be as open as possible to the concepts that are emerging line by line (see Holton, 2007).

#### 3.6.2.4 Step 4: Focused coding

Focused coding was the next major phase in the coding process. This step involved analysing the multiple pages of themes that had been generated through the open coding process and sorting them into potential themes. At this stage, constant comparative methods (see Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were used to make comparisons and establish distinctions in the data. For example, data between transcripts was compared to identify similarities and differences in people's experiences, actions and interpretations (see Bazeley, 2009). Consideration was also given to the relationship between codes and how the different codes could be combined to form overarching themes. As a result of this process, key emergent themes (parent nodes) were created to identify and label groups of codes (sub-nodes). For example, participants were asked what they felt were the factors that contributed to sexual harassment by customers. When coding responses to this question across transcripts, a 'causality' parent node was created in NVivo to capture the various responses given. Sub-nodes were then created to capture the themes that emerged within the parent node. A thematic map is shown in Figure 7 to illustrate this.



*Figure 7.* Emerging themes of 'causality' category

The coding process employed at this stage of analysis aimed to condense the very large quantity of data obtained during data collection. To ensure coding consistency, nodes were regularly checked through constant comparison to ensure the text assigned to them

was relevant to the theme. Where necessary, text was multi-coded or moved to a more appropriate node. Table 10 provides an example of the data-driven (see DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011) coding process employed across transcripts. This phase of analysis was iterative, rigorous and time consuming as participant interviews had accumulated 24 hours of audio recordings, converting to 199 pages of rich transcribed data.



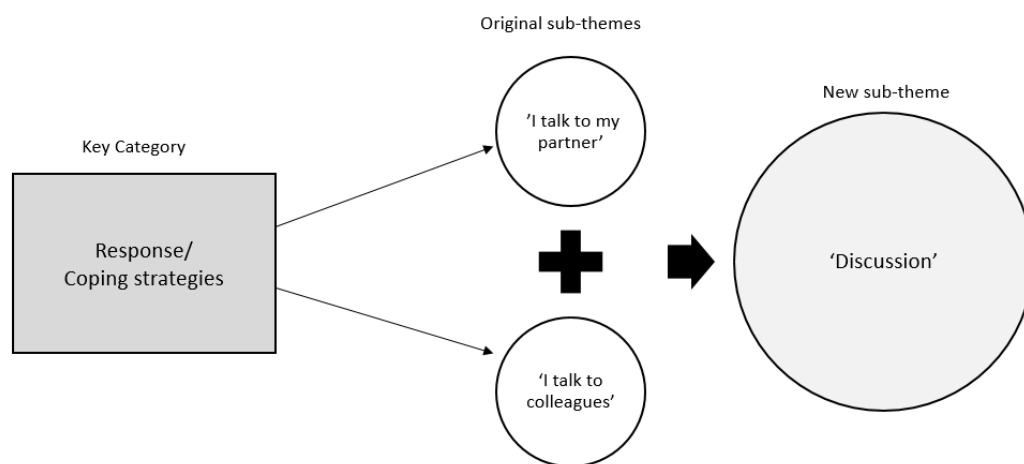
Table 10. Sample codes and categories (adapted from DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011)

Data example	Codes	Categories
“I think we need a lot of training, and I think employers need to talk to their employees.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education and training</li> <li>Management commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention</li> </ul>
“Alcohol, and also when girls are in big groups they are egging each other on.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alcohol</li> <li>Pack mentality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causality</li> </ul>
“I know where her story is going, but I just play along, I’m not bothered by it jeez I feel flattered.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Denial</li> <li>Flattered by attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response/coping strategies</li> <li>Impact</li> </ul>
“I noticed the guys were being a bit close and started touching her and she was laughing but only because she didn’t know what to do.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical contact</li> <li>Denial</li> <li>Witnessing SH of colleague</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining SH</li> <li>Response/coping strategies</li> <li>Incidence</li> </ul>
“Sexual harassment can be anything from making rude comments, to pinching somebody’s butt right through to making propositions.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical contact</li> <li>Verbal (propositioning)</li> <li>Verbal (sexual remarks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining SH</li> </ul>
“I think alcohol is a big factor, and I think with visitors to the island, the perception is they can come here and let down their hair, I don’t know whether they think the local girls might be easy or something like that.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceptions</li> <li>Moral holiday</li> <li>Alcohol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causality</li> </ul>
“There’s been situations with the boys here where they’ve had inappropriate comments from some female tourist customers at wedding functions, I’ve seen it and they’ve just laughed it off. So, it hasn’t come across as sexual harassment to them but I guess males deal with it differently.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Denial</li> <li>Witnessing SH of colleague</li> <li>Gender perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response/coping strategies</li> <li>Incidence</li> <li>Gender perspective</li> </ul>
“I think in a restaurant situation that maybe some of the other <i>environments</i> don’t have, is that you have evening association and alcohol is involved. So, guests who are intoxicated.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hospitality environment</li> <li>Alcohol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causality</li> </ul>
“For instance, I think the message at the airport on arrival. We could be talking about the authenticity, the warmth and friendliness of the people, the morals and ethics, the expectations of us to respect our people and our environment. So, you need to incorporate that message in there.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination marketing</li> <li>Educating the visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention</li> </ul>

### 3.6.2.5 Step 5: Categories

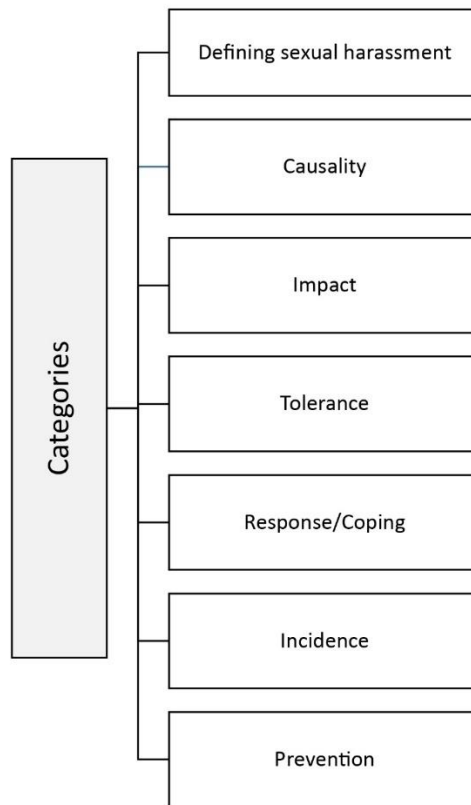
Your study fits the empirical world when you have constructed codes and developed them into categories that crystallize participants' experience (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54).

Through constant comparative analysis, the substantive codes are then developed into categories, from which theory is then generated (see Coyne & Cowley, 2006; Holton, 2007). At this stage of the coding process, categories and themes were carefully analysed. Consideration was given to the categories to ensure there was a coherent pattern within them. If themes did not seem appropriate, consideration was given to whether the theme needed to be moved to another category or whether the theme was potentially a merging category. This process enabled the number of themes to be reduced by merging those themes that were alike into broader themes. As an example, participants were asked how they coped/responded to sexual harassment by customers. A category named ‘response/coping strategies’ was created to capture the various responses. Two themes initially created included ‘I talk to my partner’ and ‘I talk to colleagues’. At this point, these two themes were collapsed into a broader theme. The new theme became ‘discussion’.



*Figure 8: Merging of themes into broader themes*

Consideration was also given at this stage to the research questions and any themes that were considered irrelevant or unusable were discarded. Field and Morse (1985) refer to these pointless data as ‘dross’. Categories were compared and contrasted until the major categories were identified. Through this process, seven core categories (see Holton, 2007) emerged and formed the final category system, as shown in Figure 9. The themes within these core categories were then finalised. On the basis of these analyses, a thematic framework (see Figure 10) was developed to incorporate the core categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis phase. These categories and themes are the key findings of this study and are discussed in the findings chapter in an order that corresponds with the thematic framework.



*Figure 9: Core categories of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry*

### 3.6.3 Thematic framework of core categories and themes on sexual harassment by customers, in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

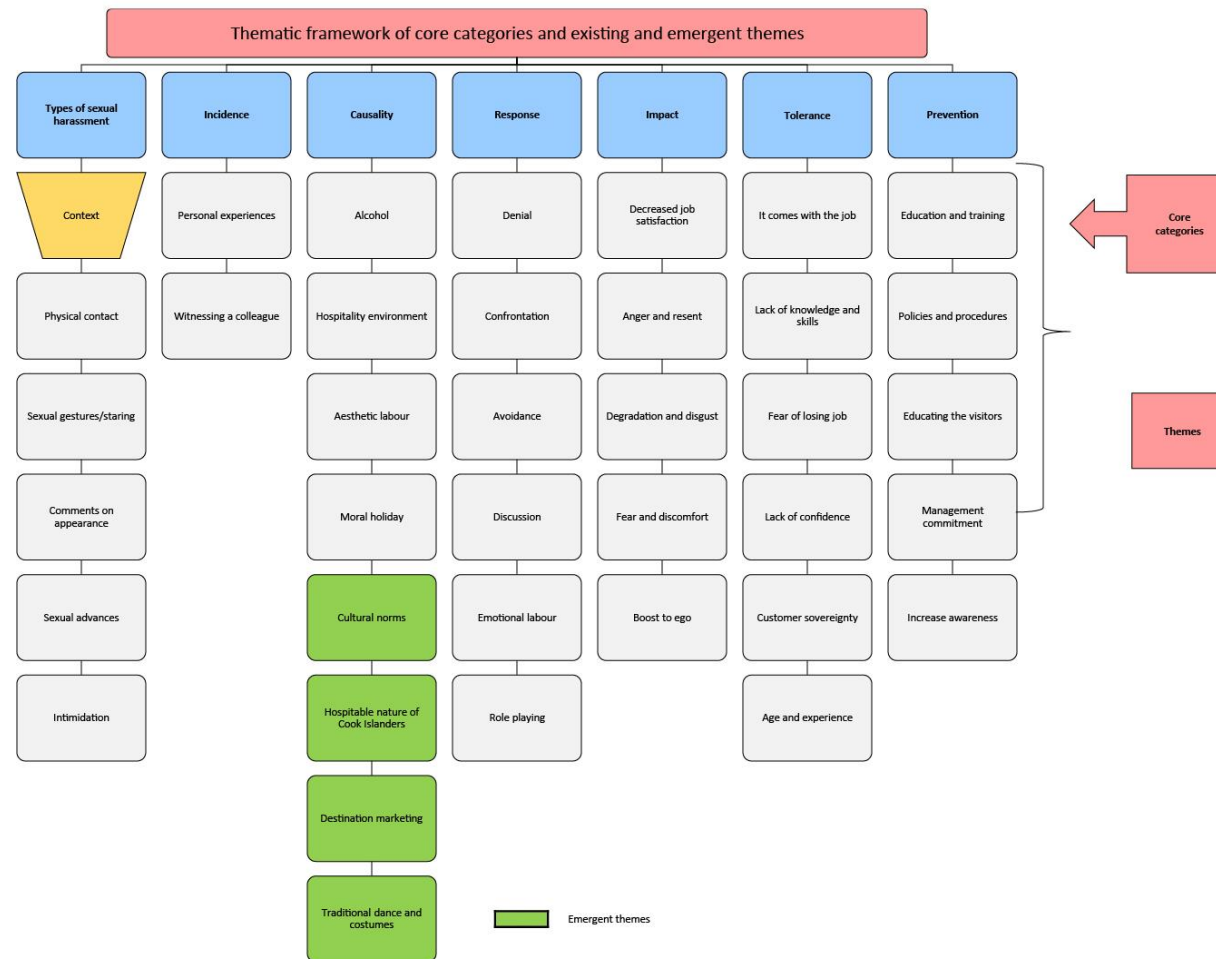


Figure 10. Thematic framework of core categories and themes on sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

#### *3.6.3.1 Step 6: Theories*

The relationships between the seven core categories and themes were explored at this stage of analysis to consider potential theories. This was done by identifying correlated links, similarities and differences between constructs. For example, theoretical assumptions were made about the new themes that emerged on causality that were unique to the study. The relationships between these themes was explored to identify potential theoretical explanations. These considerations are presented in the discussion chapter that follows (see section 5.3.2 and 5.3.5).

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

All methods of research, qualitative and quantitative, have limitations and these must be openly acknowledged by the researcher (Griffin, 2004; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The limitations identified in this study are discussed below.

#### **3.7.1 Sample size**

DePaulo (2000) suggested that sample size has an important role in both quantitative and qualitative research. The sample size for this study comprised 32 respondents, both male and female. A common criticism of qualitative research is that generalisations cannot be made about the population at large if the sample is limited (Oppong, 2013). Although this research could potentially be viewed in this light, the study makes a significant contribution to the existing gap and can be used as a basis for further studies on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands and the wider Pacific. Furthermore, the sample size of 32 participants was, in fact, generous in comparison with other qualitative studies, which generally comprise a much smaller sample (see Chase & Brewer, 2009). The researcher did not interview more participants than needed and ceased data collection once theoretical saturation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) had been reached.

#### **3.7.2 Potential bias and reflexivity**

Another concern is that because qualitative research is highly subjective, it is often criticised for lacking the scientific rigour of quantitative research, which is based on measurable, definitive outcomes (Mays & Pope, 1995). The interpretive, subjective approach assumed in qualitative research can potentially put the study at risk of researcher bias. It is likely, therefore, that another researcher could view the data in this study from a totally different perspective. Smythe and Giddings (2007) posited that qualitative researchers will always bring their own unique bias to their research.

Accordingly, they propose that before we embark on research, we reflect on our bias to consider how it might influence the study. Acknowledging our own bias will make the study more trustworthy. When undertaking this research, I was particularly conscious that my close connection to the case location created potential bias. Bryman and Bell (2011) acknowledged that affiliations often exist in research and can influence the way research findings are presented; hence, researchers must consciously think about how they acquire knowledge and the implications of their values, beliefs, methods and decisions. This reflective approach is what Bourdieu (1990) referred to as *epistemic reflexivity*. As previously mentioned, when undertaking this study, I did not push aside acknowledging my intimate connection to the case location, but instead used it to help contextualise and understand participants' experiences. The fact that I have been residing in New Zealand for some time now enabled me to maintain a balanced perspective when undertaking the study.

### **3.7.3 Sample frame bias**

The sample in this study was framed according to the research aims. To ensure that the study would be valuable to Cook Islanders, the sample criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) required participants to be a Cook Islander or permanent resident, *or* have worked in the hospitality industry in the Cook Islands for a minimum period of two years. The sample frame bias (Groger, Mayberry, & Straker, 1999; Tuckett, 2004) applied to the study restricted the sampling of other individuals working in the industry who did not meet the eligibility criteria. Significant tourism growth has seen an increase of migrant workers in recent years, particularly from Fiji. The sample criteria meant that migrant workers employed for less than two years in the Cook Islands hospitality industry were not eligible to participate. This criterion was to ensure that the findings of the study would be specifically relevant to the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Future studies into sexual harassment in the Cook Islands could include migrant workers, as recommended in the conclusion chapter of this study.

### **3.7.4 Gatekeeper bias**

Groger et al. (1999) claimed that gatekeeper bias arises when individuals who are involved in an investigation somehow take control of the sampling in terms of the eventual participants that are selected for a study. During the recruitment phase of this study, I was sometimes reliant on industry employers discussing the research with their employees and putting forward participants from their workplace. Essentially, this meant that these employers, to some extent, controlled sampling. They became

gatekeepers selecting ‘who’ from their workplace would participate in the study. Although this scenario was identified as a possible limitation because it created gatekeeper bias (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Groger et al., 1999), I was very fortunate to have these existing relationships with employers, because it expedited the recruitment process and provided access to employees.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Researchers have a responsibility to behave in a moral and ethical manner and to respect the values and beliefs of the environment in which they are working. Ethical behaviour should prevail at every step of the research process, from recruitment and data collection, to analysis and reporting (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Diener and Crandall (1978) claimed that when undertaking research, there are four key risks that must be assessed. These are potential harm to participants, a lack of informed consent, deception and an invasion of privacy. This section discusses several of these risks and other deontological factors (S. J. Skinner, Dubinsky, & Ferrell, 1988) that were considered when undertaking this research. It outlines the various ethical obligations considered in this study to ensure appropriate conduct prevailed at all stages.

#### **3.8.1 Potential harm to participants**

Vaioleti (2006) posited that researchers have a responsibility to their participants. They must consider the potential harm on their participants and take the appropriate steps to prevent them from these harms. Harm to participants could be psychological, financial or social (Polonsky & Waller, 2015). Prior to commencing this research, it was essential that I assess whether the study might inadvertently cause harm in some way to participants. I was mindful that because sexual harassment is a sensitive topic (Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009) there was a risk of causing emotional distress, hence a danger of inflicting psychological harm on participants. To eliminate this threat and demonstrate a duty of care, counselling services were arranged prior to the study commencing. The researcher met with the directors of two counselling centres on Rarotonga to discuss the intended research and seek their services, should participants require it. The Cook Islands Women’s Counselling Centre, otherwise known as Punanga Tauturu Incorporated, and the Cook Islands Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre, known also as Te Kaianga O Pa Taunga, fully supported this research and offered their services to participants, free of charge (see Appendix D for letters of support). Participants were informed from the outset about the potential discomfort the research could cause and were duly advised that counselling support would be available

at no cost. This information was explained clearly in the participant information sheet (see Appendix G) with a further reminder prior to the interviews commencing.

During one of the participant interviews, female waitress Roxy shared an experience when she had physically responded to a male customer who was sexually harassing her. She explained that she had responded this way because when she was 13 years old, she had been raped (see section 4.4.1.2). Roxy sharing this personal experience with me made me realise that some people have traumatic pasts of which we are unaware that can influence their behaviour and response to sexual harassment. I was enheartened by the courage Roxy showed to entrust me with her experience. This was affirmation of the rapport we had built during the interview. Talking about rape is extremely difficult for a victim, so her disclosure of personal violation was not something I took lightly.

The approval granted by AUTECH to conduct this study (see section 3.8) required me to ensure participants were protected from any potential harm. When Roxy told me she had been raped, I stopped the interview to offer her comfort and support. I reminded her about the counselling support that was readily available as part of the study and encouraged her to seek their support. Several days later, I made a conscious effort to follow up on Roxy and check on her well-being. We had built a special bond and my reflections of that experience are still imprinted clearly in my mind.

### **3.8.2 Informed consent**

Another important factor was to ensure that potential participants were fully aware and understood what they were being asked to do. Polonsky and Waller (2015) claimed that potential participants must be given as much information as possible to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in the study. To ensure full disclosure, the recruitment phase of this study involved the distribution of a participant information sheet (Appendix G) providing details about the purpose of the research, its benefits, potential risks and confidentiality issues. Participants were also advised that interviews would be audio recorded and later transcribed. They were offered the opportunity to check their interview transcripts, should they wish to do so. A copy of the findings from the study was also offered to participants.

### **3.8.3 Voluntary participation**

Participants were invited to contribute to this study and advised that participation was voluntary. There was no coercion or pressure, as individuals were informed that they were under no obligation to participate. They were also advised that should they agree



to participate, they could terminate their involvement for whatever reason at any time. If they chose to do so, any information they had provided would be immediately withdrawn from the study. Prior to interviews commencing, it was essential to ensure that participants fully understood the purpose of the study and the importance of their involvement and contribution. Any queries were clarified before participants completed a 'Participant Consent Form' (Appendix G) confirming their voluntary involvement in the study.

#### **3.8.4 Confidentiality and privacy of participants**

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of their participants throughout all stages of the research (Sales & Folkman, 2000). Because Rarotonga is a small community comprising only approximately 10,500 people (Tangimetua, 2016b), participant confidentiality was of upmost importance. Potential participants were advised that should they agree to participate, their confidentiality would be preserved. To respect respondents' privacy, the findings in this study have been presented in a manner that does not identify the business where participants work or the participants themselves. Pseudonyms have been assigned to all participants so as to not disclose their true identity. Every effort was made throughout the research process to ensure confidentiality. As a further example, extra care was taken in the planning phase to identify a suitable location to conduct interviews. A private office, located at the satellite campus for the USP, was hired exclusively for three weeks to conduct participant interviews. The office was situated in a secluded area of the campus and had its own access, allowing participants to arrive and leave discreetly. To further protect participants, all documentation, transcripts and audio recordings have been stored in a secure place with access limited only to the researcher.

#### **3.8.5 Care and respect of participants**

I was mindful of the importance at all times to act honourably and professionally by treating participants with respect and care. As an example, a small donation of \$15 was provided to cover petrol costs, as participants were required to travel to the interview location. I was also conscious that participation in the study was an additional commitment; hence, I needed to be flexible, ensuring that meeting times were convenient for participants. Furthermore, because most participants attended interviews during their lunch break, light refreshments were offered to them on their arrival.

### **3.8.6 Potential conflict of interest**

Given my connection to the location, I was mindful of the potential conflict of interest. Hence, it was vital that every effort be made to minimise conflict and maintain a level of criticality. As an example, transparency was particularly important during the recruitment phase of the study. Full disclosure of myself, as the researcher, was made in the participant information sheet so that it was known I was a Cook Islander. Rarotonga is a small island and I was conscious that some participants would most likely be known to me. Regardless of any pre-existing acquaintance with participants, it was essential that I maintain a level of professionalism.

### **3.8.7 Due diligence**

Vaioleti (2006, p. 30) encourages researchers who are exploring Pacific issues “to be respectful and to see, not just look; to hear, not just listen, and to observe; to know the culture and context they are engaged in and behave accordingly”. Researchers have a responsibility to take appropriate steps to respect the values, practices and beliefs of the environment in which they are working (Gregory, 2003). They must develop and maintain good relationships with their research subjects and research site and be fully aware of any potential implications or interests that their research might have on the community (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Researchers must do their homework before involving Pacific participants (Prescott, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006). Consultation and due diligence was vital to ensure that this study was undertaken in an ethical manner and with the full support of local stakeholders. Prior to fieldwork commencing, meetings were held with local stakeholders to discuss the objectives of the research and seek their endorsement. Stakeholder meetings included:

- *Office of the Cook Islands Prime Minister*: Meeting with the chief executive officer (CEO) to discuss the aims of the research and clarify the application process for undertaking research in the Cook Islands.
- *Cook Islands Ministry of Internal affairs*: Meeting with the CEO to discuss the legal and institutional frameworks that provide protection against sexual harassment in the workplace, including the Cook Islands Employment Relations Act.
- *Cook Islands National Tourism Office*: Meeting with the CEO and director of destination development to discuss the research aims and how the research could contribute to the ‘Destinations Product Development Strategy’ through enhancing the customer service skills of employees in the industry.

- *Cook Islands Internal Affairs, Women's Division*. Discussions on CEDAW legislation in the Cook Islands and the relevance of this legislation to this study.
- *Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre (Punanga Tauturu Incorporated)*: Meeting with centre director to discuss the research aims and seek their support with providing counselling services for participants.
- *Cook Islands Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre (Te Kaianga O Pa Taunga)*: Meeting with centre director to discuss the research aims and seek their support with providing counselling services for participants.
- *Cook Islands Restaurant Association (CIRA)*: Meeting with CIRA secretary to discuss the research aims and identify appropriate strategies to promote the research to their members and encourage participation.

Copies of the findings from this study will be made available to all industry stakeholders and government departments who have supported this research.

### **3.8.8 Permission to undertake the research**

Prior to this research commencing, permission needed to be granted. Application was made firstly to AUTEK seeking approval for the study to proceed. The application addressed the various ethical issues involved with the study and explained how these concerns would be addressed (see Appendix A for EA1). Approval by AUTEK was granted on 6 March 2014 (refer Appendix B).

Application was also made to the Cook Islands National Research Committee (CINRC) seeking approval to conduct research in the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands Government is interested in any research undertaken in their country and has established the CINRC board as a monitoring body. Any person who intends to do research in the Cook Islands must submit an application to the CINRC. Fieldwork of any nature cannot commence unless authorisation has been granted. In January 2014, an application was lodged outlining the research objectives and benefits of the study to the Cook Islands. Approval was subsequently received, allowing the study to proceed (see Appendix C)

## **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an analysis of the comprehensive methodological approach adopted to conduct this case study inquiry. The researcher's ontological and epistemological stance has been outlined to justify the rationale for adopting a qualitative methodology based on a constructivist-interpretivist approach. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate for the study as it provided in-depth insight into

participants' experiences of sexual harassment. The constructivist grounded theory method applied to the study involved a systematic and iterative process of constant comparison, coding and categorising, enabling categories and themes to emerge that were deeply embedded in the data. Furthermore, the talanoa approach that was adopted enabled me to build genuine relationships with my participants, to engage their authentic participation, enabling more "*mo'oni (pure, real, authentic)*" (Vaiotei, 2006, p. 21) All research has limitations and ethical implications, and these have been carefully considered in relation to this case study inquiry.

The thematic framework that emerged through the grounded theory methodology, which informs the research in subsequent chapters, was presented. Furthermore, the chapter helps to contextualise the research by allowing the reader to fully understand the rationale behind the methodology that was applied to the study. This knowledge will enable the reader to make sense of the findings and discussion chapters that follow.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

People are too shy to talk about it, they don't want to talk about it openly. You have to break down the barriers. Eventually it will break down, but it's trying to find that first step. I was hesitant about doing this interview.  
(Michael, restaurateur)

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the 32 interviews conducted for this case study inquiry. Findings are presented using direct quotes to authentically reflect the participants' voices. Tables and figures are used to support the presentation of data.

A total of 32 participants provided data for this case study, comprising 21 employees and 11 employers. Participants were purposively recruited (see section 3.5.1) from a range of workplaces across the industry, including restaurants, bars, hotels and tour operators. Participants included both men and women, aged between 25 and 60 years. Sample profile details are presented in section 3.5.2.

### **4.2 Emergence of final categories and themes**

The conceptual framework developed at the outset of the study (see Figure 5, p. 15) was instrumental in helping to analyse the large amount of data, by identifying themes in the data that related to the current body of knowledge on sexual harassment. However, data analysis was not limited to the extant literature on sexual harassment as the scope of the findings was open to the emergence of new themes. The grounded theory methodology adopted for this study (see section 3.4.1) enabled new themes to emerge that were grounded in the data.

The coding process employed during the data analysis phase (see section 3.6.2) enabled the large quantity of data to be significantly condensed. Through constant comparison of the data, seven core categories emerged and formed the final category system. Through the inductive coding process (see section 3.6.1) and the constant comparison of data, themes emerged within each of the seven core categories. The final categories and themes, as presented in the thematic framework categories (see Figure 10, p. 74), are the key findings of this study and are discussed in this chapter. Discussions that follow are presented in an order that is directly aligned to the thematic structure of the framework.

### **4.3 Defining sexual harassment**

When I first started working in the industry, people were doing that to me. It was weird, I thought, what's this? I've never experienced this in my life. So,

I was kind of confused and I literally had to ask my friends, “what is this?”  
(Renata, restaurant supervisor)

A key objective of the study was to gain insight into the awareness of sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Participants were asked to explain, in their own words, what their understanding was of sexual harassment. They responded by providing specific examples of what they considered sexual harassment. Figure 11 summarises the key responses that emerged from the data. These responses are represented as themes in the thematic framework (see Figure 10, p. 74) under the category ‘types of sexual harassment’.

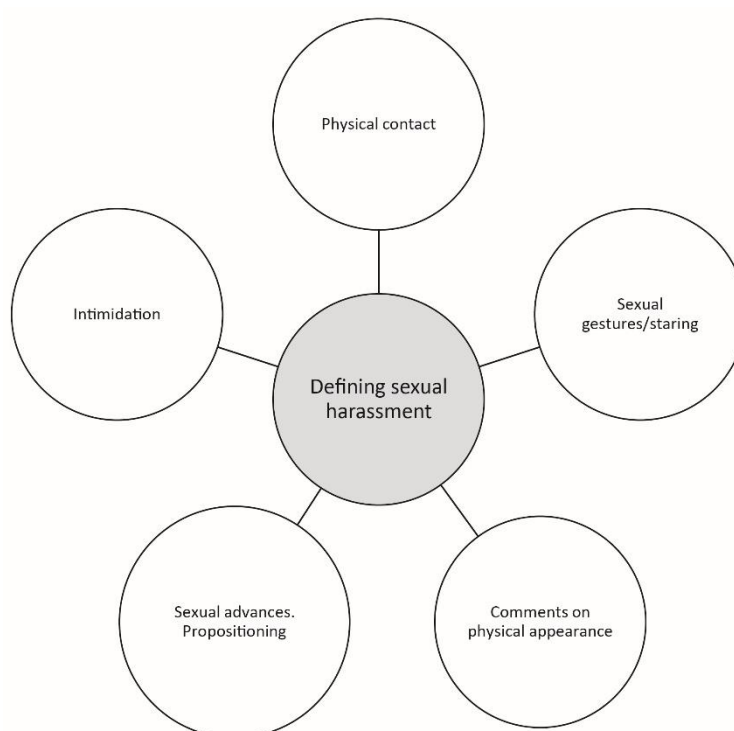


Figure 11. Defining sexual harassment in the case location

#### 4.3.1 Physical contact

Most participants viewed physical contact by a customer as sexual harassment. Varying examples were provided; however, the most common responses included pinching the buttocks, groping, shimmying up (moving body up against somebody), rubbing the back, stroking an arm, and brushing or touching the breasts. Roxy, a mature waitress, claimed that being touched by male patrons was not uncommon: “*It happens to me with male customers, quite often, like touching and especially when you walk past and they touch your bum.*” A number of female participants considered stroking of their arm by male customers inappropriate, viewing it as sexual harassment. Young waitress Renee explained:

*With old people, even though they have their wife with them, they touch my arm with their hands... the older men do that and I feel so uncomfortable because their wife is there and he's got no respect for her.*

Barmaid Raelene responded assertively to a male patron stroking her arm: *"I had the rubbing of the arm, he was drunk. I just turned around and slapped his face, yeah in front of my boss, and said, 'get the fuck away from me!'."*

Male participants objected equally to physical contact. Tour guide Remy admitted that while he tolerated verbal harassment, he disliked physical contact: *"It's the touching part I don't like. Verbal stuff I'm okay with. The touching doesn't happen all the time, but during hens' parties [women only parties], it does, and I don't like it."*

Other forms of contact were also discussed. Female employees working in restaurants and bars commented that 'brushing up' by customers was common, as illustrated by café manager Ruth: *"You know how they come and make their body move against you at the bar when we're standing around? They just come and make contact. That's a sign, a sexual sign."*

Several employees commented that having physical barriers such as a bar or counter was beneficial because it separated them from customers, preventing the opportunity for physical contact. Café manager Rhianna commented: *"Generally, across the bar there's no contact at all, which is why it's good to have that buffer. It's something in between!"*

Notably, the majority of male employers claimed that touching a female's back was inappropriate and could be justifiably considered sexual harassment. Mitch's comment was similar to the views expressed by other male participants: *"I think certain parts of your body are no go zones... definitely the lower back for a female, the torso, and the breast area."*

Overall, physical contact of any form was viewed negatively, as it made participants feel uncomfortable, and caused distress.

#### **4.3.2 Sexual gestures/staring**

Some participants viewed sexual gestures by customers as sexual harassment. Male tour guide Robert explained: *"Their facial expressions 'that' look they're giving me and staring at me, it makes me feel so uncomfortable."* Female participants also considered staring a form of sexual harassment, causing feelings of anxiety and discomfort, as described by young waitress Rebecca: *"Every time you walk, you can see their eyes following you, ...I can feel it because my heart tends to beat really fast, because they're*

*just sitting there staring.” Similarly, café manager Ruth spoke about feeling uncomfortable when being ogled by male customers: “You know when you wear singlets and they stare and they’re looking around your bust area. I’ve experienced a lot of that.” Female participants also described feelings of immense frustration and anger with being stared at by male customers. Barmaid Raelene commented: “They stand at the bar, they’re looking me up and down and I can feel it. It really pisses me off.” However, unlike most female participants, restaurant supervisor Ruby was flattered by the attention, although interestingly, this depended on the customers’ age. She commented: “I feel appreciated when it happens, I’m flattered! But it depends on the customer, if they’re old or young. If they’re older, then oh my goodness! But if they’re young, it’s all right.”*

Most male participants did not comment on staring, which would indicate that unlike female participants, they did not consider this behaviour sexual harassment, or it did not happen to them.

#### **4.3.3 Comments on physical appearance**

More than half of the participants viewed comments made by customers about their physical appearance as sexual harassment and described feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable. Male lagoon cruise tour guide Robert commented:

*When I take my shirt off on the boat they say to me, “I wish my husband’s body looked like that.” They say it when the husband is there. I wish they wouldn’t say that. The husbands don’t say anything, but if I put myself in their shoes, I’d feel uncomfortable.*

Restaurant supervisor Ruby said: “Male diners would just say to me straight up, ‘you’re so beautiful, you’re very slim. Are you single? Are you married?’” Female employees also described situations when customers made explicit comments about their physical appearance. Bar manager Monica claimed that male customers have said to her: “I like your rack [breasts].” Some participants indicated, however, that ‘context’ (see section 4.3.6) was important (i.e., *who* made the comment, *what* was said and *how* it was said) and influenced how they interpreted the comment. For example, waitress Renee explained: “I have both male and female customers comment on my appearance. If the males say it, I feel really uncomfortable, but when a female says it, it’s all right. I feel like the males say it just to hit on me.”



#### 4.3.4 Sexual advances/propositioning

Unsurprisingly, most participants viewed sexual advances by customers as sexual harassment. Richard, a night life tour guide, said that being propositioned by intoxicated females was a regular occurrence, and ultimately led to his resignation:

*It happened quite often, almost every night when I do the night tour. Like this one lady, she approached me, she said, "Man, look at your body do you have anything inside?" (looking at his groin area) Yeah, it happened all the time, that's why I ended up leaving the job.*

Similarly, bar manager Rita expressed frustration with being constantly propositioned by intoxicated patrons:

*All the time I have men ask about my marital status. I tell them I'm married. They ask, "Are you single? Are you married?" There's some men you can tell they're asking because they want something in your pants. So, that's when it becomes sexual harassment, because they keep asking the same stupid question.*

Most participants described encounters when they had been propositioned by a customer, suggesting that this is a common occurrence in their industry.

#### 4.3.5 Intimidation

Two hotel managers described experiences when customers had used intimidation to gain sexual favours from employees. Hotel manager Margaret spoke of a hotel guest who pressured a spa therapist for services beyond what he paid for. She explained:

*I had an incident one day with one of our spa therapists she said to me, "Oh the guest in room X, I massaged him earlier and he wanted a happy ending. He said, 'Can you end off with a happy ending?'" She got a shock because it's her first case. She knew what that meant, so she said she stopped massaging his back and said "no!"*

Hotel owner Mitch related an incident involving the coercion of a young waitress by an in-house guest:

*We had the head honcho of a New Zealand company. He brought all his staff to Raro, they booked out the hotel. He'd call room service and specifically ask for this certain waitress to deliver his food. One day when the girl arrived at his room he was lying on the sun-lounger wanking, masturbating. And she just freaked out! So, she put the food on the table and stormed out. And he was calling, "Come back here, I haven't finished with you." And she ran up to my office and said "Ohhh (name) I've just seen something." So, I went straight to his room and I said, "One more act like this and I'm going to ask you to leave the hotel." He was drunk and he said, "I've paid for this hotel, I can do whatever I want!"*

In both situations, the customers used intimidation and were of the impression that their request for sexual favours was reasonable, because they had paid for a service. This was irrespective of the fact that the paid service did not include sexual benefits.

In summary, participants considered physical contact, sexual advances, sexual gestures, staring, intimidation and comments regarding physical appearance sexual harassment.

For most participants, however, context was an important factor, significantly influencing how they interpreted the customer's behaviour.

#### **4.3.6 A note on 'context'**

Most participants viewed context as an influence on whether they viewed behaviour by a customer as sexual harassment. Hence, context was used by participants as a *filter*, to analyse and interpret behaviour. This was exemplified by accommodation manager May, who commented: "*It would depend on the context and your relationship with the customer, if you know them or not and if it makes you feel uncomfortable. So, it's contextual.*" Similarly, hotel owner Mitch commented:

*I think it's important we identify whether it's sexual harassment or flirting. Particularly if you're single or married because sometimes it could be viewed as flattery...So, I think it depends on a whole range of factors including the employee's age, their physical appearance and whether or not there is some potential chemistry between them.*

Michael (restaurateur) suggested that personality and age could influence how an employee perceives a customer's behaviour. He commented: "*Some staff are young, fun, party animals and would see it as okay.*"

Another perspective was suggested by accommodation CEO Marcus, who proposed that sexual behaviour by a customer could, in fact, be instigated by the employee, in which case it would not be sexual harassment:

*You need to look at the context of the whole thing. If the staff member has been flirting, or shows some affection towards the guest, be it through focusing on that guest more than others, then that would be different. So, context plays a huge part.*

#### **4.4 Incidence**

Just because no-one is saying anything, it doesn't mean it's not happening.  
(Margaret, hotel manager)

The aim of research question two of the study (see section 3.2.1) was to investigate what sexual harassment experiences participants have encountered or witnessed

involving customers. Of the 21 employees interviewed in this study, only two reported that they had not experienced sexual harassment by a customer. Notably, both employees worked in administration roles that involved minimal interaction with guests.

#### **4.4.1 Personal experiences of sexual harassment**

This section presents some of the participants' reflections on their experiences and response to sexual harassment by customers.

##### *4.4.1.1 Emotional response to sexual harassment*

Most participants who had experienced sexual harassment by customers responded emotionally, describing the feelings they encountered at the time. Café owner Monique and tour guide Mana exhibited an emotional response to their experience:

*I've had groping, I've had men try and shimmy up to me, coming too close into my personal space. And I've had the uncomfortable staring where they're looking you up and down. It's so uncomfortable.*

*You know with hens' parties they think they can come and touch you whenever they want. It's when they get drunk and they get really carried away, they get all touchy, feely. I feel really uncomfortable*

Tour guide Robert described being constantly pressured to remove his shirt while on tour:

*The ladies they'll say "What have you got on underneath?" And I'll say, "You know what's underneath." Then they'll ask, "Can you take it off?" And I'll say "Nah" .... I try to stop it right there.*

##### *4.4.1.2 Responding to sexual harassment with retaliation*

Contrary to the emotional responses described above, some participants responded more assertively, using physical abuse. Bar manager Rita described an encounter with an intoxicated guest:

*He was sexually harassing me. He made comments to me like, later on when you finish, my room is 402, we can have a drink on the balcony and do whatever you want to do. To my understanding if you're in the hospitality industry, the customer is your first priority, even if they're rude. So, you have to be the best of your ability. But then, I don't know if any idiot can be the best of the best when that person is being like that to you, constantly all night. Because for myself, it really pissed me off, so I can't hold it. So, at the end of the day it's my choice to knock the shit out, just fuck the job and go. So, I punched him in the face and I walked out!*

Waitress Roxy shared a personal experience, to justify her retaliation towards a male customer harassing her. Her story was poignant:

*When I was working at X, one of the house guests kept touching me and I turned around and told him he's not allowed to do that. But he kept doing it so I punched him on the face and he was shocked. He said it was the first time someone punched him and I said well this is the wrong person, that's what I tell him. I said to him if you take this to my manager, I'll go straight to the police, so he said sorry. If they do things like that to me, I tell them off. I'm not afraid to stand up for myself. Why, is because when I was 13 years old, I was raped. You're the first one over here that I have ever talked to about this.*

(See section 3.8.1 for further discussion on Roxy's interview)

Numerous experiences of customer-perpetrated harassment were shared by participants during the interviews, suggesting that this behaviour is a common occurrence in the industry.

#### **4.4.2 Witnessing sexual harassment of a colleague**

Some participants claimed that not only had they experienced sexual harassment personally, but they had also witnessed the harassment of a colleague. Barmaid Raelene explained:

*We've got a young male staff, he's very good looking. I've seen tourists, leaning over the bar saying "Oh can I have a photo with you please, can I have a photo with you?" He gets harassed every day by female tourists. Sometimes he feels frustrated he's sick of it. So, that's why I say to him just say "no"! But he doesn't say anything because he's very gentle, he's too friendly and too shy and doesn't have the confidence to actually stand up and say something. He's a very handsome guy with abs [abdominal muscles] and the girls are like, pull your shirt up, pull your shirt up! And yes, he does! Because he doesn't know what to do!*

Front office manager Rosemary described a similar bystander incident involving a female colleague:

*A colleague was serving drinks and these guys were hitting on her, but she was just laughing it off because she didn't know what to do. But I was kind of irritated because they thought it was funny. So, they just kept doing it to her.*

Bar manager Monica expressed frustration about the constant harassment of her staff:

*I've had three staff leave here for that reason. I asked them why are you leaving? I thought you loved working here at the bar? And they said they don't like customers that keep saying things about their arse or their breasts. They were excellent staff, so to lose them was a huge loss!*

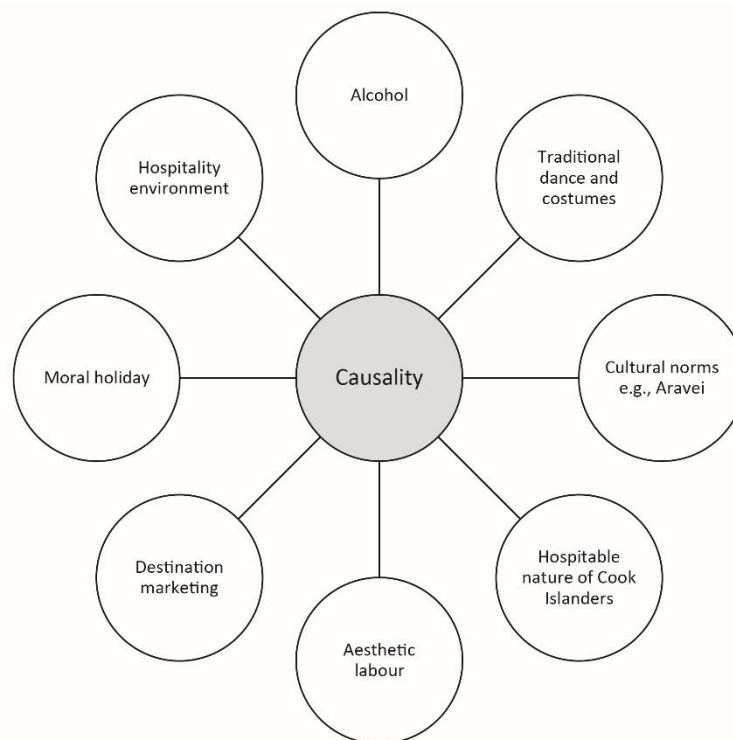
Participants shared various experiences where they had been a bystander to sexual harassment by a customer of a colleague. Unsurprisingly, in most of these situations, alcohol was involved (see section 4.5.1).

## 4.5 Causality

We're putting our beautiful young women to be sexualised as an object because our dance is sexualised and it's erotic. And if our visitors think it's okay to yahoo on stage with a scantily clad girl, do they think they can then transfer that behaviour into their general conduct whilst here? I think this has a big impact on their behaviour. (May, accommodation manager)

Research question three of the study (see section 3.2.1) aimed to identify the key contributing factors of customer-perpetrated harassment in the case location.

Participants who had either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment were asked to consider what they believed had caused this behaviour. The key responses given to this question are summarised in Figure 12. These responses are represented as themes in the thematic framework (see Figure 10, p. 74) under the category 'causality'.



*Figure 12. Cause of sexual harassment by customers*

### 4.5.1 Alcohol

I have to say a hundred per cent of the time when it [sexual harassment] happens it's due to the fact that they've over stepped the line with alcohol. So yeah alcohol is definitely number one. (Michael, restaurateur)

Unsurprisingly, the most common response given by participants regarding causality was the excessive consumption of alcohol. For most participants, this was their first response, which suggests that participants view alcohol as a key cause of customer misbehaviour. This is to be expected, given the nature of the hospitality industry, in

which alcohol is a significant component of the service experience. Waitress Renee commented on the impact of alcohol on customers' behaviour: *"Seriously, if they're sober, there's no way they'll come up to you and say something like that."* Hotel manager Margaret observed the change in the behaviour of hotel diners when under the influence of alcohol: *"When they start dinner, they're fine. But when they start getting tiddly [intoxicated], then the atmosphere changes. Now they're wanting more than just service."* Margaret's comment suggests that when customers become intoxicated, they want a service offering to also include sexual harassment.

Participants also expressed apprehensions over the drinking culture and the relaxed approach to liquor licensing laws, suggesting that these factors encourage binge drinking, resulting in inappropriate customer behaviour. Front office manager Rosemary commented: *"The drinking culture here is so different to overseas. We've had lots of tourists comment on the relaxed approach when the police are stopping them at checkpoints. They think it's quite funny, so they take advantage of it."*

Accommodation CEO Marcus voiced concern over the negligence of liquor licensing laws in the industry: *"There's a lot more leniency in our drinking culture. A big problem is in the hotels where our licensing regulations are not well enforced."*

Participants unequivocally stated that excessive alcohol consumption was a key cause of customer misbehaviour. The drinking culture in the Cook Islands, combined with a disregard of liquor licensing laws, further compounds this problem. Participants unreservedly voiced their concerns, expressing a need for these issues to be addressed.

#### **4.5.2 Hospitality environment**

The findings revealed that sexual harassment was more prevalent in certain hospitality environments than in others. Unsurprisingly, café employees rarely experienced sexual harassment, perhaps because of the limited operating hours and liquor licensing restrictions. Café owner Tom commented: *"It's alcohol that seems to drive it and fortunately being a café and being day time, our staff are a little more protected."* As expected, employees working in bars experienced much higher levels of sexual harassment. Café supervisor Renata compared her current job in the café to her previous employment at a bar: *"Because it's a café, we don't have that problem. But before when I was working at X Bar, I was constantly getting it."*

### 4.5.3 Aesthetic labour

Some participants thought their personal appearance was a contributing factor to sexual behaviour by customers. In particular, participants commented that the emphasis placed on appearance by their employers was a cause of sexual harassment. Tour guide Remy commented: *“I think it’s our appearance, I think this is what X (employer) wants from us, so we can bring in the big numbers.”* Other participants also said that maintaining an attractive appearance was a requirement of their job. Tour guide Robert said that not only was he expected to look good, but he was also expected to behave in a certain manner:

*During the tour, I have to take my shirt off to make it more exciting for them. It’s my job. I can sense the men don’t like it, because of my tattoos and because I look good. They feel uncomfortable because of their partners. But the women love it. When I take my shirt off the ladies say “Wow!”*

Additionally, some participants commented on the revealing attire worn by female employees, suggesting these employees were self-sexualising to attract attention. Hotel owner Mitch questioned: *“What sort of clothing are staff wearing? Are they wearing revealing stuff and provoking it? Are they emphasising certain parts of their anatomy by wearing short skirts or low-cut dresses with push up bras?”* The findings of the study revealed that some participants perceive aesthetic labour (see section 2.4.2) to be a contributing factor to inappropriate behaviour by customers.

### 4.5.4 Moral holiday

I think because they’re on holiday they think they won’t see that person again. So, they think I may as well go for it, try it on, see how much and how far I can go. (Richelle, wedding coordinator)

Most participants claimed that visitors behave inappropriately simply because they are on holiday and have a sense of anonymity. Café owner Monique commented: *“I definitely think with visitors to the island, the perception is that they can come here let down their hair and behave however they want.”* Some participants suggested that visitor misconduct is also motivated by a desire to engage in sexual experiences with the locals. Tour guide Robert commented: *“I think they do this because they’re on a holiday and want to come here and have a good time with the locals and then happy ending.”*

Notably, the findings identified strong feelings of animosity and resentment towards visitors. Some participants perceived that visitors lack respect for their island, behaving inappropriately while on holiday. Bar manager Richelle commented: *“Some of them just*

*go over the top. And I look at them and think, you're treating this place like it's nothing. But it's our place, it's our home and you're just trashing it."* Café manager Rhianna also observed the inappropriate behaviour of some visitors: *"Tourists feel free when they're here on holiday. So, they like pushing the boundaries further than they would normally do when they're at home."*

#### 4.5.4.1 Celebrations (e.g., weddings)

Participants commented in particular about the behaviour of overseas groups visiting the island for celebratory purposes, particularly weddings. The Cook Islands is a popular wedding destination, hosting up to 700 weddings per annum (Tingika, 2016).

Participants observed the behaviour of wedding groups particularly at stag (all-male) parties and hens' (all-female) nights. Accommodation CEO Marcus commented: *"the Cook Islands hosts hundreds of weddings a year. Alcohol is involved and the atmosphere, the mood, the spirit of everything. They're here for a good time. So, that in itself is a contributing factor."* Café owner Monique made a similar observation regarding the large amount of wedding groups coming to the Cook Islands to have *"huge alcohol fuelled parties"*. Concerns were raised by most participants about the binge drinking behaviour of overseas groups (see section 4.5.1).

#### 4.5.4.2 Pack mentality

The impact of pack mentality also emerged as a contributing factor to customer misbehaviour. Participants claimed that customers in groups provided a strong power base for inappropriate behaviour, particularly when alcohol was consumed. General comments were made about men in groups (stag dos) or women in groups (hens' parties) who were intoxicated and behaving inappropriately in front of their peers. Participants described them *"egging each other on"* and misbehaving, simply because there was safety in numbers. Receptionist Ricki said: *"I see that kind of behaviour when they're in groups on special occasions, like weddings. They just want to mess around, like Zac Guildford"* (see section 5.3.3.1). Café manager Rhianna made a similar observation stating: *"it's definitely the pack mentality, especially with stag dos [all-male parties for grooms, the night before a wedding]. There's always a sense for men and their egos to go that one step further and push the boundaries."*

Hotel wedding coordinator Richelle observed about overseas female groups, in particular, travel agents:



*When there's a group of girls, overseas travel agents are a prime example. They're all "yahooing" when there's males dancing. Because they've probably been to those stripper night clubs and then they come here and have that right there in front of them!*

Participants expressed anger and frustration about visitors misbehaving on their island. The explicit statement made by hotel owner Mitch was echoed by most participants in the study: *"Don't leave your morals at home when you get on that plane, bring them with you!"* The general perception of the participants was that visitors were not only 'on holiday', but were taking a 'moral holiday', behaving in an inappropriate manner.

#### **4.5.5 Cultural norms**

Cultural norms are the standards that individuals live by. They are the shared expectations and rules that guide the behaviour of people within social groups or communities. Norms differ considerably across cultures. In the Cook Islands, for example, it is customary to 'aravei (greet) someone by kissing them on the cheek. 'Aravei is a social norm and is the standard greeting among family members, friends and acquaintances. In other cultures, however, this behaviour may be perceived differently. Accordingly, participants believe that misunderstanding or misinterpretation by visitors around some cultural norms, such as 'aravei, can inadvertently affect visitors' behaviour. Guest relations manager Rosie commented: *"Yes, we kiss people here. But the French kiss too. And do we assume they're going to be free and easy? No, we don't!"* Hotel owner Mitch shared the same view, stating: *"Kissing you, when we greet you doesn't mean we want to sleep with you."* Café manager Rhianna was also outspoken about her perspectives on this issue, commenting: *"A kiss on the cheek isn't an invitation to come home with me."* Cultural differences on 'personal space' were also acknowledged by some of the participants. Tour guide Robert observed, for instance:

*Some comfort zones in other countries is wider, but in our culture, we're okay getting close to people. You'll see some people moving outwards like this (leans backwards) which is different to us. Those sorts of things can send out messages.*

The findings suggested that misunderstandings around some of the cultural norms can inadvertently trigger inappropriate behaviour by customers. This finding is significant because it identifies a potential need for visitors to acquire a greater awareness of Cook Islands customs and traditions.

#### **4.5.6 The hospitable nature of Cook Islanders**

The study revealed that the friendly, hospitable nature and vibrant personalities of Cook Islanders are perceived to be another cause of sexual harassment by customers.

Polynesians are renowned for being warm, friendly, hospitable individuals who enjoy a high degree of social interaction. As a result, their vivacious, outgoing personalities may attract sexual attention. Barmaid Raelene commented: *“I think our friendliness can be misinterpreted by visitors because it happens a lot to me. It’s like no mate, I ain’t hitting on you, I’m just being friendly, showing you our Cook Islands way.”* Interestingly, the viewpoint of tour guide Robert suggested that Cook Islanders themselves are to blame for encouraging the harassment: *“It’s in our culture to be warm and friendly. So, we’re inviting all sorts of temptations, whatever thing happened, we invited it, by being too friendly.”* Renata, however, had a different opinion: *“Our people are hospitable. I don’t know how to say something in order for it to not happen. Whether it’s actually arousing these people to speak that way – it’s not our fault, because this is the way we are!”* Hotel manager Mariah also acknowledged misconceptions around the friendly nature of Pacific people: *“I think perhaps they misinterpret what the Pacific Islands are about and misunderstand our friendliness for something else and assimilate sex tourism, like in Asia, where that’s readily available.”*

The study has revealed that the hospitable, friendly nature and vibrant personalities of Cook Islanders can be misinterpreted, inadvertently attracting sexual attention. This finding identifies a potential need for frontline employees to undergo cultural awareness and social skills training.

#### **4.5.7 Destination marketing**

The marketing of the Cook Islands as a tourist destination was identified as a further contributing factor to visitor misbehaviour. Some participants perceived that some of the destination’s marketing collateral was provocative or suggestive, distorting visitors’ perceptions and inadvertently triggering inappropriate behaviour. Accommodation CEO Marcus commented:

*All we do as a nation to promote our country is put pretty girls and boys up-front as the face of our destination. And they’re scantily clad in such a way that would subconsciously potentially arouse people. So, as a result, some people would come here with preconceived ideas.*

Accommodation manager May also observed the impact of destination marketing on visitor behaviour: *“Our destination is marketed as exotic, carefree, relaxed, fun and laid back. And I think that can negatively influence visitors’ behaviour.”* Hotel manager Mariah acknowledged the potential for preconceived misconceptions as a result of promotional roadshows:

*I guess from a destination marketing point of view, it's a tool for promotion. We go to the visitors' home country. We take the best-looking girls and boys and put them in the best-dressed costume possible. And it knocks the pants off them! But yeah, I think it could create preconceived ideas for visitors.*

Guest relations manager Rosie perceived that some images of the South Pacific portrayed in the media negatively affect visitors' perceptions: *"I think it's that whole concept of the South Pacific. Visitors have got this romantic view, they've seen too many Hollywood movies. They think that we're just free and easy. Well we're not!"* Concern was also expressed by hotel owner Mitch regarding the brand image of the Cook Islands: *"I think 'that' type of traveller is growing, I'm meaning sex tourism. So, we need to be very careful that we don't cross that line, because then we'll become like Thailand."*

The findings of the study revealed that some destination marketing collateral including images are perceived to be suggestive or provocative, inadvertently causing misconceptions by visitors and triggering inappropriate sexual behaviour.

#### **4.5.8 Cultural dance and costumes**

Definitely the sexual innuendos that are exuded by our dancers... It's basically 'sex sells' it's selling sex! But are our visitors getting a true picture of our culture? (Marcus, accommodation CEO)

Of all factors raised regarding causality, participants were most vocal about the influence of cultural dance and costumes on customer behaviour. Participants expressed concern regarding the authenticity of Cook Islands dance, saying it had changed considerably and become sexualised. In particular, participants observed that the style, technique and movements of the female dance had become seductive and provocative. Front office manager Rosemary described how women were now dancing with *"their legs open"*, which, she commented, *"is not part of our culture"*. Bar manager Monica suggested that watching female dancers perform on stage was *"like going to a strip club!"* Male tour guide Richard also observed the sexualisation of female dance:

*Definitely when a girl's dancing, all the males will be thinking wooow! They're just looking at the hips moving. I have a Pakeha friend that talked to me, he said, "Man she'll be great sex on the bed because of the way she dances!"*

Concern was also expressed regarding changes in the style of the male dance, with specific reference to the grinding of the hips movement that has recently become common. Participants stated the movement was not authentic and was sexually provocative. Bar manager Rita explained: *"To me the guys grinding when they dance, to*

*me that is actually sexually teasing our customers. Because that is not our culture! We have never grind something like that with our own bum.”* Restaurateur Marissa made a similar observation:

*They’re trying to act sexy, whereas before it was just dance. The boys are doing sexual thrusts and I think “why are you doing that?” It just looks stupid! And there’s sexual connotations, because hello, you’re thrusting your pelvis like that? Is that really necessary? I know that’s not Cook Islands dance! So definitely, I think that impacts on how visitors behave.*

Guest relations manager Rosie observed the changes in traditional dance and costumes, raising her concerns over the impact of these changes on visitors’ perceptions:

*Our dance and costumes have changed and it’s something we need to be concerned about. Sometimes I try and make a joke about our males dancing when they do that grinding thing with their hips... I say “Miley Cyrus doesn’t have anything on our dancing!” I must admit, I feel uncomfortable especially when I’m hosting travel agents and I’m thinking oh God what are they thinking when they’re watching our dancers do that? Do they think any lesser of us, that we’re free and easy?*

Participants also voiced concern about the loss of traditional costumes, claiming that dancers appeared scantily clad on stage, in revealing costumes. Participants compared the skimpy costumes worn today with the conservative costumes worn in the past. Tour guide Richard observed: *“I think it’s not only our dance, but now we’re also almost naked. In the olden days, the hula skirts were up here (points above navel), but now the skirt, it’s dropping, dropping further down.”* Café owner Monique also observed the changes in the cultural dance costumes:

*Our culture was very conservative before. My grandparents were involved in dance groups and the costumes back then were really plain. The ‘titi’ [waist band] came right up here, covering the belly button. These days, they’re wearing next to nothing.*

Participants perceived that Western influences and the pressures of modernisation have caused these changes. They expressed concern that the Cook Islands was gradually losing its culture, and that the sexualisation of their dance and costumes was a contributing factor to sexual harassment by visitors. The changes in cultural dance and costumes described by the participants suggest the occurrence of cultural commodification. This is considered further in the discussion chapter that follows.

## 4.6 Response

My way of coping is to laugh it off, I ignore it. But in my mind, I'm getting so pissed off. (Richelle, wedding coordinator)

The study revealed that employees engage various strategies to respond to customer-perpetrated harassment; the most common approaches are shown in Figure 13. These coping strategies are represented as themes in the thematic framework (see Figure 10, p. 74) under the category 'response'.

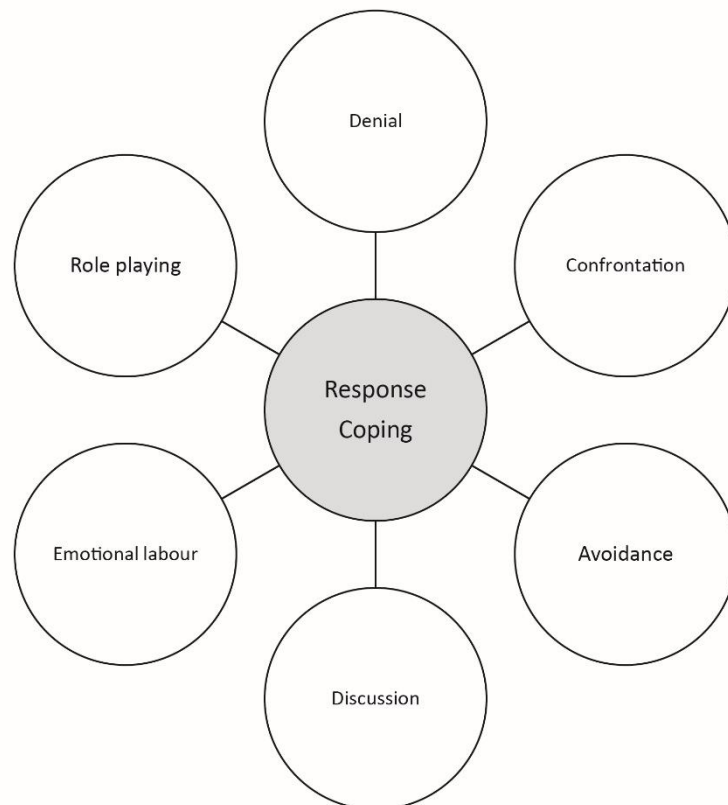


Figure 13. Responding to sexual harassment by customers

### 4.6.1 Denial

The most common strategy used by participants to cope with sexual harassment is to ignore it. Employees spoke of “*brushing off*” or “*ignoring*” harassment for various reasons, including fear of being blamed, fear of losing their job or simply not knowing how to respond. Tour guide Remy commented: “*I just walk away and laugh it off, so it doesn’t create tension. We have it all the time, so we’re used to it.*” Young waitress Rebecca described suppressing her feelings, sharing them for the first time during the interview: “*We just keep it to ourselves and don’t talk about it until somebody actually brings it up, like yourself. This is the first time I’ve ever talked about it.*”

#### **4.6.2 Confrontation**

Direct, assertive responses are known to be the least frequent response used by victims of sexual harassment (see section 2.6.2). While most employees in the study did not respond to the harassment assertively, a few did.

##### *4.6.2.1 Verbal abuse*

Barmaid Raelene said she tolerated the harassment but only until a certain point: *“I’ll ignore them, but when I’ve had enough, I’ll say ‘piss off and go and drink your beers on that side of the bar’.”* Other female participants also described confronting the customer verbally, using explicit language. Bar manager Rita said: *“I start getting into swearing, like ‘fuck off’. I’ve said it to a lot of men because they’re constantly harassing me.”*

##### *4.6.2.2 Physical abuse*

Four of the 16 female participants described using physical abuse to respond to the harassment. Bar manager Rita explained: *“I’ve punched a person, because he thought I was a dumb bitch, he kept saying those things to me. So, I punched him right there and walked out.”* Bar manager Monica also admitted to slapping a drunk tourist in the face because he had pinched her bottom. All four incidences involving a physical response occurred in a bar and involved an intoxicated customer (see section 4.4.1.2).

#### **4.6.3 Avoidance**

Victims of sexual harassment are known to respond to the harassment by distancing themselves from the situation (see section 2.6.5). Participants described avoiding the harasser by physically removing themselves from the situation. Restaurant waitress Rebecca explained: *“I stop serving them, I get someone else to serve them or I’ll go and do something else to avoid them. I remove myself from the situation.”* Bar manager Monica described the detrimental impact of sexual harassment on workplace relationships: *“Having to deal with it is emotionally stressful, that’s why staff hide. They’re like ‘oh you go serve them’. And that affects their relationships because it’s like ‘why do you want me to do your job? You’re supposed to do that!’.”*

Having ‘time-out’ was another strategy adopted by participants to cope with harassment. Barmaid Raelene commented: *“I go outside and have a cigarette. I need time out because I’m so angry. Then I come back and my head is straight.”* Some participants used a ‘team-tag’ approach, asking a colleague to take over so they could remove themselves from the situation. Restaurant manager Reuben explained: *“If it happens to one of the staff I remove them from that table and get someone else to take*

over.” Front office manager Rosemary adopted a similar approach, stating: *“I get another colleague to step in.”*

#### **4.6.4 Discussion**

Employees also cope with sexual harassment by seeking support from their colleagues or partner. Participants said that having staff drinks at the end of a shift was beneficial, as it provided an opportunity to share experiences and cope with the harassment in a collaborative manner. Restaurant manager Reuben commented: *“Staff talk about it amongst themselves but it’s informal. Like after work, we all sit down and have a drink.”* Restaurant supervisor Ruby also described the advantage of sharing her experiences with colleagues: *“We talk about it at the end of a night but it’s just in a joking way. I talk about it to get it out of my head, then I move on.”* Some participants said that confiding in their partner was another way of coping with the harassment. Barmaid Raelene explained: *“I talk to my partner, I always tell him what happened when I go home. It’s good to let it all out.”*

#### **4.6.5 Emotional labour**

In the hospitality industry, service employees are expected to always be welcoming and friendly and to create the impression that they enjoy performing their role. They must engage in emotional labour to provide ‘service with a smile’ and always be polite and cheerful irrespective of the customer’s behaviour towards them (see section 2.6.3). The findings revealed that employees used emotional labour to cope with sexual harassment by customers. Employees internalise their emotions to hide their true feelings, drawing on their emotional labour to cope with the abuse. Restaurateur Michael explained: *“Physically you may not see it, but emotionally, inside, it’s really hard to deal with. I think it comes out in anger later on to other people close to you, like your partner.”*

#### **4.6.6 Role playing**

Some participants described creating a persona while at work and hiding behind the façade, then leaving the role behind when they leave the workplace. Tour guide Remy used the analogy of a ‘switch’ to illustrate his ‘fake’ persona at work: *“When we arrive at work, we have to turn on a switch, it’s part of the job. It’s emotionally tiring, it’s draining too.”*

Additionally, some participants said that they were expected to behave in a certain manner by ‘appearing single and available’. Tour guide Robert explained:

*We just play along, but after the tour, it stops right there. I find it really hard. It's like we're playing single for the day. It's like, I'm yours, but at the end of the day, it stops right there, my job is done. I feel sorry for them because at the end of the day, I bring them up to that level and then all of a sudden, I put their hopes down. I'm giving them false hope, nek minit [next minute] good bye, done my job! I feel bad about doing that.*

Likewise, tour guide Remy believed that projecting a single image was part of his job role: “*We project a single image, it's something we feel we have to do and also something that (names employer) wants us to do.... We know what customers want and this is one of those things.*”

In stark contrast, barmaid Raelene took a different approach, desexualising herself by dressing as a tomboy to avoid sexual advances from customers:

*I never go dressed up as a girl to the bar. I always have a cap, singlet and shorts because I don't want them looking at me like, oh she's so pretty. I had one guy ask me “Are you a guy or a chick?” I turned around and said, “Excuse me, I'm a chick, can't you see my boobs [breasts]? But I'm a tom-boy, because creeps like you hit on us.”*

The findings revealed that participants adopt various strategies to cope with sexual harassment by customers. Passive approaches such as denial, avoidance, role playing and emotional labour were used by some participants, while others responded more assertively, verbally confronting the customer or, in some cases, physically retaliating.

#### **4.7 Impact**

It's emotionally tiring, we do this seven days a week, come to work, smiling, singing. I enjoy this job, but it's draining. (Remy, tour guide)

Sexual harassment is known to have significant negative impact on both victims and organisations (see section 2.7). The study revealed that customer-perpetrated harassment affected participants in various ways, as shown in Figure 14. These responses are represented as themes in the thematic framework (see Figure 10, p. 74) under the category ‘impact’.



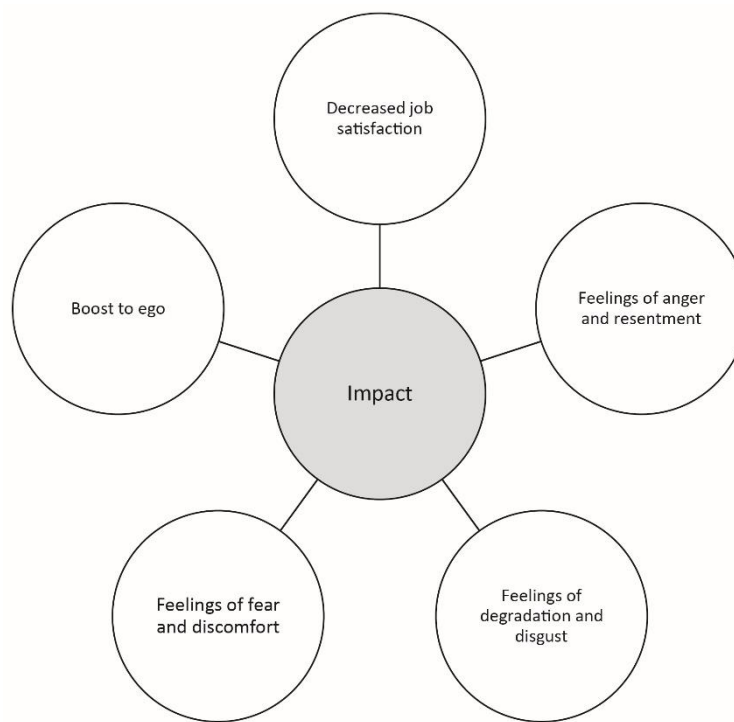


Figure 14. Impact of sexual harassment by customers

#### 4.7.1 Decreased job satisfaction

Most participants described experiencing a negative impact on their overall job satisfaction as a result of the harassment. Participants also described experiencing a lack of concentration and a decline in their work performance. Front office supervisor Ronald explained: *“I feel it impacts my work because I’m trying to concentrate, but it distracts me because I’m fixated on it, so I’m not actually working. It really bothers me.”* Barmaid Raelene observed the behaviour of a female colleague who was being harassed: *“She didn’t say anything to him, even though I told her to. I was watching her and she was banging the bottles down and serving angrily because she was pissed off.”*

#### 4.7.2 Feelings of anger and resentment

Some participants described experiencing feelings of anger and resentment as a result of the harassment. Spa therapist Rachel commented: *“When something like that happens you’re not concentrating, because you’re feeling so angry.”* Wedding coordinator Julia also expressed her anger: *“I get so pissed off, because they think they can come over here and do that, thinking it’s acceptable.”* Accommodation manager May observed strong feelings of animosity by the locals towards visitors, commenting: *“Our Cook Islands people are sick and tired of tourists. There’s animosity and I totally understand why”* (see section 4.5.7). The study has identified broader underlying tensions in the host–guest relationship, not just as a result of sexual harassment, but because of visitors’

conduct in general. These tensions are explored further in the discussion chapter that follows.

#### **4.7.3 Feelings of degradation and disgust**

Some participants also expressed feelings of disgust and degradation as a result of the harassment. Front office manager Rosemary described feeling “*disgusted*”, saying that the experience negatively affected her self-esteem. Restaurateur Michael expressed self-doubt, stating: “*What the hell! Why is this person doing this to me? Did I encourage it? It’s so degrading!*” Bar manager Monica expressed her frustration about losing three female employees to sexual harassment: “*They left because they felt like they had to come to work and it’s dirty, it’s degrading for them being treated like that. They don’t feel valued.*”

#### **4.7.4 Feelings of fear and discomfort**

Victims of sexual harassment are also known to experience feelings of fear and discomfort (see section 2.6). Restaurant supervisor Ruby described feeling “*really uncomfortable*” with being watched by a customer. She commented: “*I feel unsafe because he could stay around and wait till I finish work.*” Human resources assistant Roberta also described feeling distressed by the harassment: “*I feel so uncomfortable and I’m thinking how am I going to get out of this? And did I cause this behaviour?*” A salient statement was made by the youngest participant in the study. It was very moving when young waitress Rebecca, overcome with emotion and with tears in her eyes, made the following statement:

*I never spoke about it to anyone, not even my mum, because I was scared and ashamed. If you’re a young girl you don’t know what to do. You’re too scared to talk about it. I was 16 years old at the time. I didn’t discuss it with my manager or my colleagues. This is the first time I’ve talked about it.*

Like Rebecca, most female participants explained that they ignored sexual harassment by customers for fear of being blamed, disbelieved or losing their jobs.

#### **4.7.5 Boost to ego**

Women are known to be less tolerant of sexual harassment than men, reacting to the harassment more severely (see section 2.3.4). Unsurprisingly, most of the male participants were flattered by sexual attention, whereas female participants considered the behaviour offensive. Restaurant manager Reuben commented: “*I don’t think male Cook Islanders are bothered by it, I think they enjoy it. They’re definitely flattered! For our women though, I think it’s different!*” Tour guide Richard was also flattered by the

attention, describing a boost to his ego because “*someone was looking*” at him. While most female participants viewed the behaviour unfavourably, hotel receptionist Ricki and café supervisor Ruby said they were flattered to have customers compliment their slim figure and appearance.

## 4.8 Tolerance

When you’re a bartender, sexual harassment comes with the job. There’s always going to be intoxicated people. You have to put up with a fair amount of shit. I wouldn’t hire Little Miss Timid, she definitely wouldn’t last! (Rhianna, café manager)

Previous research indicates that sexual harassment is tolerated more in the hospitality industry than in most other private sector industries (see section 2.8). This study revealed that participants tolerated sexual harassment by customers for various reasons, as shown in Figure 15. These responses are represented as themes in the thematic framework (see Figure 10, p. 74) under the category ‘tolerance’.

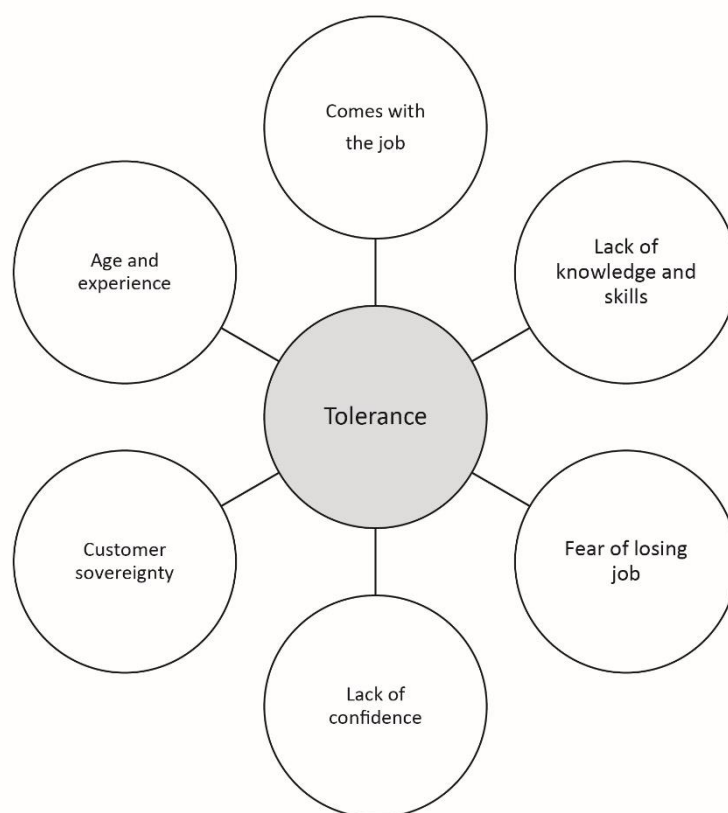


Figure 15. Tolerance to sexual harassment

### 4.8.1 Comes with the job

Most participants stated that they tolerated sexual harassment because they were of the view that it was simply part and parcel of the job. Hotel manager Mariah commented:

*“You’re in a role to serve people and you’re also surrounded by alcohol, so you’ve kind of got to roll with the punches.”* Tour guide/cultural dancer Robert described females ‘flicking up’ his hula skirt and asking him *“What’s underneath?”* He added: *“They’ll even ask, can you take it off? When that happens, it doesn’t bother me, I’m okay, because it’s my job.”* The comment made by restaurateur Michael suggested that sexual harassment is very much normalised in the industry. Referring to this study, Michael commented: *“This is an interesting subject. To be honest, I wouldn’t have given it a second thought, because you see it every day at work.”*

#### **4.8.2 Lack of knowledge and skills**

Participants overwhelmingly stated that the main reason they tolerated sexual harassment by customers was that they lacked the skills to respond confidently and professionally. Restaurant supervisor Ruby explained:

*I ignore it and run away because I have no other way of dealing with it. I’ve never said anything to a customer, because I don’t know the right words to use. It bothers me. We just ignore it and I don’t think it’s good.*

Accommodation manager May emphasised a vital need for training, stating: *“Our people don’t know that it’s wrong, they need to be educated.”* Front office manager Rosemary also observed the need for education and training: *“A colleague working in the bar was being harassed by a group of intoxicated men. They were hitting on her and touching her and she was just laughing, because she didn’t know what to do because she hasn’t been trained.”*

#### **4.8.3 Fear of losing job**

Participants also tolerated sexual harassment for fear of being blamed, or fear of disbelief (see section 4.7.4). Young waitress Rebecca commented: *“I was too scared to talk about it because I might lose my job, or maybe the boss might think I’m lying.”* Waitress Roxy made the following observation: *“Staff just keep their mouth shut even though it’s happening every day. Because our local women are too scared to say anything.”* Concern was expressed by hotel owner Mitch for young adolescents who drop out of school and are ill equipped to respond to sexual harassment. Mitch commented: *“They get into the workplace and they’re thrown into these situations and don’t know how to respond. And they think I better not make trouble, because I might get fired.”*

#### **4.8.4 Lack of confidence**

The majority of employees claimed that they tolerated sexual harassment because they lacked the confidence to respond in a professional manner. Hotel receptionist Ricki explained: *“I think it’s a problem, because we locals don’t want to tell the boss or do anything about it. It needs to change.”* Expatriate spa therapist Rachel also observed Cook Islanders’ non-confrontational approach: *“Cook Islanders don’t speak out about it because it’s their culture. I’m not saying this in a bad way. I think it’s because they’re too scared and shy.”* Similarly, restaurateur Michael described Cook Islanders as being *“very shy and non-confrontational”* and questioning *“do we need to change as a people?”*

#### **4.8.5 Customer sovereignty**

You know how they always teach you in customer service that the customer is always right? Well, that’s a load of bullshit! (Raelene, barmaid)

Most participants also claimed that they tolerated sexual harassment because they were expected to satisfy and please the customer and always be friendly and polite. Hotel receptionist Ricki explained: *“They say customers are always right, but there’s a point where they’re not. But we don’t actually say anything. We need to change. We’re not going to get anywhere if we don’t speak up.”* Hotel manager Margaret suggested that the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders was being exploited: *“We teach our staff to serve the guest, make sure they’re happy and do anything they request. So, it’s always ‘yes, it’s not a problem’. And I feel it’s from that genuineness, that the customer starts taking advantage.”* Guest relations manager Rosie was more explicit in voicing her views on this issue:

*Even though they say the customer is always right, well no they’re not! If they want a drink and they want food, that’s all right. But if they want any of that other stuff, that’s not what this hotel is selling. They should go to Thailand!*

#### **4.8.6 Age and experience**

Previous research indicates that age, maturity and experience can influence an individual’s tolerance to sexual harassment (see section 2.7.1). The findings of this study support the literature, revealing that age and experience affected participants’ tolerance to sexual harassment. Bar manager Rita explained:

*When I was young, I used to think it’s a compliment, someone’s actually taking notice of me. I would think wow, I’m the prettiest in the restaurant and then I would go and show myself off. But now because I’ve grown, and been in the*

*industry for 20 years, when people say that to me, I find it offensive. It's sexual harassment. It's because of my age.*

Café supervisor Renata also acknowledged the impact of age and experience on her tolerance to sexual harassment, saying: *“Back then, I'd probably just smile and ignore it. But now, I'd probably knock that person out!”*

## 4.9 Prevention

We need to educate and train our people on what to do and how to cope with it. And we need to let them know that they will be supported. (May, accommodation manager)

To conclude the interview process, participants were asked for suggestions on how the issue of customer-perpetrated harassment could be addressed. Various strategies were proposed by participants, with the key responses shown in Figure 16. These prevention strategies are represented as themes in the thematic framework (see Figure 10, p. 74) under the category ‘prevention’.

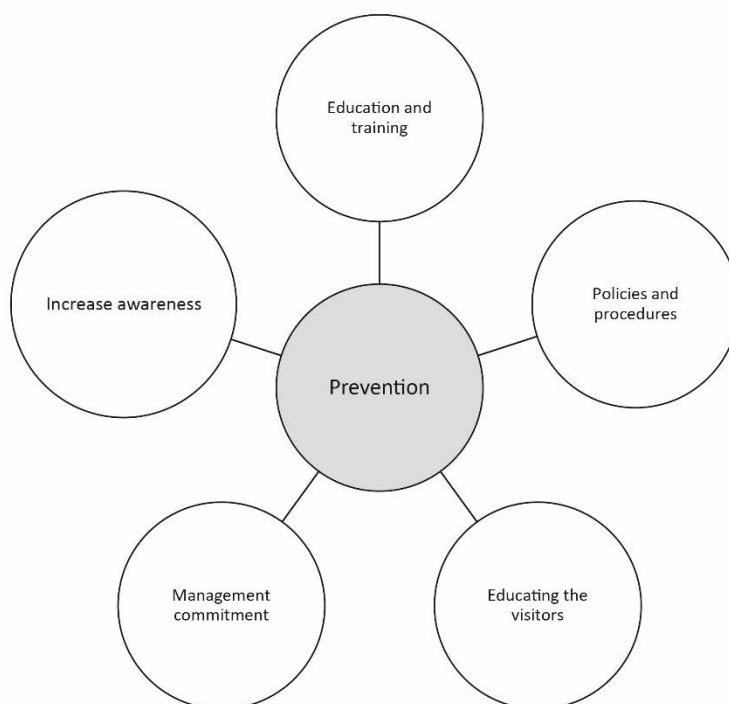


Figure 16. Preventing sexual harassment by customers

### 4.9.1 Education and training

The Cook Islands hospitality industry largely comprises young men and women who, generally, have had limited training. The findings identified a need to educate employees on the issue of sexual harassment. Hotel manager Mariah commented: *“We need to let employees know that it's not right, it's not acceptable. And give our young ones the understanding and the confidence to be able to confront it when it happens.*

*That's our responsibility."* Some participants emphasised the need for cultural awareness training and social skills training. Café manager Rhianna commented: *"Staff need to know the signs and also not give any encouragement. Be friendly, but not overly friendly. It's about knowing where that cut off point is."* Bar manager Rita advocated the need for sexual harassment education to commence prior to employment in the industry: *"I think it should be happening in the schools and through our youth programmes, before they get into the workforce."* Rita also emphasised the need for ongoing training, stating: *"Constantly training, like don't just come today and then piss off and never do it again! Because it will keep building and building and by then, it's worse."*

Accommodation CEO Marcus acknowledged the value that this research will provide to the Cook Islands tourism industry:

*I think the information you're gathering through your thesis is very sound and I think a lot of the content can be provided to the tourism industry as a means of incorporating it into staff handbooks and training situations. This information should be given to all staff.*

#### **4.9.2 Policies and procedures**

Of the 21 employees interviewed in this study, 18 claimed that their current workplace did not have any policies or procedures for dealing with sexual harassment. The remaining three employees stated that while policies were included in their staff handbook, there was little awareness of these policies and no training had been implemented. Furthermore, 10 of the 11 employers admitted to not having policies or procedures to safeguard employees against sexual harassment in the workplace.

Participants emphasised the need to implement policies and procedures to prevent sexual harassment and to ensure that staff are fully aware of these processes.

Participants claimed that until strategies were effectively implemented by management, the problem of sexual harassment would prevail. Bar manager Monica was zealous in voicing a need for action:

*I really believe in your topic. You should do policies and procedures and also do training and skits so that staff understand sexual harassment. Because if we have procedures, then the young ones are educated to say no. I feel sorry for them because they can't stand up for themselves, because they haven't had any training.*

Monica also stated that simply having policies was not sufficient, as these needed to be consciously applied in the workplace. She stated that while some industry employers

had written policies in their employee handbooks, staff were simply “*given the handbook and told to read it*”.

#### **4.9.3 Educating the visitors**

Participants perceived that misunderstandings around some cultural norms were negatively affecting visitor behaviour (see section 4.5.5), raising a need to educate visitors about Cook Islands customs and traditions. Hotel owner Mitch suggested that increasing visitors’ awareness should be the role of the national tourism office:

*Cook Islands Tourism needs to put it on the front page of their brochures—boom, right there! ‘The dos and don’ts of your holiday in Rarotonga’. This is our culture, understand it, so you’re educated! From a regulatory point of view, Cook Islands Tourism needs to start driving this.*

Another strategy, proposed by accommodation CEO Marcus, was to incorporate subliminal messages at the airport and on visitor arrival cards:

*Somebody needs to craft some good words talking about the authenticity, warmth and friendliness of the people, the expectations by us to respect our people and our environment. Even just a little comment like “Polynesians are warm hospitable people, you’ll often see them greeting each other.” We somehow need to incorporate these messages.*

Furthermore, bar manager Monica recommended inflight videos to communicate appropriate information to visitors prior to their arrival: “*Advertising on the flights, so we’re educating the tourist before they arrive. Then, there’s no misunderstanding!*”

#### **4.9.4 Management commitment**

Participants stated that eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace requires a clear and visible commitment from management. Hotel owner Mitch commented: “*It’s really important, having staff know that management are always going to back them up [support them]. So, they’re empowered to do their jobs as they’ve been trained, and with confidence.*” Accommodation manager May emphasised the need for managers to promote a zero-tolerance workplace, commenting: “*There’s definitely a need for employers to be supportive and to create a culture that it’s [harassment] not okay.*”

#### **4.9.5 Increase awareness**

When I was first in the industry, it was kind of weird to me. When I first started and people were doing that to me, I thought, what’s this? I’ve never experienced this in my life. So, I was kind of confused and I literally had to ask my friends, “What is this? What’s going on?” (Renata, café supervisor)



The study identified a significant lack of awareness regarding sexual harassment across all sectors of the industry and at all levels, including management. Participants emphasised a need for increased awareness on this issue, both in the workplace and in the wider community. Café owner Monique was of the view that sexual harassment was deliberately being ignored because of its sensitive nature: *“Sex is a taboo subject, especially for Pacific Islanders. But we need to talk about it, because sexual harassment ‘is’ happening here. There’s community leaders that know it’s happening and aren’t doing anything about it.”* The significant lack of awareness identified from this study highlights a need to bring the issue of sexual harassment to the fore and encourage open dialogue.

#### 4.10 Participants’ overall perceptions of sexual harassment

A key objective of this study (see research question five, section 3.2.1) was to establish whether customer-perpetrated harassment is perceived to be a problem in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Nineteen of the 21 employees interviewed said that on more than one occasion they had experienced sexual harassment by a customer. The high incidence identified in the findings of this study is consistent with existing literature, indicating that sexual harassment is prevalent in the hospitality industry and that customers are generally the main perpetrators (see section 2.4.1 and 2.4.3).

Through constant comparison of the data, similarities and incongruities emerged in the perceptions of customer-perpetrated harassment between employees and employers and male and female participants. The study revealed that more than half of the employees perceived sexual harassment by customers to be problematic and in need of attention (see Table 11). This perspective was supported by almost half of the employers, who also considered sexual harassment to be prevalent in the industry (see Table 11).

*Table 11.* Employee–employer perspectives on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.

<b>Do you think sexual harassment is a problem in the Cook Islands hospitality industry and needs to be addressed?</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Employees (n)</b>	<b>Employers (n)</b>
Yes	12	5
No	3	2
Not yet, but could become a problem if ignored	4	2
Unsure	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>

From a gender perspective, the findings revealed that the majority of male participants did not consider sexual harassment to be problematic, despite experiencing it on numerous occasions (see Table 12). These perspectives were contrary to the large majority of female participants who perceived sexual harassment to be widespread across the industry (see Table 12).

*Table 12.* Gender perspectives on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.

<b>Do you think sexual harassment is a problem in the Cook Islands hospitality industry and needs to be addressed?</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Male (n)</b>	<b>Female (n)</b>
Yes	3	14
No	3	2
Not yet, but it could become a problem if ignored	3	3
Unsure	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>

Overall, more than half of the participants' in this study considered sexual harassment by customers to be a problem in the industry and needing to be addressed. The overall perceptions of sexual harassment considered in this section, are explored further in the discussion chapter.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the key findings from the 32 interviews conducted for this case study inquiry. Through the inductive processes inherent in the grounded theory methodology, core categories and themes emerged from the data and formed the key findings of the study (see section 3.2.1). These findings have addressed the five main research objectives of this study.

The findings have revealed that participants perceive certain behaviours by customers' to be sexual harassment including physical contact, sexual gestures and staring, sexual advances, intimidation and comments about physical appearance. Context however, is a significant factor influencing whether participants interpret sexual behaviour by customers as sexual harassment. Furthermore, the findings revealed that customer harassment is not uncommon in the case location, with all employees except two, reporting that they had experienced sexual harassment by a customer on more than one occasion. The most common types of harassment included groping, touching of the breasts or bottom, sexual remarks, staring, comments about physical appearance, propositioning and intimidation. Most participants also reported witnessing the sexual harassment of a colleague, by a customer.

Furthermore, the findings identified eight key factors (themes) contributing to customer harassment in the case location. Four of these themes can be linked to existing causality models. They include alcohol, hospitality environment, aesthetic labour and moral holiday. Of significance, the findings identified four new emergent themes that are unique to this study and cannot not be linked to the current body of knowledge. These four themes include cultural norms, the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders, destination marketing and traditional dance and costumes. These emergent themes offer new perspectives on causality of customer harassment and are explored further in the discussion chapter.

The data also revealed that participants adopted multiple coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment by customers. Denial and avoidance, which are passive responses, were identified as the two most common coping strategies used by participants. Conversely, some participants responded to customer harassment assertively using explicit verbal abuse and in some cases, physical abuse. Overall however, participants predominantly engaged passive strategies to cope with sexual harassment by customers.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that customer harassment impacted participants in various ways. Participants described experiencing decreased job satisfaction, decreased work productivity, and feelings of anger, degradation, disgust, fear and discomfort. Notably, strong feelings of animosity and resentment by participants, towards visitors was also evident in the data. The data has also identified a direct relationship between customer harassment and employee turnover. The findings also reveal a high level of tolerance to customer harassment, indicating that the two main reasons participants tolerate customer harassment is due to a lack of confidence and a lack of knowledge and skills to respond assertively.

When asked what their organisations could do to address the issue of customer harassment, participants recommended various strategies with education and training being the most common response given. Implementing policies and procedures on sexual harassment was also recommended, with 29 of the 32 participants confirming that their workplace did not have formal processes on sexual harassment.

Overall, more than half of the participants in the study perceived sexual harassment by customers to be a problem in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Notably, slightly more employees perceived the issue to be more prevalent, than did employers. The findings also identified gender differences in attitudes and perceptions of customer harassment with significantly more female participants perceiving the issue to be more widespread, than male participants.

The findings that have been presented in this chapter have addressed the key objectives of this study and are discussed further in chapter five, using the current body of knowledge.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

It's actually been really good talking about this with you. At first, I was like hmmm. But once it comes out, it's like it just keeps going. And once it's out, I feel so much better. I'm really glad you're doing this. (Ruth, café manager)

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the key research findings that were presented in chapter four. As this is an exploratory study, the aim was to gain understanding and insight into the various categories and themes, using the current body of knowledge. The discussions that follow, focus on the key findings (i.e. themes) that emerged relating to the following core categories:

- defining sexual harassment
- causality
- response
- impact
- tolerance

A main objective of this inquiry was to identify the key causality factors of sexual harassment by customers. In order to address sexual harassment in the workplace, it is essential to identify the primary causes. Accordingly, particular consideration is given in this chapter to exploring 'causality', with emphasis on the new concepts and themes that emerged on causality in this study. A 'thematic model of causality' is presented to provide understanding and insight into these unique concepts and themes. The discussions also explore the key findings that emerged on response and tolerance to, and impact of customer harassment. The chapter concludes with consideration of the differences in perceptions of and attitudes to sexual harassment, by gender and between employee and employer.

### **5.2 Defining sexual harassment in the case location**

A key outcome of this study are the insights gained into understanding the incidence of sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Sexual harassment is difficult to define because it encompasses such a diverse range of behaviours and there are multiple factors influencing how those behaviours are interpreted (see section 2.3). The findings revealed that in relation to the case location, certain types of behaviours by customers are viewed as sexual harassment. These behaviours include physical contact, staring/ogling, comments on physical appearance, sexual advances and intimidation (see section 4.3).

### **5.2.1 The impact of context**

Defining sexually harassing behaviours is influenced by multiple factors, including culture, gender and age (Agrusa, et al., 2002; Blackstone, et al., 2014; Pryor, 1995). Individual perceptions on sexual harassment can vary significantly, as sexual behaviour considered offensive by one person may be considered harmless, or even flattering, by another. Giuffre and Williams (1994) suggested that whether a particular interaction is considered sexual harassment will depend on the intention of the harasser, the interpretation by the victim and the social context in which the incident occurred. The position of the perpetrator also influences whether the behaviour is perceived as sexual harassment or not (Mohipp & Senn, 2008; Rotundo et al., 2001).

Gender also influences interpretations of sexual behaviour (Cogin & Fish, 2007, 2009; Ekore, 2012; Johnson, 2010; H. K. Luthar, Tata, & Kwesiga, 2009). Women are more likely to view behaviour as sexual harassment and are overall, less tolerant than men, who generally view the experience more positively (Bourgeois & Perkins, 2003; Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Timmerman, 2003). Perceptions regarding what conduct is appropriate in a workplace can also vary across cultures (Barak, 1997; Luthar & Luthar, 2007; Merkin, 2008a). Ethnicity and culture are significant components in determining the interpretation of sexual behaviours. What is considered acceptable in some cultures may be viewed differently in another (Cortina & Wasti, 2005; V. K. Luthar & Luthar, 2002; Zimbardo, 2007).

In relation to the case location, certain behaviours are considered unwelcome and offensive (see section 4.3). However, participants view 'context' as a significant factor in whether they perceive sexual behaviour as sexual harassment (see section 4.3.6). Thus, individuals use context as a 'filter', to analyse and interpret behaviour. To illustrate the significance of 'context', Figure 11 (p. 84) 'defining sexual harassment' has been modified and is presented as a revised model (see Figure 17). The impact of context is shown in this modified model, where the red outer circle (being 'context') represents a filter that affects the interpretation of behaviour, enabling the participant to contextualise the customer's actions. The revised model illustrates the complex process of interpretation and the importance of context in determining whether or not customer behaviours are viewed as sexual harassment. Previous studies also acknowledge the influence of context on individuals' perceptions of sexual harassment (Mohipp & Senn, 2008; Rotundo et al., 2001). However, as context is highly subjective, there is a potential risk of interactions being misconstrued or misinterpreted by employees.

Interpretations could be further distorted in the hospitality industry, in which there is inextricably close contact between employees and customers, making it more difficult to establish whether the behaviour is, in fact, sexual harassment.



Figure 17. The impact of context on defining sexual harassment

### 5.3 Analysing ‘causality’ in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

Customer-perpetrated harassment is a complex, intricate issue. There is no single solution to preventing such behaviour from occurring because there is no single cause. Previous studies reveal that multiple factors can contribute to sexual harassment by customers (see section 2.4). Therefore, in order for organisations to address this issue, it is essential to identify the underlying factors that cause this behaviour.

A key objective of this study was to identify the main causes of customer-perpetrated harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry (see research question three, section 3.2.1). During the data analysis phase, the conceptual framework (Figure 5, p. 15) was instrumental in helping to make sense of the large amount of data, by identifying themes that could be linked to the literature. Through constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), some causality theories in the conceptual framework emerged from the data as key causes of customer-perpetrated harassment. Of significance, however, is that some themes that emerged during the data analysis process could not be directly linked to the current body of knowledge. An overview of the causality themes, both new (emergent) and those relating to the literature, is presented on the *right side of* Figure 18, under the

heading 'Causality in Thematic Framework'. These themes are separated into two main categories comprising 'new emergent themes' and 'themes correlating to existing theories'. The discussion that follows explores these various themes to provide an in-depth insight into the causality of sexual harassment by customers in the case location.



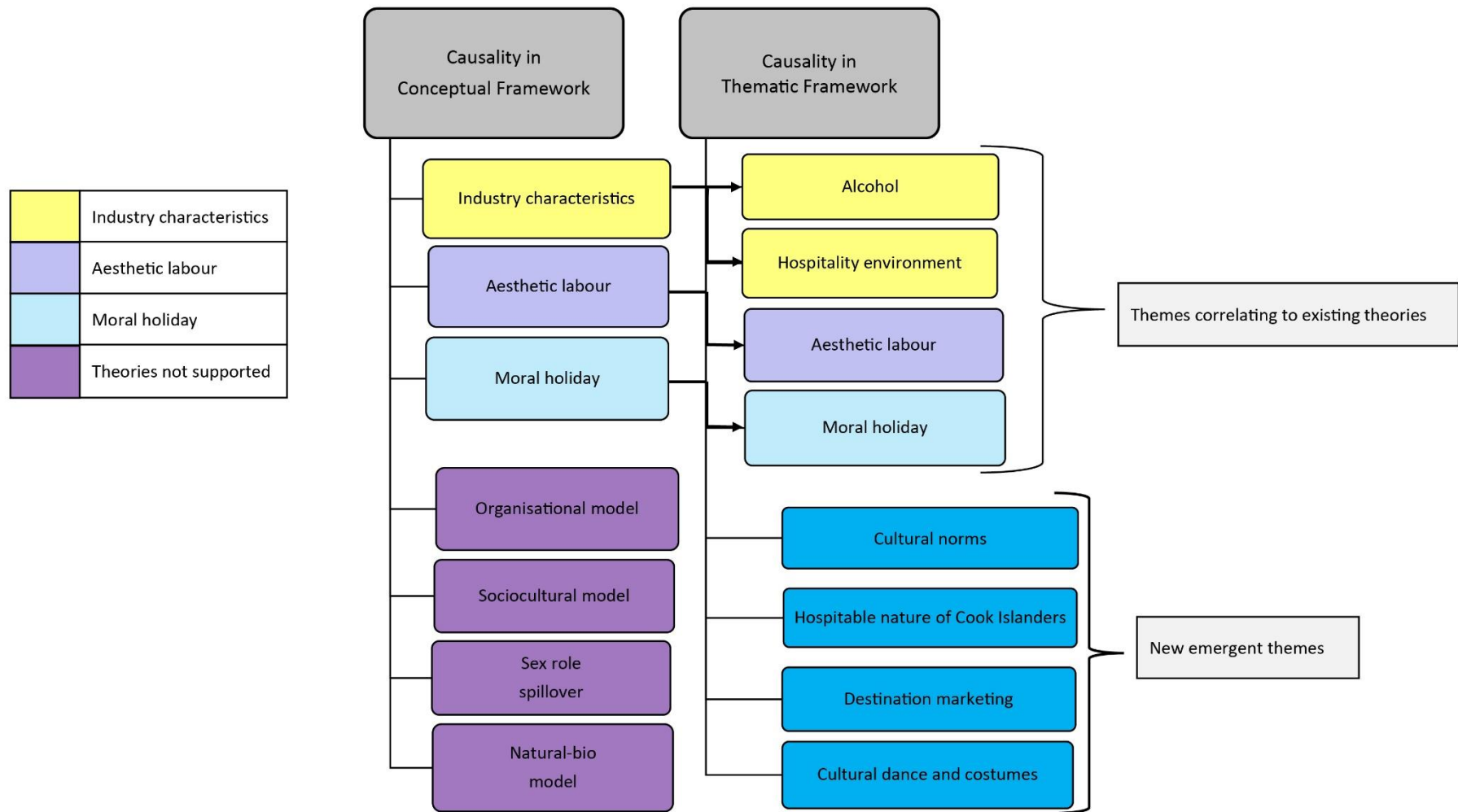


Figure 18. Causality of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry: Identifying new emergent themes

### **5.3.1 Themes that correlate to existing theory on causality**

Through the data analysis process, some themes that emerged from the data correlate to existing theories on causality. These themes are presented in Figure 18 on the upper right side of the framework under ‘Causality in Thematic Framework’. They include alcohol, hospitality environment, aesthetic labour and moral holiday. The relevant theories found in the literature that relate to these themes are presented to the left of each theme to exemplify their relationship. These existing theories were incorporated into the conceptual framework (see section 3.6.3) developed at the commencement of the study. A colour-coding system has been used to illustrate how themes that emerged from the data link to the relevant theory in the literature. For example, the industry characteristics model (Eller, 1991; Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Keith et al., 2010; Weber et al., 2002), colour coded in yellow under the ‘conceptual framework’, emerged from the data as two key themes comprising ‘hospitality environment’ and ‘alcohol’.

Accordingly, these two themes have been coloured yellow to correlate with the industrial model to which they relate. Other theories found in the literature that emerged from the data include aesthetic labour (Nickson & Warhurst, 2003; Nickson et al., 2005) and the moral holiday perspective (Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015; Hayner, 1928; Vivancos et al., 2010). Similarly, these theories have been colour coded with the relevant themes to illustrate their relationships. The significance of these theories in relation to the case location (i.e., the Cook Islands hospitality industry) is considered in this section.

Other causality models that were included in the conceptual framework are the organisational model (Tangri et al., 1982), the sociocultural model (Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979), the SRS model (Gutek & Morasch, 1982) and the natural-bio model (Tangri et al., 1982). These models are presented in Figure 18 under ‘Causality in Conceptual Framework’, colour coded in purple. Notably, however, while these models are common explanations of sexual harassment in the workplace, they did not emerge clearly from the data, indicating that they are not key causality factors in the case location. For this reason, they are not discussed further; however, an overview of these models is provided in section 2.5.

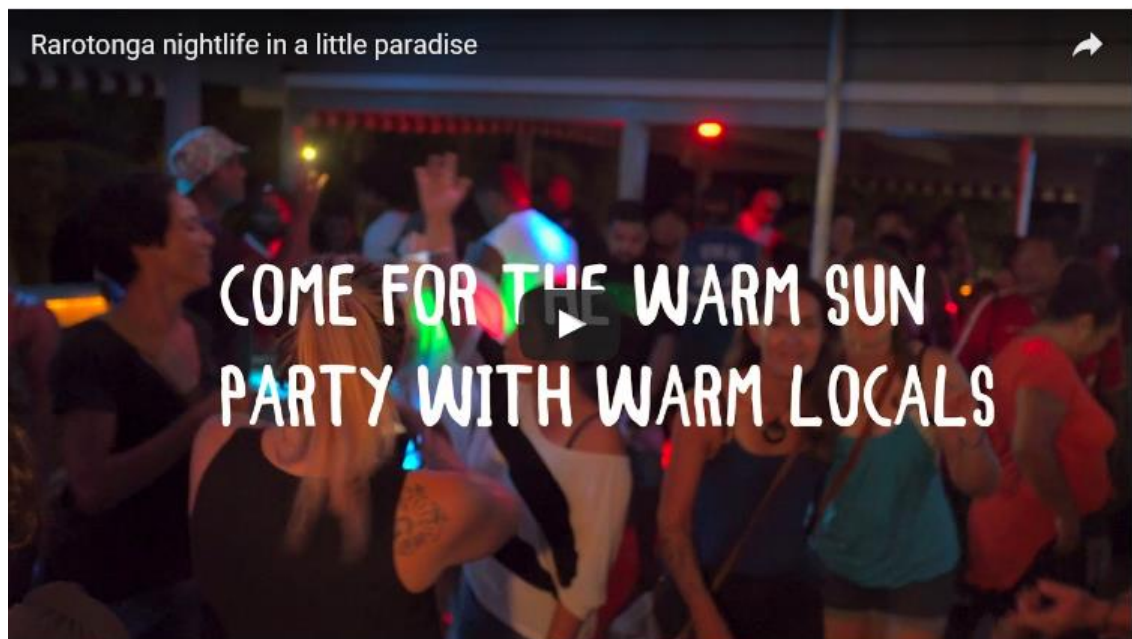


Figure 19. Marketing images of the Cook Islands (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)

#### 5.3.1.1 Alcohol

Alcohol consumption emerged from the findings as a key cause of customer-perpetrated harassment. Intoxication is an aspect of the industrial characteristics model, which suggests that inappropriate behaviour may arise if customers' inhibitions have been affected by alcohol, as they may behave in a manner in which they would not normally behave (Eller, 1991; Graham & Wells, 2003; Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Yagil, 2008). Concern was expressed by participants in the study about the normalisation of binge drinking (see Yang, Zhao, & Srivastava, 2016) and the relaxed approach to liquor licensing laws. Accommodation CEO Marcus commented: *"There are two issues, one is that our liquor licensing regulations are not well enforced.... The other problem is our drinking culture..."*. Participants observed that liquor licensing regulations were not being enforced, creating a binge drinking culture that was negatively affecting visitors' behaviour. The issue of pack mentality (Kirby, 1995) was also raised as a contributing factor, particularly when groups are under the influence of alcohol. General comments from participants were about individuals socialising in groups, becoming intoxicated and behaving inappropriately in front of their peers. *"It's the pack mentality. When they're drunk, they encourage each other, they egg each other on. They're just out of control!"* said accommodation manager May. Hotel manager Margaret also observed the impact of pack mentality on customer behaviour: *"Once they've got alcohol on board they start feeding off each other, daring each other. Then they start hassling the staff thinking how far can we go with this one?"* Exploring the impact of alcohol on

male behaviour in bars, Graham and Wells (2003) suggested that alcohol gives males “*liquid courage*”, and “*testosterone by the glass*” (p. 551). When intoxicated, individuals experience increased feelings of courage and are more willing to take risks. Hotel manager Mariah commented: “*They’re on holiday. Add alcohol and then there’s always a sense, especially for men and their egos to go that one step further. Pushing the boundaries and being cooler or better than the other.*”

Participants commented, in particular, about the influence of “pack mentality” (see section 4.5.4.2), observing ‘excessive drinking’ and ‘alcohol-fuelled parties’ by overseas groups visiting the island for celebratory purposes, such as weddings. Several participants raised the sexual assault incident involving intoxicated ex-All Black Zac Guildford in Rarotonga in 2011. Guildford was widely publicised in the media when local triathlete Kelly Pick alleged that that he sexually harassed her. Pick explained that she was out running when heavily intoxicated Guildford drove back and forth on his scooter, shouting inappropriate sexual and defamatory comments at her. Pick said she told him to go away but he persisted. “His behaviour was totally inappropriate to the point where I felt unsafe” (M. Field, 2011b). That evening, Guildford entered Trader Jacks Bar, naked and drunk, and allegedly assaulted two people. Pick told her story to the media because she wanted Guildford to accept the consequences of his behaviour. She commented: “You do not have the right to treat people like that. We don’t need tourists like you on our island” (M. Field, 2011a). The Guildford incident was raised by participants to illustrate their concerns about the impact of excessive alcohol on visitor behaviour. Guest relations manager, Rosie commented: “*It’s the drink that’s the problem. We know that with the notorious All Black, but that’s no excuse.*”

Accommodation manager May shared a similar view to that of Rosie:

*Just because this particular person was a celebrity, an All Black, it shouldn’t be accepted. Just because they’re on holiday and they’re drunk. It’s a big issue here and it needs to be addressed.*

Participants overwhelmingly stated that the main cause of inappropriate sexual behaviour was alcohol (see section 4.5.1). The observation made by café owner Max was representative of most participants’ views: “*Definitely alcohol, that’s number one.*” Tour guide Robert was also explicit in describing the impact of alcohol on customers’ behaviour, stating: “*When they’re drunk, they want to touch me.*” The findings of the study are consistent with existing literature suggesting that alcohol is a key cause of inappropriate sexual behaviour by customers (Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Poulston,

2008a; Worsfold & McCann, 2000; Yagil, 2008). The drinking culture in the Cook Islands, combined with the laxness of liquor licensing laws, is further compounding the problem. The study identifies a need to investigate the concerns raised by participants regarding these issues.

### 5.3.1.2 Aesthetic labour



(Source: Rarotongan Beach Resort & Spa)



(Source: Koka Lagoon cruises)



(Source: Pacific Resort Hotel Group)

Figure 20. Images of Cook Islands hospitality employees

Research suggests that some hospitality organisations use the aesthetic labour (Warhurst et al., 2000) of their employees to attract customers and gain a competitive advantage. Employers want employees with the ‘right look’ and to be attractive (Karlsson, 2012; Keith et al., 2010; Waudby, 2012), and they will hire based on how the individual looks (Warhurst et al., 2009; Witz et al., 2003). The emphasis that is placed on aesthetic labour explains why employees encounter sexual harassment by customers (Biswas & Cassell, 1996; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

Consistent with the literature, some participants perceived that the emphasis placed on personal appearance by their employer was a likely cause of sexual harassment by customers. These participants considered that maintaining an attractive appearance was a ‘requirement of their job’ and an ‘expectation of their employer’. Furthermore, some participants believed that, not only were they expected to maintain an attractive appearance, but they were also expected to behave in a certain manner, by ‘appearing single and available’. Tour guide Robert explained:

*I have to work out and stay in shape because it's part of my job. And I have to tan myself. I have to look good. Because during the tour, I have to take my shirt off to make it more exciting for the tourists. It's my job. It's what I feel I have to do.*

Tour guide Remy shared a similar view:

*We have to look good on tour and we have to project a single image. It's something we feel we have to do and also something that (employer) wants us to do.... We know what customers want and this is one of those things.*

These findings suggest that some participants view sexualisation (Papadopoulos, 2010) as part of their job role in that they are required to look attractive and appear single, in order to attract customers and increase business. However, there was nothing from management to confirm this; hence, it is unknown whether these 'perceived expectations' are implicit or explicit, or are, in fact, even valid. There is a need to investigate this finding further.

Contrary to the above viewpoint, another perspective emerged regarding aesthetic labour, suggesting that employees deliberately engage in self-sexualisation to appear 'sexy' and 'attractive'. This perspective removes the onus from the employer, suggesting instead that employees deliberately self-sexualise by altering their uniform, or wearing revealing clothing such as short skirts and low-cut tops. Hotel owner Mitch observed: *"We're becoming more sexual. Our young ones today they want to look good, they want to project their best assets. Our girls, their skirts are getting shorter and shorter, and now they're wearing G-strings."* Restaurant supervisor Renata also observed how some staff alter their uniforms, suggesting that a key motive is to 'pull tips': *"They shorten their uniform, they adjust it so that they look so appealing, so they can get heaps of tips!"* The viewpoint of Renata is perhaps not surprising, given the low level of pay in the Cook Islands, where the current minimum wage is a mere \$6.25 an hour (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2015).

Furthermore, the racial features of Polynesians may make them vulnerable to aesthetic labour demands. The Polynesian race, to which Cook Islanders belong, are renowned for their distinct, attractive appearance (Gates, 1922; P. Smith, 1904; Sturma, 1950) (see Figure 20). Gates (1922) described Polynesians as having an olive complexion and distinctive features, adding, "Polynesians are the physical superiors, even of Europeans. They have cast a charm over the civilised world and are perhaps the handsomest people extant. The women are often of rare beauty" (p. 257). Some participants perceived the physical characteristics of Cook Islanders to be a contributing factor to sexual harassment, as indicated by bar owner Moses: *"I think it's because of our appearance, yeah absolutely!"* Barmaid Raelene shared a similar view: *"I think it's because they find our Cook Islands women attractive, because I've seen that heaps with the tourists."*



Participants' perceptions that physical appearance is a likely cause of sexual harassment by customers is consistent with the existing literature on aesthetic labour (see section 2.5.2).

#### 5.3.1.3 Moral holiday

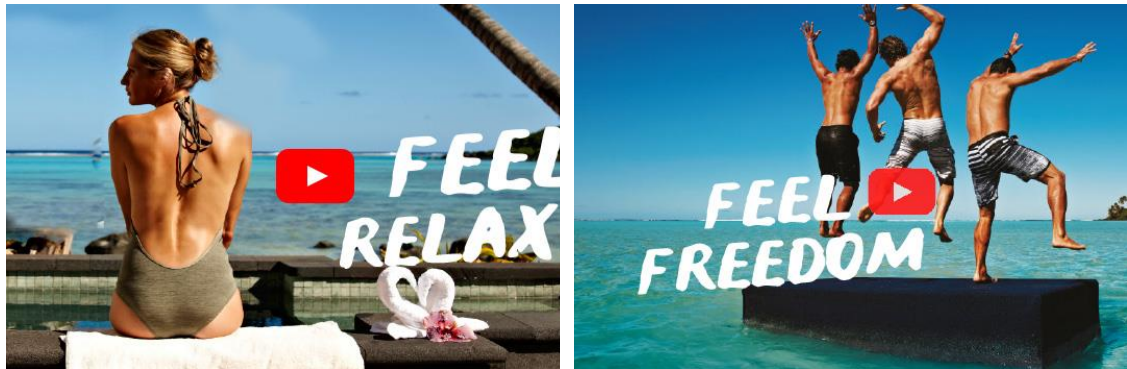


Figure 21. Marketing images of the Cook Islands (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)

Because they're on holiday they come over here and just let themselves loose, they're totally out of control! They behave like however they want! (Richelle, wedding coordinator)

Studies suggest that some customers behave inappropriately when they are on holiday because they are freed from the constraints of home (Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015; Vivancos et al., 2010; Weichselbaumer, 2012). Hayner (1928) first suggested that travellers become detached from the daily norms of life, distorting their perceptions and triggering sexual risk-taking behaviour (section 2.5.3). Some themes that emerged from the findings are consistent with the moral holiday perspective. Participants perceived that visitors behaved inappropriately simply because they were away from home and had a sense of anonymity. Hotel manager Mariah explained:

*I think psychologically because it's a tropical island and people are removing clothes, they're removing their inhibitions. And I think that has a psychological effect. They loosen up, they become freer.*

In particular, the issue of binge drinking and its impact on visitor behaviour was a commonly raised issue (see section 4.5.1). Participants spoke of visitors engaging in 'alcohol-fuelled parties' and behaving inappropriately simply because they were incognito and disconnected from the realities of life. Accommodation manager May made the following observation:

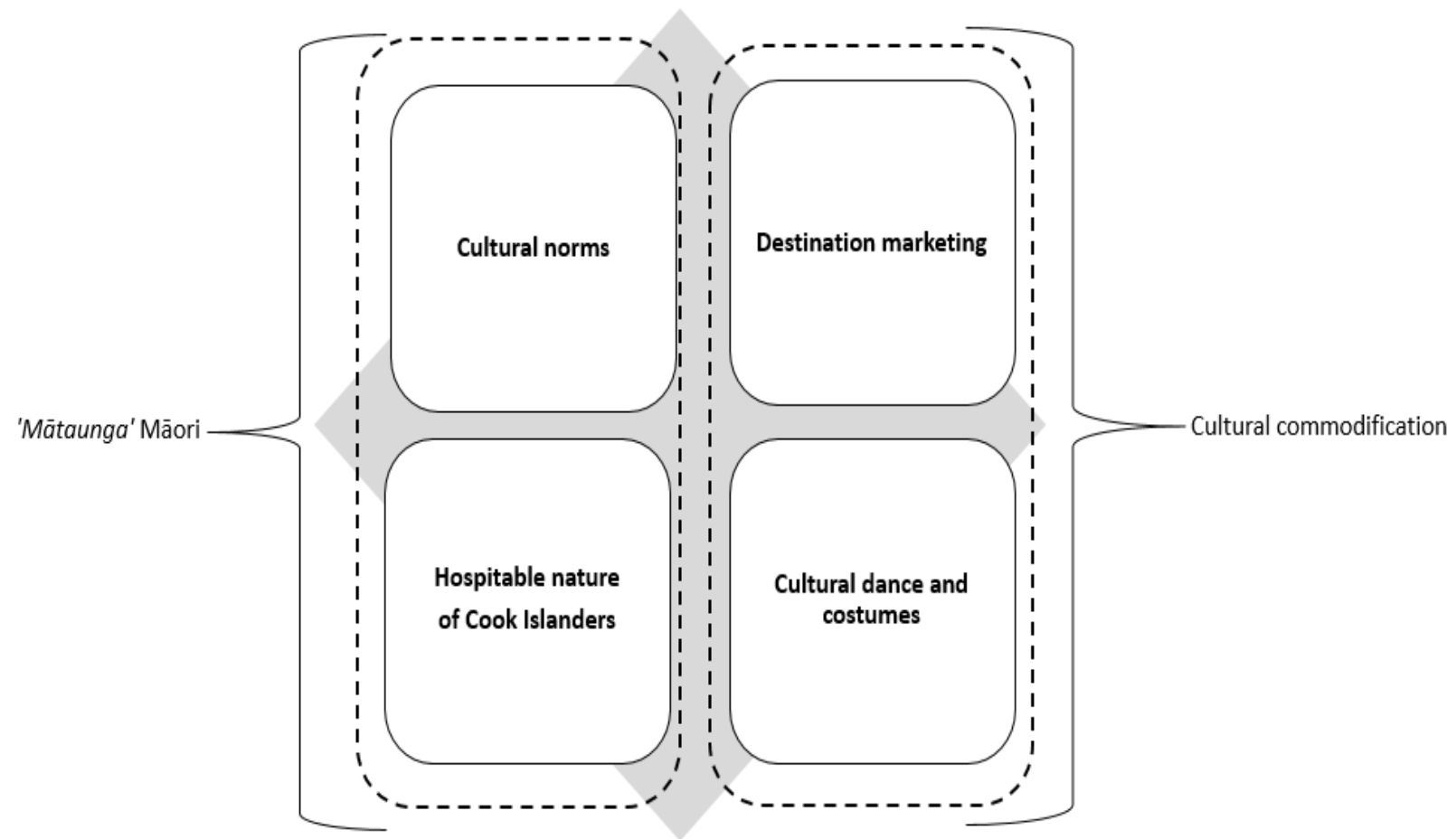
*We don't need visitors like that to our island. This is our home and for visitors to come and treat it in a negative way, like it's their own personal pub, or playground, is not cool. We need that message to get out there.*

Notably, the study identified strong feelings of animosity and resentment towards visitors, as participants observed that some visitors lack respect for their island and cultural values and beliefs. Frustration and anger was expressed by most participants, who perceived that ‘visitors were leaving home, without their morals and codes of conduct’. These underlying tensions that emerged from the findings are explored further in section 5.5.

### **5.3.2 New emergent causality themes unique to the Cook Islands hospitality industry**

The most significant outcome of this research is the new knowledge derived from actual experience. The grounded theory methodology adopted for the study (see section 3.4.1) enabled new themes to emerge that were grounded in the data. It was through the iterative and systematic processes of coding, constant comparison and categorising, and techniques inherent in the grounded theory method that new themes and concepts emerged. These themes and concepts are unique to this study and cannot be directly linked to the current body of knowledge. In particular, the findings identified four new emergent themes and two overarching concepts explaining sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. The four main themes are cultural norms, the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders, destination marketing and cultural dance and costumes. The two overarching concepts are cultural commodification (Macleod, 2006) and ‘*mātaunga* Māori’ (Savage, 1962). Two of the causality themes, cultural norms and the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders, are encompassed within the overarching concept of *mātaunga* Māori, while destination marketing and cultural dance and costumes are embedded within the conceptual theme ‘cultural commodification’. These relationships are exemplified in the thematic model on the causality of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry (Figure 22). These new emergent concepts and themes represent a gap in the literature as they could not be directly linked to the current body of knowledge. Discussions now move to exploring these unique concepts and themes.





*Figure 22.* Thematic model on causality of sexual harassment, by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

### 5.3.2.1 Cultural norms



Figure 23. Cook Islands Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna is welcomed by the Cook Islands community at a function. (Source: Otago Daily Times: Jane Dawber)

I think we love life, because of our social community, our culture. So, when people come here from a society that is perhaps more formal, they enjoy seeing the relaxed laid-back life, so they think if it's good for them it's good for me too. (Mariah, hotel manager)

When individuals are socialised, they learn various patterns of interaction that are based on the norms and values of their culture (Eid & Diener, 2001; Gudykunst et al., 1996). These norms and values are the standards that individuals live by and shape the way in which they interact with society. They are the shared expectations that guide behaviour within social groups or communities. Norms differ considerably across cultures and there is no 'one size fits all'. The values that are predominant in a culture directly influence the behaviour of the individuals in that group. Individuals learn their values and norms through the socialisation process (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Norms influence every facet of our lives, including what people value, their attitudes and how they behave. As previously mentioned (see section 4.5.5), in the Cook Islands it is customary to 'aravei' (greet) someone by kissing them on the cheek. 'Aravei' is a social norm and is the standard greeting among family members, friends and acquaintances. Berno (1999) suggested that:

Most social interaction in the South Pacific is based on the concepts of aro'a. Aro'a is an important characteristic in Polynesia. Aro'a means love, kindness and generosity. Aro'a is used as a form of greeting and farewelling. (pp. 657–658)

Furthermore, Frijhoff (1991) suggested that “kissing is at the same time a gesture and a ritual. It is a simple but complete gesture, a bodily expression of social interaction which is a cultural practice in itself” (p. 221). Cultural norms, such as ‘*aravei*, form the social fabric of the Cook Islands. However, perspectives on cheek kissing can vary greatly from one country to another. In other cultures, this behaviour may be less socially accepted and may even be considered inappropriate or offensive (Frijhoff, 1991).

Participants in the study perceived that a misunderstanding of some cultural norms by visitors can inadvertently affect visitors’ behaviour (see section 4.5.5). Specific reference was made to ‘*aravei*, which is common across all levels of society. The concept of ‘*aravei* is illustrated in Figure 23, images showing the Cook Islands Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna being greeted at a Cook Islands community function. In other cultures, greeting a dignitary with this level of informality would be considered a breach of protocol. A further example was given by restaurant manager Reuben to illustrate cultural diversity. Reuben spoke of Cook Islands boxer Eddie Daniels, who had kissed Queen Elizabeth of Britain on the cheek when introduced to her at the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Daniels made international headlines at the time because of his actions (Chapman, 2006). When interviewed by the media, Daniels said the gesture was simply ‘a sign of respect’. In other cultures, this behaviour may be considered inappropriate and disrespectful to the sovereign.

Participants perceived that some of the norms inherent in their culture, such as ‘*aravei*, can be misunderstood and inadvertently provoke inappropriate behaviour. In particular, participants perceive that visitors may misinterpret ‘*aravei* as an ‘invitation’ or ‘sexual advance’. Barmaid Raelene commented: “*We need to protect our employees and make the tourists understand. It’s our culture to kiss, we’re trying to share it with you, we’re not trying to seduce you!*” Hotel manager Mariah made a similar observation:

*At the island night, when we do the ‘ura piani [invitation dance: see Figure 24] we invite people to dance with us and we kiss them and we’re having that close contact with them. And perhaps they misunderstand it for being more than that. A sexual invitation perhaps?*

Erickson (2017, p. 3) suggested that “it is easy to misread what someone is actually communicating if one only comes from their cultural perspective”.



*Figure 24. The ura piani (invitation dance) is customary in Cook Islands culture (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)*

Additionally, the study identified differing cultural perspectives on ‘personal space’, which was believed to be another factor affecting visitor behaviour. Personal space is the area around people that they think of as ‘their’ area or space, “an invisible boundary surrounding each individual, a territory into which others may not trespass” (Fisher & Byrne, 1975, p. 15). The amount of space people need around them varies significantly and there are various factors that affect how people define personal space, including age, personality and gender (Dosey & Meisels, 1969; Sommer, 1959). However, sociologists claim that personal boundaries have much to do with cultural background (Beaulieu, 2004; Fisher & Byrne, 1975). Erickson (2017, p. 2) suggested that researchers sort the world into “‘contact cultures’ (South America, the Middle East, Southern Europe) and ‘non-contact cultures’ (Northern Europe, North America, Asia)”. In non-contact cultures, people stand further apart and touch less than those from contact cultures (Erickson, 2017). The Cook Islands can be perceived as a ‘contact culture’ as Cook Islanders are generally relaxed about personal space. Tour guide Robert observed: “*Some comfort zones in other countries is wider, but in our culture, we’re okay getting close to people.*”

The study has revealed that in relation to the case location, some cultural norms such as ‘aravei and personal space can be misinterpreted by visitors and inadvertently trigger inappropriate sexual behaviour. These findings offer new insight into customer-perpetrated harassment as they cannot be directly linked to existing models of causality.

Future research is needed to explore the impact of Cook Islands cultural norms and practices on visitor behaviour.

#### 5.3.2.2 *The hospitable nature of Cook Islanders*

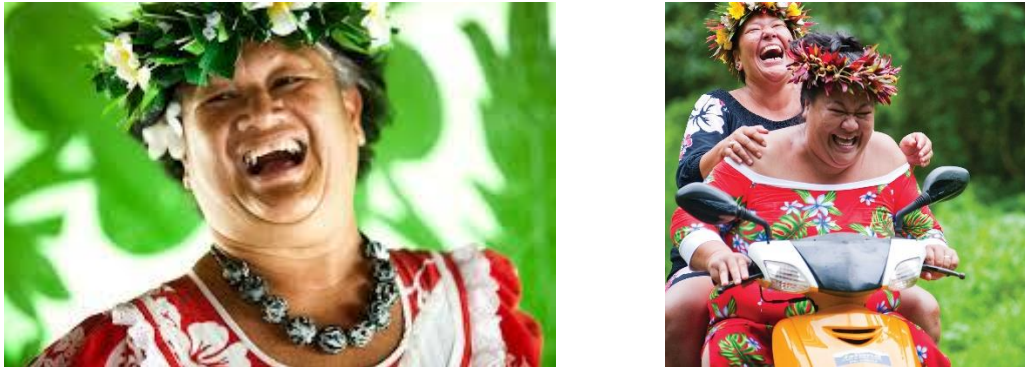


Figure 25. Marketing images of the Cook Islands people (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)

All that can be said is that there was, and perhaps continues to be, a spirit of generosity alive in Polynesian society (Campbell, 1981, p. 35)

Polynesians are renowned for being warm, friendly, hospitable individuals who enjoy high social interaction (Berno, 1999; Gates, 1922; Pratt, 2013; Schänzel et al., 2014). Campbell (1981, p. 27) suggested that “of all the peoples of the earth it is the Polynesians who are perhaps the most famous for their hospitality”. Similarly, Gates (1922) observed that “Polynesians are exceedingly gentle, courteous and hospitable” (p. 257). In Polynesian culture, welcoming guests and taking care of them is considered an essential part of being a host. The underlying foundation of Polynesian hospitality is a desire to do good to other people, to welcome them unreservedly, with no conditions attached (Berno, 1999; Schänzel et al., 2014). This perspective is aligned to Derrida’s model of unconditional hospitality (Derrida, 2000, 2005).

The findings of this study revealed that the friendly, hospitable nature (Campbell, 1981; Schänzel et al., 2014) and vibrant personalities (Gates, 1922; P. Smith, 1904) of Cook Islanders (see Figure 25) can be misinterpreted as ‘flirtatious’ or ‘playful’ and inadvertently attract sexual attention. Hotel owner Mitch explained: “*We’re very affectionate people and I feel this could possibly have an impact on visitors’ behaviour because they misinterpret our friendliness for something else.*” Café supervisor Renata was self-justifying in her view on this issue: “*It’s not our fault, because this is the way we are! It’s in our culture to be warm and friendly. It’s like, hey I’m not hitting on you, I’m just being friendly, showing you our Cook Islands way.*”

The findings that emerged on this issue raise some fundamental questions. Do Cook Islanders need to be more conditional and more formal in the hospitality they extend? Do they need to move away from the principles of ‘unconditional hospitality’ (Derrida, 2005) and align themselves more with Westernised understandings and practices of hospitality? These considerations were raised by several participants in the study. “*Do we need to change as a people?*” restaurateur Michael asked with genuine concern. Front office supervisor Ronald expressed similar concerns: “*Because we’re so warm and welcoming, and always smiling, always ‘yes yes yes’, being so nice. It’s probably something we need to look at*”. Participants’ perceptions that the friendly, hospitable nature of Cook Islanders is a contributing factor to sexual harassment by customers is an emergent theme unique to this study. As this is an exploratory study, further research is needed into these findings.

### **5.3.3 Thematic concept of *mātaunga* Māori**

Cultural norms such as ‘*aravei*’ and the notion of “*aro ‘a*; love, kindness and generosity” (Berno, 1999, p. 658) are deeply ingrained in the psyche of the Cook Islands people and form the social fabric of their society. They are what Savage (1962) refers to as *mātaunga* Māori, which is “to be used to having done or performed certain acts or things so as to become perfectly familiar with same” (pp. 150–151). ‘*Mātaunga*’ Māori refers to the cultural practices, attitudes and beliefs of the Cook Islands peoples and is exemplified in the ‘Thematic Model on Causality’ (see Figure 22, p. 127), where *mātaunga* Māori is depicted as the overarching concept of the two themes: cultural norms and the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders.

Concepts similar to ‘*mātaunga*’ Māori are deeply imbedded within other Pacific Island cultures. Inherent in the Samoan culture for example, is the concept of *Vā* (Tuagalu, 2008) which refers to the “social and spiritual relations between people. *Va* is important concept in understanding the ways that Samoans relate with one another and the world at large” (Tuagalu, 2008, p. 108). While there is literature providing understanding and insight into the concept of *Vā* (see Kumar, 2010; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009; Tuagalu, 2008) this study has identified a gap in the literature on the concept of *mātaunga* Māori. Accordingly, this study identifies an opportunity for future research into the *mātaunga* Māori concept and in particular, to investigate its impact on visitor behaviour.



#### 5.3.3.1 Destination marketing



Figure 26. Destination marketing images (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)

Modern attitudes and perceptions about the South Pacific region are still rooted in centuries old colonial biases. To outsiders, the Pacific are the islands of love and lust, islands of paradise. Swaying palms, endless beaches, voluptuous women, muscular men and all of them apparently willing because they are living in a state of nature-based simplicity or as Rousseau put it ‘savage innocence’. (Ruggia, 2014, p. 14)

For many Pacific Islands, tourist brochures are filled with images of romance, white sandy beaches, turquoise blue lagoons, swaying palm trees and beautiful island women (Pratt, 2013; Stephen, 1993). These images and perceptions of the Pacific have been created and reinforced over a long period. Pratt (2013) suggested that:

“Early advertising of the region showed untouched scenery and voluptuous native women wearing only a sarong performing traditional dance” (p. 599)...suggesting that these “early tourism pictures and postcards portrayed the South Pacific islands with alluring females who suggested sexual possibilities”(p. 598).

The findings of this study revealed that some of the marketing images used to promote the Cook Islands as a tourist destination are perceived to have a negative effect on visitor behaviour (see Figures 19, 21, 26, 28). The Cook Islands is often promoted with vibrant images of its people, beautiful island women, scantily clad, and males with bronzed, toned bodies (see Figure 27). These images exude sexuality, enticing visitors to the islands through underlying tones of seduction. Crick (1989, p. 309) suggested that “sun, sea, sand and sex is often used in mass tourism to promote exotic destinations”. The use of sex in advertising can be overt, subtle or subliminal (Liu, Cheng, & Li, 2009). Some participants perceived that some of the destinations’ marketing collateral contained sexual innuendos and undertones and that some marketing images were

provocative and suggestive, creating misconceptions and triggering inappropriate sexual behaviour by visitors (see section 4.5.7). Hotel manager Margaret commented:

*I would say for the individual traveller, what they see in our destination marketing brochures it's like wow look at what we can get when we go there! So, they're coming here for something, for their own pleasure. Because when they see our images it's like, wow look at that!*

Bar owner Moses made a similar observation: “*I’m looking at it from the tourists’ side, our brochures of beaches and girls in bikinis and all that stuff. The tourists will be thinking, man I wanna go there!*”



Figure 27. Marketing images of the Cook Islands people (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)

In particular, some participants expressed disapproval of Air New Zealand’s controversial inflight safety video filmed in the Cook Islands in 2014 (Air New Zealand, 2014). The video featured a group of glamorous swimsuit-clad models, including *Sports Illustrated* models Chrissy Teigan, Christie Brinkley and Ariel Meredith, posing in bikinis and demonstrating how to use lifejackets and oxygen masks. Participants said that the video caused much embarrassment to the Cook Islands, as it was sexist and culturally insensitive.

The video was raised by participants to illustrate the use of ‘sex’ to attract and entice visitors to the Cook Islands. Hotel chief executive Marcus commented: “*The Air NZ ad sends a certain message to the visitor like hey, this is where it happens! Those girls look pretty good! So, the whole sense of wow! I’m already hyped up and my libido has risen!*”

When the video was first released, there was an outburst of disapproval by members of the public (ABC News, 2014). Cook Islanders in particular objected strongly to the



advert. A letter of complaint written by Dr Mathew Ravouvou of the Cook Islands Association of New Zealand, Wellington, to the Chief Executive of Air New Zealand, Christopher Luxton, described the inflight safety video as a “*grievous cultural insult, reprehensible and offensive to Cook Islanders and reducing women to mere sexual objects*”. He added that the video “*perpetuated the bowdlerised mythology of the Pacific as being inhabited by dusky maidens, to be sexualized and objectified by males*” (see Appendix I). Ravouvou recommended that the advertisement be immediately retracted. Coincidentally, an article featured in the *Cook Islands News* several days later confirmed that the video had experienced a “temporary hiatus but would soon return” (Samoglou, 2014, p. 3). The article stated that the airline had removed the advertisement because of widespread objection. Nevertheless, Samoglou (2014) acknowledged that the advertisement’s quest to attract more visitors to the Cook Islands had been successful, generating an astounding 5.9 million views on YouTube, a public website domain for films.

A study by Pratt (2013) investigated “Australian travellers’ awareness and perceptions of destination image for a range of South Pacific destinations” (p. 595). The study explored the brand attributes of four destinations, Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu, to identify the impact of ‘destination image’ on travellers’ perceptions. Respondents were asked to rate the islands individually on attributes such as hospitality and friendliness, local culture, relaxation, suitability for couples, romantic atmosphere, adventure, family suitability and value for money. Similarities emerged in the perceptions of some destination attributes, including friendly people, good climate and beautiful scenery. However, the findings also revealed some distinct perceptions between the destinations. “Samoa for example, was associated with fun and adventure. Fiji, was perceived as an ideal holiday destination for families and the Cook Islands was perceived as being a destination for romance” (Pratt, 2013, p. 606). Furthermore, Pratt (2013) observed that the Cook Islands brand image focused on ‘discovery’ with the use of brand slogans such as “Live Differently” and catch phrases such as “Discover Us” and “Play with Us” (p. 596)

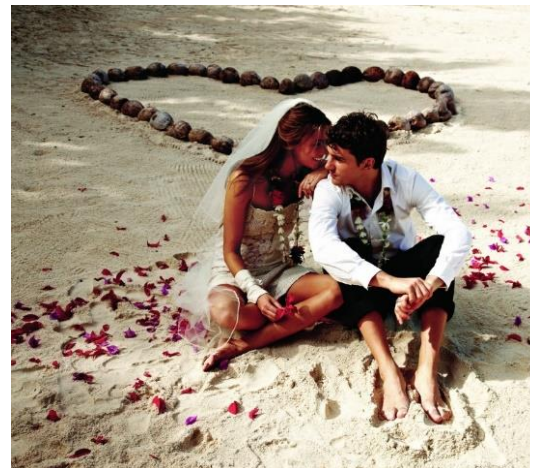


Figure 28. Destination marketing images (Source: Cook Islands Tourism)

The findings of this study have revealed a positive correlation between destination marketing and visitor misbehaviour. The use of provocative images, sexual innuendos and undertones in some destination marketing material is perceived by some participants to have an inadvertent impact on visitor behaviour.

Ram et al. (2016) suggested that “the link between sex and tourism goes beyond just selling the image of sex, it is impregnated in the DNA of the industry” (p. 2119). In the context of these discussions, it is important to acknowledge that the sexualised marketing of a destination is not limited to marketing initiatives undertaken by a national tourism office, in this case, Cook Islands Tourism. Jenkins and Pigram (2003, p. 241) suggested that “destination image is an evaluation based on perceptions and includes ‘all’ aspects that make up the individual’s knowledge (whether it be accurate or inaccurate) of that place”. Therefore, destination marketing is the all-encompassing marketing strategies of the destination, including those marketing initiatives implemented by industry operators such as hotels, restaurants, bars and tour operators.

The findings that have emerged identifying ‘destination marketing’ as a key cause of sexual harassment by customers reveal a gap in the literature. These findings offer new insight into customer-perpetrated harassment as they cannot be linked to the current body of knowledge. Accordingly, further research into this new emergent theme would be beneficial.

#### *5.3.3.2 Cultural dance and costumes*



*Figure 29. Cook Islands dance (Source: Cook Is. Ministry of Cultural Development)*

We are selling ourselves as seductive people. It's not our culture, it's not who we are. It's so uncomfortable. (Margaret, general manager)

This study has revealed that, in relation to the case location, cultural dance and costumes are perceived to be a primary cause of sexual harassment by customers. Of all the issues raised regarding causality, participants were most vocal about these two influences. Participants perceived that the traditional dance and costumes have evolved over time and become sexualised, loosening the sexual inhibitions of visitors. Participants observed that the style of dance, for both males and females, has changed dramatically and become provocative and suggestive. Restaurant owner Marissa commented:

*Our dance is provocative. Visitors come to the Cook Islands and they see all these beautiful skinny women with no clothes on, dancing erotically. And that could definitely influence their behaviour.*

In particular, participants observed that some of the styles, techniques and movements seen in contemporary performances were not authentic, and they expressed concern that the Cook Islands was gradually losing its culture. Accommodation CEO Marcus questioned: *“Is our dance authentic? I think it's authentic for the day, but it's definitely not. I guess all things evolve. We're staying with the times because of Western influence.”*

Shepherd (2002, p. 185) suggested that “cultures are being driven by a process of Disneyfication, a process that transforms everything into a theme park making *authentic* experiences impossible”. A valid question in this regard is, what is authentic dance, and what constitutes authentic? (Shepherd, 2002, pp. 194–195) proposed that authenticity “can only be confirmed when what has been defined as authentic re-enters the marketplace”. In other words, without something that can be deemed inauthentic, the notion of authenticity carries no meaning. Exploring tourism dance, Daniel (1996, p. 783) suggested that “authenticity of dance aims for historical, geographical and cultural accuracy and includes movements, gestures, rhythmic motifs and sequence that have been identified with a particular social group and have been passed down from generation to generation”

O'Connor (2003) suggested that “the performer is often the critical item, the indicator of authenticity. What happens to the performer in the process of the performance, the transformation that occurs, is often deemed critical in determining authenticity” (p. 128). The setting in which tourist performances occur may also affect perceptions of



authenticity. Most cultural shows for tourists on Rarotonga are performed on stage in hotels as part of a traditional 'Island Night' experience. The cultural experience includes a traditional island buffet dinner followed by a cultural dance show. The professional arena of the hotel stage, with vibrant costumes, pulsating drums and elaborate stage sets, provides a theatrical production that may appear exotic to the tourist. But these dramatic shows are often considered fake and inauthentic by the locals. Exploring the changing nature of tourism, Ritzer and Liska (1997, p. 98) suggested that "the tourism industry, to some extent, has been Disneyised, making it increasingly difficult to find the authentic". Guest relations manager Rosie observed the evolution of Cook Islands dance:

*I think these changes all started when we established the Cook Islands Arts Theatre. It was because they had a good choreographer so they adapted our dancing to be more contemporary. So now we're trying to do a theatrical production. It's all about entertaining. We've learnt how to use the stage.*

Landsberger's (1958) Hawthorne effect may offer insight into the changes observed in the traditional dance. The Hawthorne effect suggests that individuals modify their behaviour in response to their awareness of being observed. In this case, dancers alter their style, technique and movements, dancing in a seductive, provocative manner simply because they are being watched. Restaurateur Michael commented: "*My grandmother says these days the dancers dress up like peacocks. She says they dress up in their fancy things, trying to attract somebody to them. That's the way it looks from her point of view.*" Hotel owner Mitch also observed the changed behaviour of female dancers on stage: "*Our girls dance super-fast and they intentionally swing their hips to flip up their pāreu [lava-lava] to show a bit of cheek! That's become the norm today. And when there's a male sitting there it's like woooww, that's an invitation!*"

Daniel (1996, p. 785) suggested that the tourism setting provides an "opportunity for play and experimentation, pushing the boundaries with new combinations and styles to achieve innovation, invention and creativity". With outside contact, foreign elements and structures have been incorporated within traditional dance performance and over time, these "new (restructured or reinterpreted) forms and styles have emerged as authentic" (Daniel, 1996, p. 784). Participants observed that new dance movements, styles and techniques have been adopted from Western cultures and mixed with the traditional dance. Barmaid Rita thought that, to a certain extent, the Cook Islands needs to embrace these changes. She commented:

*I think changes are okay as long as we haven't totally demolished our culture. Because if we stay in the olden days, I don't think anybody will want to come to our island because to me it's just dead, it's boring. So, we have to stay up with modern times.*

However, unlike Rita, most participants perceived that the presence of tourists has transformed their culture, in particular, their traditional dance, which one described as a *'fake culture'*. Participants claimed that the sexualisation of their dance has been caused by the Western world and the pressures of modernisation (Sofield & Li, 1998). "*Sex sells*" was a common response given by participants to justify their contemporary new dance. Nevertheless, as a consequence of these changes, traditional values and ideologies have been sacrificed. Accommodation manager May commented: "*Today we're putting our beautiful young men and women on stage to be sexualised as objects.*"

Participants also expressed concern about the loss of traditional costumes, observing that dancers now appear scantily clad on stage in revealing costumes. Barmaid Raelene commented: "*I think our dance has gone overboard. They're wearing next to nothing. Our culture has changed, I think it's bad. I don't know why we're changing it, I really don't know!*" Hotel manager Mariah also made an observation about the revealing costumes worn by dancers today: "*I think the more scantily clad the women and men are just heightens all the sexual tension.*" Participants made comparisons between the contemporary costumes worn today and the traditional costumes worn in the past. Historically, costumes were conservative and dancers were modest and unassuming in their appearance. The *pāreu kiriau* (hula skirt) was worn up high, covering the navel (as shown in Figure 24, p. 130). However, female dancers today wear the *pāreu kiriau* (hula skirt) much lower, deliberately pushing the skirt onto their hips, to reveal their entire torso. Participants also commented on the length of the *pāreu* (lava-lava), which has become considerably shorter. Open splits down the side of the *pāreu* to reveal the legs are now also common. Human resources assistant Michelle observed: "*The pāreu that our girls wear today, is so short and sometimes you can see right up there. And if there's a dirty old man in audience he'll be just sitting there staring.*" The photographic images shown in Figure 30 and Figure 31 exemplify the stark contrast between the traditional costumes worn in the past and contemporary costumes worn today.

As this study does not allow further investigation into these findings, future research would be beneficial to determine which costumes visitors find more appealing. These investigations may reveal that visitors prefer the costumes worn traditionally, as opposed to the contemporary costumes, because they are seeking an authentic

experience. Hotel manager Margaret commented: “*Our forefathers had high standards and we’ve dropped those standards to go with the times, to cater to modern society, because sex attracts, so they say.*” The question of why Cook Islands culture has changed so dramatically is worth exploring in future research. Why has the culture changed so drastically and why have Cook Islanders allowed these changes to occur? Who asked them to change? They cannot blame the visitors as the visitors did not ask for these changes. One can assume that Cook Islanders have indeed adapted of their own accord. These questions are thought provoking and identify an opportunity for future research. Furthermore, the findings that emerged identifying ‘cultural dance and costumes’ as a primary cause of sexual harassment by customers are unique to the case location and cannot be linked to the current body of knowledge. These findings offer exciting opportunities to gain new insights into customer-perpetrated harassment. Accordingly, further research into this new emergent theme, would be beneficial.



(Source: Bill Johnson)



(Source: Bill Johnson)



(Source: Jane's Oceania)



(Source: Bill Johnson)



(Source: Bill Johnson)



(Source: Bill Johnson)

*Figure 30.* Traditional Cook Islands dance costumes





(Source: Expedia New Zealand)



(Source: William Tuiravakai, Island Photo)



(Source: Tourism Cook Islands)



(Source: Tourism Cook Islands)



(Source: Tourism Cook Islands)



(Source: Cook Islands Ministry of Cultural Development)

*Figure 31.* Contemporary Cook Islands dance costumes

#### 5.3.4 Thematic concept of cultural commodification

I think over the years the Cook Islands culture has been commercialised, especially ‘that’ which the visitor gets to see. (Mariah, hotel manager)

The views expressed by participants regarding cultural dance and costumes and destination marketing suggest that tourism development in the Cook Islands has caused cultural commodification. This relationship is exemplified in the thematic model on causality (Figure 18), in which cultural commodification is depicted as the overarching concept of these two causality themes (destination marketing and cultural dance and costumes). According to Macleod (2006, p. 71), cultural commodification relates to “how culture is used to sell a particular destination, and elements of a culture that are sold to visitors and consumed”. Participants in the study considered that tourism development and the presence of tourists has eroded their culture and gradually caused a change in traditional values and beliefs. Participants perceived that “what was once pure and authentic has been spoiled and commodified, in order to appeal to the tourist” (Shepherd, 2002, p. 183). Accommodation CEO Marcus observed the commodification of Cook Islands culture:

*Is our culture authentic? Definitely not! Perhaps if you took a time capsule and took mama out of the times 50 years ago, and bought her here and said “Okay what do you reckon?” I think she would be really, really shocked!*

Shepherd (2002) suggested that “to be genuinely authentic, the production of culture must take place outside the commercial exchange process” (p. 192). However, this assumption is unrealistic for the Cook Islands, which is heavily reliant on tourism for its economic survival (see section 1.5). Accordingly, the Cook Islands is faced with a predicament in that “tourism relies on their culture, but tourism is ultimately a threat to their culture” (Lanfant, Allcock, & Bruner, 1995, p. 52). Tourism is a double-edged sword in that tourism can destroy tourism.

Tourism growth and development in a host country, inevitably causes cultural commodification (Doğan, 1989; Lanfant et al., 1995; Shepherd, 2002). Accepting commodification allows some fundamental questions to arise. How does the Cook Islands cope with the impacts of tourism development in a way that will allow it to retain its cultural identity?

To what extent are Cook Islanders prepared to sacrifice cultural traditions and values for the benefits of financial gain? Has Cook Islands culture become so intertwined with

tourism it would be difficult to identify that which belongs to culture from that which pertains to tourism (Lanfant et al., 1995).

Picard (1995) suggested that one approach to coping with the impacts of tourism development on a host community's culture "lies in promoting culture and tourism simultaneously, so as to ensure that the development of tourism results in a reciprocal development of culture" (p. 54). McKean and Smith (1989) proposed regular reviews by local government to evaluate the sociocultural impacts of tourism on the destination.

Doğan (1989) recommended that host countries adopt 'boundary maintenance' strategies to manage the risks of cultural commercialisation:

This process involves establishing well-defined boundaries between 'foreign' and 'local' cultures and presenting local traditions to foreigners in a different context so that the effects of foreigners on local culture is minimised. (pp. 222–223)

Shepherd (2002) argued, however, that this perspective assumes that residents can easily differentiate between what is sacred (not open to commodification) and what is profane (open to commodification). Nevertheless, the benefits and costs of tourism development in the Cook Islands must be carefully considered.

### **5.3.5 Further exploration of the new emergent and themes**

The aforesaid discussions have explored the new themes and overarching concepts that emerged on causality in the case location (see Figure 22). As this is an exploratory study, further research is required into these emergent themes and concepts. In particular, it would be beneficial to examine the extent to which the overarching concepts affect their corresponding themes, and furthermore, to identify what impact, if any, the overarching concepts have on their inversing themes. For example, what impact does cultural commodification have on cultural norms and the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders? Finally, what is the relationship between the two overarching concepts? To what extent do they affect each other?

## **5.4 Response to sexual harassment by customers**

This section discusses the main coping strategies used by employees in response to sexual harassment by customers. Discussions expand on section 4.6 of the findings chapter, which presented the key themes that emerged within the core category 'response' in the thematic framework (see Figure 13, p. 99).

In relation to the case location, the most common coping strategies adopted by participants in response to sexual harassment are denial, confrontation, escape, discussion, emotional labour and role playing. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies investigating response to sexual harassment in the workplace (Roumeliotis & Kleiner, 2005; Wasti & Cortina, 2002; Yagil et al., 2006). Furthermore, the two main coping strategies participants engage are avoidance (Fitzgerald, et al., 1995; Signal et al., 2003; Welsh & Gruber, 1999) and denial (Carver et al., 1989; Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995; Handy, 2006).

Avoidance strategies are the most common ‘externally focused strategies’ used by victims of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Signal et al., 2003; Welsh & Gruber, 1999). ‘Externally focused strategies’ are those approaches that focus on actively solving the problem (Reeves, 2010). Avoidance strategies are known to be particularly common with women in low-skill, low-status jobs (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008; Samoluk & Pretty, 1994) and young female employees who are inexperienced and lack confidence (Berdahl, 2008; Gruber & Bjorn, 1986). Consistent with the literature, most employees used avoidance strategies because they lacked the confidence to respond assertively to the harassment. Café supervisor Renata explained: *“If it gets serious, I’ll gap it. By gap it I mean I’ll get out of the bar, go to the restaurant, move away from that area.”* Bar supervisor Ruby adopted a similar approach: *“I avoid that customer because it makes me feel so uncomfortable.”* A common avoidance strategy used by participants is ‘team-tag’, which involves asking a colleague to take over, allowing employees to remove themselves from the situation. Hotel receptionist Ricki explained: *“I’ve had someone step in and take over, so I could remove myself.”* Bar supervisor Ruby commented similarly: *“I get one of the guys to take over.”*

Another common coping strategy used by participants is denial (Carver et al., 1989; Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995; Handy, 2006). Denial is a passive, internally focused response (Yagil, 2008) whereby victims internally manage their emotions and thoughts (Reeves, 2010; Signal, et al., 2003) to cope with the harassment. Participants described responding to the harassment by ‘brushing it off’ or ‘ignoring it’ for various reasons, including fear of being blamed, fear of losing their job or simply not knowing how to respond. Bar manager Ruby commented: *“I just ignore it, it’s just easier to flick it away, like who cares! I don’t think it’s good that I do that.”* Hotel Manager Margaret expressed her concern with the passive approach adopted by staff to cope with sexual

harassment by customers: *“Our staff just bottle it all up, they ignore it. It’s not healthy, it’s not good.”*

Although denial and avoidance strategies are intended to help an employee cope with harassment, these strategies are ineffective, because they do not stop harassment and are costly to organisations because they decrease productivity and increase turnover (Gruber & Smith, 1995; Knapp et al., 1997). Employee performance declines because the employees are unable to focus on their work (Chan et al., 2008; Gettman & Gelfand, 2007; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004) and may ultimately resort to leaving their job (Alexander et al., 2005; Bridges, 2011; Cogin & Fish, 2009; Merkin, 2008b).

The passive approaches of avoidance and denial adopted by participants identify a need for assertiveness training, to equip employees with the confidence and skills they require to respond confidently to sexual harassment by customers. The need for sexual harassment training and education is discussed further in the conclusion chapter.

## **5.5 Impact of sexual harassment by customers**

This section discusses the impact of sexual harassment by customers. Discussions expand on section 4.7 of the findings chapter, which presented the key themes that emerged within the core category ‘impact’ in the thematic framework (see Figure 14, p. 103).

Extensive research has been conducted into sexual harassment in the workplace and its adverse impact on both employees and organisations (Collinsworth et al., 2009; Sojo et al., 2016; Willness, 2005). Employees often experience a deterioration in their emotional and psychological well-being, including having feelings of anxiety, depression, low-self-esteem, degradation and disgust (Hunt et al., 2010; Salin, 2008; Vijayasiri, 2008) and may also suffer a deterioration in their physical health (Cho, 2002; X.-Y. Liu et al., 2014; Lockwood & Marda, 2014). Sexual harassment can also have an adverse impact on the workplace environment, including low morale, decreased job satisfaction and productivity and employee turnover (Poulston, 2008a; Tangri et al., 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Victims may also engage in avoidance or withdrawal behaviour (i.e., absenteeism) to cope with the harassment (Prekel, 2001; Roumeliotis & Kleiner, 2005; Willness et al., 2007).

The findings of this study are consistent with existing literature on the impact of sexual harassment in the workplace. Employees described experiencing decreased job

satisfaction, feelings of anger and resentment, feelings of degradation and disgust, and feelings of discomfort and fear (see section 4.7). Notably, the findings also identified strong feelings of animosity and resentment towards visitors. An underlying cause of these tensions is inappropriate visitor behaviour (e.g., sexual harassment) and a perceived lack of respect by visitors (see section 4.5.4). Some participants were of the view that the respect being shown by residents to visitors was not being reciprocated. Berno (1999) suggested that Pacific peoples are very caring and generous, but there will eventually come a time when they feel that their generosity is being taken advantage of by the visitor. The viewpoint of accommodation manager May was explicit, but nevertheless reflective of Berno's perspective:

*It's the fact that visitors come to the Cook Islands and their morals and codes of conduct go out the window! It pisses you off, because it's like, this is our home, this is our country. And we have to deal with this crap every day because we need the visitors, so, it's like we have to tolerate all their shit! And it's being encouraged because we as a nation aren't addressing it!*

To fully understand the impact of tourism on a host country, one must consider the perceptions of the residents (Hsiao & Chuang, 2016; C. Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). Gjerald (2005) suggested that the attitudes and perceptions of residents towards tourism development are critical for understanding the sociocultural impacts of tourism. Multiple studies have been undertaken to examine hosts' attitudes towards visitors and the behavioural strategies that residents adopt to cope with tourism development (Davis, Allen, & Cosenza, 1988; Mitchell & de Waal, 2009; C. Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). A well-known theory commonly used to analyse the host–guest relationship is Doxey's (1983) Irridex model. Doxey's model proposed that an increase in tourists at a destination results in irritation in the host community. This irritation can take the form of unfriendly behaviour due to resentment from the local community towards the visitor.

The perspectives that were expressed by some participants can be clearly aligned to the 'annoyance' stage of Doxey's Irridex model. Doxey claims that at this stage of tourism development, residents become annoyed and frustrated with visitors and begin to show misgivings. These tensions were evident in this study, as illustrated by café manager Ruth's comment:

*The tourists are just assholes when they behave like that. Yeah, they're here for a holiday and because they understand that they won't be here for a long time, just for a while and then they'll go back to the real world, they think they can just do whatever they want!*

Butler's (1980) tourism life cycle model may also provide valuable insight into understanding the impact of tourism development on the Cook Islands. In relation to Butler's model, it would appear that the Cook Islands is in the 'development' phase of the tourism life cycle. It is normally at the 'development' phase when the impacts of tourism growth become problematic for the host community (Gjerald, 2005). This phase can be directly aligned to the 'annoyance' phase of Doxey's Irridex model (Butler, 1980; Doxey, 1983; Gjerald, 2005).

The Cook Islands has seen rapid tourism growth over the past 20 years (see section 1.5). However, this growth has not come without effects on residents' attitudes and perceptions. Osborne (2017) interviewed New Zealand couple John and Judith Cotton, who had returned to Rarotonga for the first time in 45 years. The couple first visited Rarotonga in 1974 and were astonished at how much the island had changed on their return. At the time of their first visit, there were only eight accommodation properties on the island, a stark contrast to Rarotonga's tourism industry today, which now boasts over 120 properties, excluding private rentals. The Cottons observed that the locals appeared to be "*more friendly*" back in 1974. "*You'd be walking along and the locals would stop and say hi.*" *'Natural'* was the word used by the Cottons to describe how they felt about Rarotonga in 1974. "*Everything felt a lot more natural back then.*"

The study has identified underlying tensions in the host–guest relationship, manifested in feelings of resentment towards visitors. Inappropriate visitor behaviour, including sexual harassment, is considered a main source of these tensions. Future investigations into these findings would be beneficial to gain more in-depth insight into the impact of visitors' misbehaviour on the host–guest relationship.

## **5.6 Tolerance to sexual harassment by customers**

This section expands on the section of the findings chapter that considered employees' tolerance to sexual harassment. Discussions relate to the key themes that emerged within the core category 'tolerance' in the thematic framework (see section 3.6.3, Figure 10, p. 74).

Consistent with previous research (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986; Ineson et al., 2013; McCann 2005), the findings revealed a high level of tolerance to customer-perpetrated harassment (see section 4.8). A main reason for this high tolerance was 'a lack of confidence'. Cook Islanders are known to be shy (Berno, 1999) and therefore may lack the confidence to respond assertively to sexual advances by customers. Restaurateur

Michael observed the non-confrontational nature of Cook Islanders: *“I find our Cook Islands people are very shy and they don’t want to cause conflict regardless of the situation.”* Bar owner Moses made a similar observation:

*Our people are akama [shy]. They need to understand, we need to educate our people. Because our people, they can’t say anything to the Papa’a [white man]. It’s a matter of them opening up and not being akama. And we also need to say to them “you won’t lose your job”.*

Previous research suggests that employees are more likely to respond assertively to sexual harassment when organisations have implemented appropriate policies and staff are fully aware of these processes (Antecol & Cobb-clark, 2003; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). Of concern, however, was the significant absence of workplace sexual harassment policies and procedures identified from this study (see section 4.9.2). The lack of confidence described by the participants is likely to be linked to the absence of formal processes, identifying a vital need for this issue to be addressed.

Furthermore, customer sovereignty (Gay & Salaman, 1992; Korczynski, 2002) emerged as another factor contributing to the tolerance of customer-perpetrated harassment. Participants claimed they tolerate customers’ sexual behaviour simply because they were expected to always be friendly and polite. Café owner Monique explained: *“One of the things that we’re taught is that the customer is always right—smile, be friendly and be nice. I think there needs to be some hospitality training where sexual harassment is part of that training.”* Additionally, some employers claimed to ignore customer misbehaviour because they were reliant on their business. Restaurateur Michael explained: *“I just accept it because if I confront them, I might lose their business.”* In service environments, customers have power because they can control whether or not they choose to do business with the organisation (Fine et al., 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Yagil, 2008). The customer sovereignty perspective (Gay & Salaman, 1992; Korczynski, 2002) is a power-dominance model in which power inequality enables the customer to engage in harassing behaviour (Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979; Pryor, 1995). This imbalance of power was explicitly described by accommodation manager May: *“We need the visitors, they’re our bread and butter, so we just have to tolerate all their shit.”* Mknono (2010, p. 734) suggested that a “change of culture” was needed in the industry’s ideology that ‘the customer is always right’ because customers cannot continue to sexually harass employees without implications.



Participants overwhelmingly stated that the foremost reason they tolerated sexual harassment by customers was that they lacked the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately and professionally (see section 5.4). This lack of training was observed by hotel manager Mariah: *“Employees don’t have the tools to stop it, to handle the situation, because they haven’t had any training, they haven’t been educated.”* Bar manager Monica made a similar comment: *“The girls don’t know what to do, so they just giggle. They need to be educated.”* The study has identified a vital need for training, to educate employees on sexual harassment and equip them with the appropriate skills to respond confidently to the harassment. The more educated employees are about sexual harassment, the more confident they will be to respond assertively (Gutek, 1993; Head, Sorensen, & Pincus, 1995). Strategies aimed at increasing employees’ awareness are considered in the conclusion chapter.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the key findings that emerged from this case study inquiry. The key themes presented in the findings chapter, have been considered using the current body of knowledge. Discussions have given particular consideration to the two new concepts and eight new themes that emerged on causality. These new concepts and themes are the key findings of this study and are significant as they cannot be linked to the current body of knowledge. They offer unique perspectives and insight into customer harassment and identify exciting opportunities for future research. A thematic model on causality was presented to illustrate the relationships between the four emergent themes and two overarching concepts.

The four new themes are cultural norms, the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders, destination marketing and cultural dance and costumes. The two overarching concepts are cultural commodification (Macleod, 2006) and *mātaunga* Māori (Savage, 1962). With no prior studies on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands, this research provides new insights into the phenomenon in this location. These unique themes that emerged are significant as they contribute further knowledge and provide exciting prospects to develop new theories on customer-perpetrated harassment.

Discussions in this chapter have also explored the key findings that emerged on response, tolerance and impact of customer harassment. Key areas requiring future research to enable a better understanding of the phenomenon in this location, have also

been identified. The conclusion chapter that follows re-addresses the research questions and presents recommendations based on the overall findings of the study. The limitations of the study are considered, highlighting opportunities for future research.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore the sexual harassment experiences of Cook Islands hospitality employees by customers, and to understand what social and environmental factors influence this behaviour. This chapter provides a synthesis of the key research findings and demonstrates how the findings have addressed the research objectives of the study. Consideration is given to each research question with discussion of the relevant findings. Various recommendations are proposed to increase awareness on sexual harassment and address the issue of sexual harassment by customers. The contributions of this study to the current body of knowledge on sexual harassment are considered. The limitations of the inquiry are also acknowledged with recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection from the researcher.

### **6.2 Synthesis of key findings**

This case study inquiry has provided in-depth insight into the phenomenon of customer-perpetrated harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. As no prior research has explored sexual harassment in the Cook Islands, the study makes a significant contribution to the current knowledge on sexual harassment and, in particular, offers some unique perspectives on the causality of customer-perpetrated harassment. This section provides a synthesis of the key findings of the study and demonstrates how these research findings have answered the five key research questions. Each research question is presented with discussions linking the key findings to the research question.

#### ***RQ.1 What understanding do Cook Islands hospitality employees and employers have of sexual harassment?***

The study has revealed that certain sexual behaviours by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry are considered sexual harassment. These include:

- physical contact,
- sexual gestures/staring,
- comments about physical appearance,
- propositioning,
- intimidation.

Furthermore, context is a significant factor influencing whether employees interpret behaviour as sexual harassment. As an example, some participants stated that whether they interpret behaviour as harassment depends on whether the customer is known to them. Sexual behaviour exhibited by a stranger was more likely to be viewed as harassment than if the customer was known to the employee, in which case it might be considered banter. Another example given by participants is that if there was potential chemistry between the employee and the customer, then the customer's behaviour was likely to be viewed as flirting rather than harassment. Personal characteristics such as age and experience also influenced participants' perceptions of sexual behaviour. Some of the more mature participants described experiencing an increased awareness and a decreased tolerance of sexual behaviour by customers, with age and experience.

Overall, there is a lack of awareness on sexual harassment in the workplace, caused mainly by the absence of policies and procedures and a lack of training. Most participants reported tolerating sexual harassment by customers because they lacked the knowledge and skills to respond confidently. Participants expressed concerns about the lack of awareness on sexual harassment in the workplace, voicing a need for management to address this issue through education and training.

***RQ.2 What sexual harassment experiences have employees encountered involving customers as perpetrators?***

Participants encountered various experiences of sexual harassment by customers and the findings suggested that customer initiated harassment is not uncommon in the industry. With the exception of two employees, all described experiencing sexual harassment by a customer on more than one occasion. Notably, the two employees who were exempt worked in non-customer contact roles. The types of harassment participants experienced by customers included groping, touching of the breasts or bottom, sexual remarks, staring, comments about physical appearance, propositioning and intimidation. Intimidation involved customers asking or expecting sexual favours from the employee and perceiving their request to be reasonable because they had paid for a service (irrespective of the fact that the purchased service did not include sexual benefits). The most common forms of customer harassment were sexual remarks, comments about physical appearance and touching. Most participants had not only experienced customer harassment personally, but also witnessed harassment of colleagues.

Employees working in bars and restaurants experienced higher levels of harassment because of the social environment and the impact of alcohol on customers' behaviour.

Tour guides were also prone to sexual harassment, particularly when customers were in groups as the influence of the pack mentality provided a strong power base for customer misbehaviour.

Employees working in less vulnerable environments, for example, cafés or hotel receptions, also experienced customer harassment, but to a much lesser degree.

### ***RQ.3 What factors have contributed to these experiences?***

The study has identified eight key factors (themes) contributing to sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.

- **Causality factors relating to existing theories**

Four of these themes could be linked to existing causality models found in the literature. These four themes were alcohol, hospitality environment, aesthetic labour and moral holiday. Alcohol and hospitality environment are related to the industry characteristics model, which suggests that the inherent nature and characteristics of the hospitality industry make it a “prime breeding ground” (Gilbert et al., 1998, p. 49) for sexual harassment.

The aesthetic labour of employees is also perceived to be a contributing factor to sexual harassment by customers. Two perspectives emerged from the study that provide insight into this theme. Some participants viewed sexualisation as part of their job role in that they were required to look attractive and appear single to attract customers and increase business, even though there was nothing from management to support this. Contrary to the aforementioned viewpoint, another perspective emerged suggesting that employees engage in self-sexualisation in order to appear ‘sexy’ and ‘attractive’. This perspective removes the onus from the employer, suggesting instead that employees self-sexualise their labour by altering their uniforms or wearing revealing clothing such as short skirts and low-cut tops.

Furthermore, participants perceived that visitors behaved inappropriately, simply because they were away from home and had a sense of anonymity. This finding related to the moral holiday perspective found in the literature. The impact of pack mentality was perceived to be a contributing factor to visitor misbehaviour, particularly overseas groups visiting the island for celebratory purposes (e.g. wedding groups).

- **New themes on causality specific to the Cook Islands hospitality industry**

The most significant outcome of this study are the four new themes that emerged from the data that are unique to the study and cannot be linked to the current body of knowledge.

These four themes are cultural norms, the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders, destination marketing and traditional dance and costumes.

The findings revealed that some of the cultural norms and practices inherent in Cook Islands culture, such as '*aravei*' and personal space, can be misunderstood by visitors and inadvertently provoke sexual behaviour. Furthermore, the friendly, hospitable nature and vibrant personalities of Cook Islanders are also perceived to be misinterpreted for something else, affecting visitor behaviour as a consequence. These two new themes (cultural norms and the hospitable nature of Cook Islanders), emerged from the findings embedded with an overarching concept of *mātaunga* Māori. (see section 5.3.3). *Mātaunga* Māori refers to the cultural practices, attitudes and beliefs of the Cook Islands peoples. It is the inherent principles and values of Cook Islanders that form the social fabric of their society. The relationship between these two new themes and their overarching concept *mātaunga* Māori is exemplified in the thematic model on causality developed from the findings of this study (Figure 22 section 5.3.2).

Cook Islands cultural dance and costumes was another new theme that emerged from the findings to explain sexual harassment by customers. The sexualisation of the Cook Islands dance and costumes was perceived by participants to be a key cause of sexual harassment by customers. Participants observed that the style of dance, for both males and females, had changed dramatically and become provocative and suggestive. Furthermore, the skimpy, revealing costumes worn by dancers were also perceived to trigger inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Destination marketing was likewise perceived to have an impact on visitor behaviour, emerging from the findings as a new causality theme. Participants observed that some of the destinations' marketing collateral contained sexual innuendos and undertones and that some marketing images were provocative and suggestive, creating misconceptions and triggering sexual behaviour by visitors. Sexualised destination marketing is not exclusive to marketing initiatives undertaken by Cook Islands Tourism, but is the all-encompassing marketing strategies of the destination, including marketing initiatives implemented by industry operators.

The new themes that emerged on cultural dance and costumes and destination marketing indicate that tourism development in the Cook Islands has commodified the local culture. Participants perceived that the presence of tourists has eroded the culture, causing an irreversible change in traditional values and beliefs. The influence of cultural commodification therefore emerged from the findings as an overarching concept incorporating cultural dance and costumes and destination marketing. The relationship between these two themes and their overarching concept is exemplified in the thematic model on causality developed from the findings of this study.

Of all eight causality themes that emerged, alcohol was perceived to be the main cause of sexual harassment by customers. The drinking culture in the Cook Islands, combined with a laxness of liquor licensing laws, was perceived to foster an environment conducive to inappropriate sexual behaviour.

***RQ.4 How do employees cope with sexual harassment by customers and how have these experiences affected them?***

The objective of this research question was to explore how Cook Islands hospitality employees respond to sexual harassment by customers and how the harassment has affected them.

- **Coping with sexual harassment by customers**

The findings revealed that participants adopted multiple coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment by customers, including denial, avoidance, discussion, emotional labour, role playing and confrontation. Denial and avoidance were identified as the two most common strategies used by participants to cope with customer harassment.

Employees who lack confidence have limited experience and/or work in an environment that is tolerant of sexual harassment are known to adopt these two approaches. These issues (i.e., a lack of confidence, limited experience and a tolerant work environment) were identified in this study and are likely to explain why participants engage passive strategies to respond to customer harassment.

Communal coping (discussion), which involved seeking support from their colleagues or partner, is another strategy participants used. In particular, socialising and drinking with colleagues at the end of an evening shift provided an opportunity for participants to share experiences and cope with harassment in a collaborative manner.

Role playing was another coping strategy, whereby the employee (participant) adopted a 'fake' persona while in the workplace, hiding behind the façade, and then left their role

behind when they left work. This façade required them to behave in a certain manner, in some cases to appear single and available, making them vulnerable to customer harassment. This schizophrenic behaviour enabled employees to cope with harassment by mentally detaching in the workplace, perceiving that the customer's harassment was directed at the façade, and not the person behind it.

In contrast, some participants responded to the harassment in retaliation, using explicit verbal abuse and, in some cases, physical abuse. All of these incidents occurred in a bar environment and involved an intoxicated customer. Overall, the findings revealed that employees engage a range of coping strategies, predominantly passive, of which denial and avoidance are the most common.

- **Impact of sexual harassment by customers**

A key objective of this study was to gain insight into the impact of sexual harassment by customers. The findings revealed that customer harassment affected participants in various ways. Participants described experiencing decreased job satisfaction and decreased work productivity. Feelings of anger, resentment, degradation, disgust, fear and discomfort were also outcomes of the harassment. Furthermore, the study identified a direct relationship between customer harassment and employee turnover. One male participant reported leaving his job because of constant harassment by female customers and a manager reported losing three employees to sexual harassment by customers.

Notably, the study has identified feelings of animosity and resentment by participants towards visitors, revealing underlying tensions in the host–guest relationship. The findings suggest that a key cause of these tensions is inappropriate visitor behaviour (e.g., sexual harassment).

***RQ.5 To what extent do hospitality employees and employers perceive sexual harassment by customers to be a problem?***

More than half of the participants in the study perceived sexual harassment by customers to be a problem in the industry, voicing a need for the issue to be addressed. Notably, slightly more employees perceived customer harassment to be a serious problem than did employers. A possible explanation for this finding could be that employers are unaware of the extent to which customer harassment is occurring in the workplace. Most participants who did not perceive sexual harassment to be problematic were nevertheless of the view that if the issue was ignored, it could escalate and become widespread.



Furthermore, the study identified gender differences in the perceptions of and attitudes to customer-perpetrated harassment. Only three of the 10 male participants were of the view that customer harassment was problematic in the industry. These perspectives differed from those of the majority of female participants, who considered sexual harassment by customers to be a problem needing attention. Fourteen of the 22 female participants were of the view that customer harassment was widespread across the industry but nevertheless was being ignored. Interestingly, despite male participants experiencing sexual harassment by customers on numerous occasions and expressing anger and frustration, as well as one male employee leaving his job because of harassment, most male participants did not perceive customer harassment to be prevalent in the industry. While this finding can be linked to current literature suggesting that men are more tolerant of harassment than women and view sexual behaviour more favourably, it is also likely that these male participants were reluctant to disclose their true feelings because they may have perceived that doing so threatened their masculinity.

- **Tolerance to sexual harassment by customers**

Participants' tolerance to sexual harassment was also explored as part of this research objective, and findings revealed a high level of tolerance to customer harassment. Participants tolerated harassment for various reasons, including a lack of confidence, lack of knowledge and skills, fear of losing their job, customer sovereignty and the perception that sexual harassment is simply part of the job. Notably, the main reasons employees tolerate customer harassment is a lack of confidence and a lack of knowledge and skills to respond assertively to the harassment.

Furthermore, the notion of customer sovereignty emerged as another factor contributing to the high tolerance of customer harassment in the industry. Participants reported tolerating harassment by customers' because they were expected to retain a positive attitude and always be friendly and polite. The industry's mantra that the 'customer is always right' was raised by participants to illustrate the power imbalance that made them vulnerable to sexual harassment by customers. Participants also spoke of tolerating harassment for fear of losing their job because of a perception that management was reliant on customers for business and therefore would not support their complaint.

The key findings presented above have addressed the five main objectives of this inquiry, providing first-hand, in-depth insight into the incidence of sexual harassment

by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. The section that follows considers various recommendations to address the issue of customer harassment in the workplace. These recommendations arose from the findings of this study and may offer some useful strategies to Cook Islands hospitality organisations and the industry at large.

### **6.3 Recommendations from the study**

#### **6.3.1 Education and training**

A key finding of this study is the lack of awareness on sexual harassment in the workplace, identifying a need for education and training. Most participants reported tolerating customer harassment because they lacked the confidence and skills to respond appropriately. When asked what their organisations could do to address the issue of customer harassment, the main response given was to provide training. Prior research has found that sexual harassment occurs less in the workplace when employees have undergone appropriate training. While the content of training programmes will differ across organisations, consideration could be given to the following:

- Sexual harassment training with a key objective to increase employees' awareness on sexual harassment in the workplace would be beneficial. Discussions could focus on what sexual harassment is and what behaviours constitute sexual harassment in the workplace. Policies and procedures on dealing with sexual harassment could also be incorporated into the training to ensure that employees are fully aware of workplace processes on sexual harassment.
- Social skills training, with a focus on verbal and non-verbal communication may also be beneficial. A key objective of this training would be to create an understanding of the difference between friendly and familiar interpersonal interaction (see Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Use and interpretation of body language would be an important aspect of this training. Training could also focus on increasing employees' awareness of the implications of appearance, to ensure that employees understand the impact that their appearance and behaviour can have on the likelihood of being harassed (see Poulston, 2010).
- To understand the diverse cultural perspectives of visitors, it may also be beneficial to incorporate cultural awareness into training programmes, to ensure that employees are aware of the cultural behavioural norms of their visitors and

to develop an awareness of the diverse perceptions of sexual harassment across cultures.

- Assertiveness training could also help equip employees with the necessary skills to reject sexual advances by customers, confidently and professionally (see Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007). Role playing could be an effective training tool to help employees learn appropriate response techniques for responding to customer harassment (see Hunt et al., 2010). Role playing is an interactive method of learning and was a prevention strategy recommended by a participant in the study.
- Training employees in bystander intervention could also be beneficial, so that employees know how to respond not only to personal sexual harassment, but also when they witness the harassment of a colleague (see Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004). Bystander training should focus on upskilling employees to confidently intervene by redirecting the customer, relieving the employee or confronting the customer if the employee appears distressed.
- The implementation of host responsibility training programmes is recommended with the objective of training employees about the responsible service of alcohol. Host responsibility programmes should focus on increasing employees' awareness of the signs of intoxication using the traffic light system (see Willingham, 2015) and ensuring that a selection of non-alcoholic beverages and light snacks are always available.
- Organisations must ensure not only that employees are trained but also that managers are trained to deal with sexual harassment of employees by customers (see Bland & Stalcup, 2001). Managers must be aware of policies and procedures and have the awareness to recognise inappropriate behaviour by customers and take the appropriate steps to address the harassment immediately.

Training and education on sexual harassment will not only equip employees with the necessary skills to deal with sexual behaviour by customers, but also ensure that all employees hear the same organisational message. Finally, increasing awareness on sexual harassment could also be achieved by incorporating the subject into the national curriculum to educate young Cook Islanders about the issue of sexual harassment, prior to their entering the workplace.

### **6.3.2 Policies and procedures**

Recommendations also include the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures on sexual harassment. An absence of workplace policies was identified in the study: 29 of the 32 participants confirmed that their workplace had no policies or procedures on sexual harassment. The introduction of appropriate processes may help increase employees' awareness on sexual harassment and prevent its occurrence in the workplace. Policies and procedures should be easy to understand, in language that is simple and clear.

While formal resolution processes (i.e., lodging a formal complaint) have advantages, informal processes are likely to be more appropriate for addressing customer harassment. Informal processes are generally more effective for addressing third-party harassment because they are less time consuming and provide immediate resolution. Informal processes could involve someone speaking to the perpetrator on behalf of the complainant, generally the manager.

Implementing processes into the workplace also requires ensuring that employees are fully aware of these processes and know what to do, or where to go to report sexual harassment by customers. Incorporating these processes into sexual harassment training programmes is recommended.

### **6.3.3 Practical strategies**

At an operational level, practical strategies could be considered by management to address customer harassment. The 'team-tag' approach used by some participants is effective as it enables employees to remove themselves from a difficult situation before it escalates. In a restaurant environment, this could simply mean allocating another staff member to the table. Managers can facilitate this process and, in extreme situations, may need to ask an offending customer to leave the premises. Walking around is another effective way for management to monitor a workplace environment and identify inappropriate customer behaviour. Managers could also encourage debriefing sessions at the end of service so employees can share experiences regarding customer misbehaviour. This approach was identified as an effective coping strategy by some participants in the study. Promoting a harassment-free workplace through "codes of ethics" (see Poulston, 2008a, p. 232) and harassment-free literature (e.g., pamphlets or posters) may also be beneficial if they are displayed in places visible to employees and customers. Finally, as uniforms are known to have an impact on the level of harassment that occurs, it may be useful for managers to review the uniform policies for employees.

If the uniform is the choice of the employee, appropriate guidelines could be put in place to minimise the occurrence of customer harassment.

#### **6.3.4 Management commitment**

The prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace requires a clear and visible commitment from management. Participants in the study expressed a need for management to increase awareness on sexual harassment and create an organisational culture that inhibits sexual harassment in the workplace. Management commitment was considered integral to addressing the issue of sexual harassment by customers.

#### **6.3.5 Industry-wide commitment**

Addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace is not only an organisational responsibility; it also requires a collaborative commitment from the industry at large. The findings of this research have provided valuable insights into some of the sociocultural implications of tourism development in the Cook Islands. The study has also shed light on residents' attitudes and perceptions of visitor behaviour. Further investigation into the emerging themes from this research would be beneficial. Key stakeholders that could have a role in facilitating this process might include Tourism Cook Islands, Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council, Cook Islands Ministry of Cultural Development, Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce, the Cook Islands Restaurant Association, the Cook Islands Chefs Association and La Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Cook Islands.

#### **6.3.6 Increase awareness**

A lack of awareness on sexual harassment was identified across all sectors of the industry, highlighting a need for this issue to be brought to the fore. However, given the sensitive nature of sexual harassment and the 'taboo' that exists around sex in Pacific communities, the facilitation of these discussions would need to be conducted in a culturally appropriate manner. The findings of this research provide valuable insight into sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry and could be a useful resource for increasing awareness on this issue. The findings will be made available to the CINRC, who authorised this study, industry stakeholders, relevant government departments and participants who contributed to the study.

#### **6.3.7 Educating visitors**

Finally, the findings have identified a potential need for visitors to acquire a greater understanding of Cook Islands cultural values and practices. Participants perceived that

misunderstandings around some cultural norms by visitors was a key contributing factor to customers' harassment. The sensitive nature of this recommendation requires careful consideration; however, future discussions might include what information could be communicated to visitors, how this would be done and by whom. Key stakeholders that could have a role in facilitating this process might include Tourism Cook Islands, Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council, Cook Islands Ministry of Cultural Development, Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

#### **6.3.8 Synthesis of recommendations**

While the above recommendations may offer some useful strategies for hospitality organisations and industry, it is unrealistic to assume that they will eradicate sexual harassment, as sexuality is an inevitable part of life. Nevertheless, managers should make every effort to ensure that employees are supported and protected against inappropriate sexual behaviour by customers.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the study**

As with all research, there were limitations to this study. A common criticism of qualitative research is that generalisations cannot be made about the population at large if the sample is limited. While this research could potentially be viewed in this light, the study makes a significant contribution to the existing gap on sexual harassment in the South Pacific. Furthermore, the sample size of 32 participants was, in fact, generous in comparison with other qualitative studies, which generally comprise a much smaller sample (see Chase & Brewer, 2009). The researcher did not interview more participants than needed and ceased data collection once theoretical saturation had been reached.

The sample frame bias applied to this study required participants to be a Cook Islander or permanent resident, *or* have worked in the hospitality industry in the Cook Islands for a minimum period of two years. This meant that it restricted the sampling of other individuals working in the industry who did not meet the eligibility criteria. The Cook Islands has experienced a significant increase in migrant workers in recent years due to the ongoing exodus of Cook Islanders overseas (Hellebrandt & Mauro, 2015) and significant tourism growth. In light of the diverse workforce now apparent in the industry, future research including migrant workers could provide a broader perspective of the phenomenon.

## **6.5 Contributions of this research**

With no prior research having been conducted on sexual harassment in the Cook Islands, this study makes a significant contribution to the current body of knowledge on sexual harassment in the South Pacific and, in particular, the Cook Islands. The findings of the study provide in-depth understanding into the phenomenon of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. Tourism is the main industry in the Cook Island and has seen significant growth in visitor arrivals in recent years. The findings of this research offer unique insights into residents' attitudes and perceptions of visitor behaviour, which may be of value to industry stakeholders.

The key contribution of this study is the thematic model that emerged from the findings to explain the causality of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Island hospitality industry. The grounded theory methodology adopted for the study enabled new themes to emerge that were grounded deeply in the data. Two new overarching concepts and four new themes emerged from the findings, providing unique insights into the causality of sexual harassment by customers. These concepts and themes offer new perspectives into customer-perpetrated harassment as they could not be linked to the current body of knowledge. A thematic model on causality was developed from this study to incorporate these unique concepts and themes. The thematic model offers new insights into the causality of customer harassment and provides a framework for further research and exciting opportunities to develop new theory. The thematic model incorporating the new concepts and themes are the key findings of this study and make a significant contribution to the literature by offering some unique perspectives on the causality of sexual harassment by customers.

Additionally, while extensive research has been done into the incidence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry, there is a significant gap in the literature on sexual harassment in the South Pacific. Kate (2016) claimed that, despite sexual harassment being a problem in the Pacific, scarce data exist to provide a clear picture of the extent of this problem. Accordingly, this research has addressed this gap, making a positive contribution to the literature on sexual harassment in this region.

A further contribution of this study is to the existing knowledge on gender attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment. A unique aspect of this research is that the study was not gender specific, as participants were both male and female. This approach enabled new knowledge and understanding into gender differences in attitudes and perceptions

of sexual harassment. Furthermore, the inclusion of male participants in the study makes a contribution to the current gap in the literature on the sexual harassment experiences of men.

Participants in the study included both employees and employers, to gain comparative insights into their attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment. As little knowledge currently exists on sexual harassment from an employee–employer perspective (see Ali & Kramar, 2015), the findings of this study make a contribution to the current gap. Finally, the study has also made a meaningful contribution to the current gap in the literature on third-party harassment.

## **6.6 Future research**

As this study was exploratory, a wide range of areas for future research has emerged. Firstly, given that this is the first inquiry into sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry, future research is required to validate the findings of this study. In particular, the new thematic model on causality that emerged from the findings offers unique insights into the causality of customer harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry. These concepts and themes provide new perspectives into sexual harassment by customers as they could not be linked to the current body of knowledge. Future research exploring the thematic model and its unique concepts and themes provides exciting opportunities to develop new theory. Additionally, research into the concept of *mātaunga* Māori and the extent to which it affects customer behaviour could contribute new knowledge to the apparent gap in the literature on the *mātaunga* Māori concept. Another focus of future research could involve investigating the impact of sexual harassment on employee turnover in the tourism industry, as the findings of this study identified a direct relationship between customer harassment and turnover. Future research would be beneficial to establish the extent to which the Cook Islands tourism industry is losing valuable employees to sexual harassment.

Furthermore, while the study has provided some valuable insights into gender perspectives and employee–employer perspectives, these areas require further investigation. Future research to increase awareness of sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry might also consider this issue from the customers’ (visitors’) perspective.

Finally, the apparent gap in the literature on sexual harassment in the Pacific Islands identifies a need to increase awareness through future research in this region.



Comparative studies on sexual harassment between some of the Pacific Islands could contribute meaningful knowledge to address the existing gap.

## **6.7 Personal reflection**

My research interest in sexual harassment by customers stems from my own personal experience as a Cook Islands woman working for many years in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga. I entered the industry in my late teens, inexperienced and naive. The years that followed exposed me to the stark realities of the industry, in which, on multiple occasions, I encountered unwelcome sexual advances by customers. Lacking the confidence and skills to respond professionally, my response (or lack of) was to ignore it and keep smiling, irrespective of how I was feeling inside. At the core of those emotions was a loss of dignity, self-respect and self-worth. I reflect back on those experiences and the impact that they had on me personally and professionally. I regret my silence, my lack of voice and my condoning of the behaviour by not making a stand. Older, wiser and experienced, I feel a strong sense of obligation to bring this issue to the fore, to shed light on a matter that, to date, has been overlooked in the tourism industry, not just in the Cook Islands, but within the wider Pacific. Tourism is the key economic driver and a major employment provider for many Pacific Island countries. Employers have an ethical responsibility to create a safe and enjoyable working environment by taking the necessary steps to provide a harassment-free workplace. They need to protect their employees and should not place employees on the frontline to interact with customers without equipping them with the appropriate skills to engage confidently and professionally.

The opportunity to research sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry has been rewarding and enlightening. I have expanded my knowledge and gained in-depth understanding into the different facets of sexual harassment, including its cause, impact, tolerance and incidence. The highlight of this research journey was the opportunity to listen to the experiences of my participants, to hear their stories and try to understand their perspectives on sexual harassment by customers. It was a privilege and an authentic experience and I am grateful that the participants entrusted me with their stories, as they have enabled me to make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge on sexual harassment in our Pacific community.

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## Appendix A: EA1: Application for ethics approval from AUTECH

28 June 2017

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Please do not  
staple your  
application



For AUTECH Secretariat Use only

### AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUTECH)

## EA1

### APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL BY AUTECH

Once this application has been completed and signed, please read the notes at the end of the form for information about submission of the application for review.

#### NOTES ABOUT COMPLETION

- ❖ Ethics review is a community review of the ethical aspects of a research proposal. Responses should use clear everyday language with appropriate definitions being provided should the use of technical or academic jargon be necessary.
- ❖ The AUTECH Secretariat and your AUTECH Faculty Representative are able to provide you with assistance and guidance with the completion of this application which may help expedite the granting of ethics approval.
- ❖ The information in this application needs to be clearly stated and to contain sufficient details to enable AUTECH to make an informed decision about the ethical quality of the research. Responses that do not provide sufficient information may delay approval because further information will be sought. Overly long responses may also delay approval when unnecessary information hinders clarity. In general each response should not exceed 100 words.
- ❖ AUTECH reserves the right not to consider applications that are incomplete or inadequate.
- ❖ Comprehensive information about ethics approval and what may be required is available online at <http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics>
- ❖ The information provided in this application will be used for the purposes of granting ethics approval. It may also be provided to the University Postgraduate Centre, the University Research Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.
- ❖ The Form is focussed around AUTECH's ethical principles, which are in accordance with the *Operational Standards for Ethics Committees* in New Zealand.

To respond to a question, please place your cursor in the space following the question and its notes and begin typing.

#### A. Project Information

**A.1. What is the title of the research?**

If you will be using a different title in documents to that being used as your working title, please provide both, clearly indicating which title will be used for what purpose.

An inquiry into the staff experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

**A.2. Who is the applicant?**

When the research is part of the requirements for a qualification at AUT, then the applicant is always the primary supervisor. Otherwise, the applicant is the researcher primarily responsible for the research, to whom all enquiries and correspondence relating to this application will be addressed.

Dr Heike Schänzel

**A.3. Further information about the applicant.**

**A.3.1. In which faculty, directorate, or research centre is the applicant located?**

Faculty of Culture and Society

**A.3.2. What are the applicant's qualifications?**

1. Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Tourism Management.

**A.3.3. What is the applicant's email address?**

*An email address at which the applicant can be contacted is essential.*

hschanze@aut.ac.nz

**A.3.4. At which telephone numbers can the applicant be contacted during the day?**

Phone: (09) 921-9999 ext 6923

**B. The Ethical Principle of Research Adequacy**

*AUTEC recognises that different research paradigms may inform the conception and design of projects. It adopts the following minimal criteria of adequacy: the project must have clear research goals; its design must make it possible to meet those goals; and the project should not be trivial but should potentially contribute to the advancement of knowledge to an extent that warrants any cost or risk to participants.*

**B.1. What is the aim of this research**

To date, no studies have been conducted into how front-line employees in the Cook Islands hospitality industry are treated by customers. In particular, it is unknown whether sexual harassment by customers is a problem in the workplace. Accordingly, this gap in the research provides the rationale for this study, which aims to investigate the sexual harassment of Cook Island hospitality employees by customers. It particularly seeks to understand the social and environmental factors that influence sexual harassment behaviour. Concepts to be investigated comprise the incidence, cause, tolerance and impact of sexual harassment. The questions to be researched are:

1. What understanding do Cook Island hospitality employees and employers have of sexual harassment?
2. What sexual harassment experiences have employees encountered involving customers as perpetrators?
3. What factors may have contributed to these experiences?
4. How do employees cope with sexual harassment from customers and how have these experiences affected them?
5. What differences exist in the perceptions and attitudes of male and female employees about sexual harassment in the workplace?

**B.2. Is the applicant the person doing most of the research (the primary researcher)?**

☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'No' please answer B.2.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.3 and continue from there.*

**B.2.1. What is the name of the primary researcher if it is someone other than the applicant?**

Lisa Sadaraka

**B.2.2. What are the primary researcher's completed qualifications?**

Post Graduate Diploma in International Hospitality Management (AUT University)

**B.2.3. What is the primary researcher's email address?**

*An email address at which the applicant can be contacted is essential.*

[Lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz)

**B.2.4. At which telephone numbers can the primary researcher be contacted during the day?**

921-9999 ext 6284 or 021-486-906

**B.3. Is the primary researcher**

☒ an AUT staff member ☒ an AUT student

*If the primary researcher is an AUT staff member, please answer B.3.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.4 and continue from there.*

**B.3.1. In which Research Institute or Faculty and school or department is the primary researcher employed?**

Faculty of Culture and Society, School of Hospitality and Tourism.

**B.4. If the primary researcher is a student:**

**B.4.1. What is their Student ID Number?**

9114955

**B.4.2. In which faculty school, department, or Research Centre are they enrolled?**

Faculty of Culture and Society, School of Hospitality and Tourism

**B.5. What is the primary researcher's experience or expertise in this area of research?***Where the primary researcher is a student at AUT, please identify the applicant's experience or expertise in this area of research as well.*

The researcher is a Cook Islander who has worked extensively in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga and experienced sexual harassment by customers there. To date, no studies have investigated the extent to which sexual harassment exists in the Cook Islands hospitality workplace.

The researcher is currently teaching in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at AUT University and has recently completed a Post Graduate Diploma in International Hospitality Management.

**B.6. Who is in charge of data collection?**

Lisa Sadaraka (primary researcher)

**B.7. Who will interact with the participants?**

Lisa Sadaraka (primary researcher)

**B.8. Is this research being undertaken as part of a qualification?**☒ Yes ☐ No*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer B.8.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.9 and continue from there.***B.8.1. What is the name of the qualification?**

Master in International Hospitality Management

**B.8.2. In which institution will the qualification be undertaken?**

AUT University

**B.9. Details of Other Researchers or Investigators**

Primary Supervisor: Dr Heike Schänzel

Second Supervisor Dr Jill Poulston

**B.9.1. Will any other people be involved as researchers or co- investigators?**☐ Yes ☒ No*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer B.9.1.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.9.2 and continue from there.***B.9.1.1. What are the names of any other people involved as researchers or investigators?****B.9.1.2. Where do they work?****B.9.1.3. What will their roles be in the research?****B.9.1.4. What are their completed qualifications?****B.9.2. Will any research organisation or other organisation be involved in the research?**☐ Yes ☒ No*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer B.9.2.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer B.10 and continue from there.***B.9.2.1. What are the names of the organisations?****B.9.2.2. Where are they located?****B.9.2.3. What will their roles be in the research?****B.10. Why are you doing this research and what is the background?***Please provide an academic rationale with sufficient information, including relevant references, to place the project in perspective and to allow the project's significance to be assessed.*

Sexual harassment is widespread in all kinds of workplace but is particularly prevalent in the hospitality industry (Agrusa, Tanner & Coats, 2013; Eller, 2010; Ineson, Yap & Whiting, 2013;). Extensive studies have been conducted globally, investigating the incidence, cause, tolerance and impact of sexual harassment (Keith, Campbell & Legg, 2010; Gilbert; Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Gutek, 1985; Ineson, Yap & Whiting, 2013; Poulston, 2008). To date, however, no studies have been conducted into sexual harassment in the Cook Islands' hospitality industry. As a Cook Islander who has worked extensively in the industry, and experienced

sexual harassment by customers, the researcher is concerned by the limited understanding of this issue and apparent lack of prevention programmes. This limited knowledge of the phenomena in this location provides the rationale for the proposed study.

### **The hospitality workplace**

The research will explore the attitudes and perceptions of customers, employees and employers regarding sexual harassment in the workplace.

#### *Customers*

Research suggests that some customers behave inappropriately when they are away on holiday because they are freed from the constraints of being at home. Hayner (1928) claims that travellers become detached and often take a 'moral holiday' leaving their manners and morals behind. More recent studies suggest that upright citizens often change their sexual behaviour when travelling because of the anonymity associated with being abroad (Vivancos, Abubakar & Hunter, 2010; Hynes, 2005). This inappropriate behaviour is considered a cause of sexual harassment by customers (Lashley, 2000; Woods, 1997; Worsfold & McCann, 2000) and is often compounded when customer inhibitions have been affected by alcohol (Worsfold & McCann, 2000; Guerrier & Adib, 2000).

#### *Employees*

Hospitality workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment because of the low status perceived of them by customers (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Keith, et al., 2010; Poulston, 2008; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Those the industry attracts are usually outgoing, bubbly and personable. Their vivacious personalities are considered another likely cause of sexual harassment (Agrusa, et al., 2013; Ineson, et al., 2013; Whyte, 1948). Therefore, hospitality employees need to possess the knowledge and confidence to reject the sexual advances of customers skilfully and professionally. Poulston (2008) explains that sexual harassment in the workplace is reduced when employees have undergone appropriate training, for example, understanding the difference between friendly and familiar interpersonal interaction, and cultural awareness to ensure employees understand the cultural behavioural norms of their visitors.

#### *Employers*

Managers have a moral responsibility to provide a safe work environment and ensure staff are supported and protected against unacceptable sexual behaviour. Employers need to develop formal policies and procedures for the prevention of sexual harassment and ensure they are effectively communicated to employees. Worsfold and McCann (2000) claim victims are more likely to come forward when organisations adopt policies to encourage the reporting of sexual harassment. Poulston (2008) suggests that employers develop codes of ethics to reduce sexual harassment, while Ineson, Yap and Whiting (2013) recommend that effective sexual harassment prevention programmes be implemented by managers with a clear 'zero tolerance' message. Unfortunately research suggests that some employers are inclined to ignore the issue of sexual harassment because of the expense associated with establishing prevention programmes (Pina, Gannon & Saunders, 2009; Poulston, 2008; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

### **Environmental factors**

The extent to which environmental factors influence sexual harassment behaviour by customers will also be explored in the study, for example, climate, people and culture, destination marketing, and industry characteristics.

#### *Climate/atmosphere*

Memish and Osoba (2005) argue that the aphorism linked with visiting sultry destinations, 'sun, sea and sex', is a reminder of the temptation by tourists for sexual experience with local inhabitants. They suggest that when on holiday, visitors tend to notice a greater number of sexually attractive people than they would in their normal environment at home. Additionally, Littlewood (2001) advocates that the travel of tourists to sultry climates is strongly motivated by desires for sexual experiences as by desires for cultural experiences and exciting new adventures.

### *People and culture*

The beauty and charm of the Cook Islands is matched by its people who are reputed to be warm, friendly and fun loving. Cook Islanders also have the reputation of being great hosts and accordingly, many have personalities well suited to hospitality work. They are also known to be great entertainers and are regarded as the best dancers and drummers in Polynesia (Cook Islands Tourism, n.d). The culture is vibrant. The art, skill and grace of the traditional ura (dance) and the rhythmic pounding of the drums takes visitors on what might be termed a 'spiritual journey'. Cook Islanders proudly share the many aspects of their cultural heritage to visitors through legends, song, dance, carving, weaving and food (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003). However, the extent to which the friendly nature of the Cook Island people and their vibrant culture influences visitor behaviour negatively is currently unknown.

### *Destination Marketing*

Tourism is the main industry in the Cook Islands and accordingly, the country relies heavily on visitor arrivals for its economic survival (Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands, n.d.). The islands are often promoted with vibrant images of its 'people'- beautiful island women, scantily dressed in coconut bras and hula skirts, and males with bronzed, toned bodies. These images exude sexuality, enticing and luring visitors to the island through subtle underlying tones of seduction. In recent years, the Cook Islands have fast become a popular destination for weddings and honeymoons (Cook Islands Tourism, n.d) and promotional images of couples and romance feature highly. The extent to which these explicit marketing strategies influence visitor behaviour is yet to be investigated.

### *Industry characteristics*

Research suggests that the inherent nature and characteristics of the hospitality industry, strong social relationships, long hours, and inextricable close involvement with customers make it a prime 'breeding ground' for sexual harassment (Eller, 2010; Gilbert, et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Restaurants in particular can be highly sexualised environments where staff are encouraged to 'sell the service' and increase revenue through 'flirting'; blurring the line between work and social interaction. (Gilbert et al., 1998; Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Ineson, Yap & Whiting, 2013; Poulston, 2008).

### **Sexual Harassment**

The study will investigate sexual harassment in the Cook islands hospitality industry with specific reference to customers offending front line employees. The incidence, cause, tolerance and impact of sexual harassment will be researched. Gender differences in attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment will also be analysed.

### *Incidence*

Sexual harassment is widespread across all sectors of the workplace but is particularly prevalent in the hospitality industry due to the unique nature and characteristics of the industry (Eller, 2010; Gilbert, et al., 1998; Keith, et al., 2010; Poulston, 2008; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Findings indicate that customers are generally the main perpetrators of sexual harassment and predominately harass women in front office and food and beverage roles because they are usually well presented, (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008; Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

### *Causality*

Hospitality is about satisfying the idiosyncratic, diverse expectations of guests. (Korczyński, 2002). The close contact with customers means that 'lines' can sometimes become blurred when employees are expected to 'sell their service' and respond politely to customers' requests (Agrusa, Tanner & Coats, 2000; Inneson, Yap & Whiting, 2013). Moreover, some studies suggest that the industry's strong emphasis on aesthetic labour is another cause of sexual harassment. Employers typically seek employees with the 'right look' and quite often use the aesthetic skills of their staff to obtain a competitive advantage (Nickson, Warhurst & Dutton, 2005; Sheane, 2011; Spiess & Waring, 2005; Tsaur



& Tang, 2013; Warhurst & Nickson 2007). The importance that some managers place on appearance focuses the attention of employees as 'sexual beings' (Ineson, Yap & Whiting, 2013).

#### *Tolerance*

A study of hospitality employees conducted by Weber et al. (2002) found tolerance of sexual harassment is higher in the hospitality industry than elsewhere, and other studies have suggested similar conclusions (e.g. Agrusa et al., 2013; Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008; Tangri et al., 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). This finding is predominately attributed to the nature and characteristics of the industry. Moreover, individuals attracted to hospitality may have personalities that are more tolerant of anti-social behaviour (Poulston, 2008). Many hospitality employees appear to think that sexual harassment is simply part of the industry and comes with the job. Thus, they are expected to be compliant and deferential to customers and to satisfy customers' expectations (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008; Tangri et al., 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000).

#### *Impact*

Sexual harassment has significant negative impact on those who are harassed. Victims can experience a deterioration in their emotional and physical wellbeing, including, feelings of anxiety and depression (Tangri et al., 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Sexual harassment also has an adverse effect in the workplace such as, low morale, increased absenteeism, high employee turnover and decreased productivity and performance (Gilbert et al., 1998; Poulston, 2008; Tangri et al., 1982; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Furthermore, there are significant financial costs including legal costs, absenteeism and costs associated with hiring and training new staff (Poulston, 2008).

#### *Gender*

A substantial amount of research has examined the extent to which men and women differ in their judgements of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gruber & Bjorn, 1986; Rotundo, Nguyen & Sackett, 2001; Spencer & Barnett, 2011,). Findings indicate that women generally perceive a broader range of social sexual behaviours as harassing while men tend to be flattered by this behaviour (Rotundo, et al., 2001). Studies also suggest that women are more likely to be sexually harassed than men (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Ineson, Yap & Whiting, 2013) and that women in low skill or low status jobs are particularly vulnerable (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986). Spencer and Barnett (2011), claim however, that men are less likely to report sexual harassment because it challenges their masculinity.

#### **B.11. What are the potential benefits of this research to the participants, the researcher and the wider community?**

The research will be of benefit to Cook Islanders working in the hospitality industry. The study provides opportunities for Cook Islands employees and employers in the hospitality industry to identify sexual behaviours by customers that are unacceptable in work place settings. Participants will become partners in the research by providing insights into the nature of sexual harassment behaviour by customers. The outcomes of this research should ultimately be for their benefit.

Cook Islands government departments have also expressed a keen interest in the research. For example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has acknowledged the importance of the study in relation to CEDAW (convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women) and the rights of women generally. The Tourism Cook Islands Office has also conveyed its support of this research, for the benefit of the industry at large.

#### **B.12. What are the theoretical frameworks or methodological approaches being used?**

The paradigmatic position considered most appropriate for this study is the interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). An interpretive approach assumes that knowledge is based on social constructions and that the researcher interacts with its participants in an effort to understand their experiences, and the meanings they attribute to them. A constructivist grounded theory methodology

will be adopted for the study. Constructivist grounded theory encourages the researcher to examine the standpoints of the participants, their historical locations and social circumstances. Constructivist grounded theory sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges the multiple standpoints of both the participants and the researcher, and takes a reflective stance towards situations and our analytical constructions of them (Charmaz, 2009). The main features of a constructivist grounded theory approach are constant data-theory interplay, constant comparisons between transcripts to identify conceptual themes, memoing, theoretical interpretation and coding, and the development of theory that has credibility, originality, and usefulness. (Charmaz, 2009).

#### B.13. How will data be gathered and processed?

A case study approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2009) involving one to one interviews with participants will be adopted. The proposed case study will be situated on Rarotonga, Cook Islands, where the researcher will personally interact with the participants. Exploratory questions of how, why, what, and when will allow the researcher to delve deeply and gain an in-depth understanding into the feelings and emotions of participants.

Participants will be hospitality employees and employers. Discussions with staff and managers respectively, will identify similarities and differences in the perceptions and attitudes of sexual harassment. Interviews will be semi-structured based on a pre-formulated question guide, although a flexible approach will be used, with no strict adherence to these questions. This technique will enable new questions to emerge that are unlikely to eventuate if a structured approach is followed.

The sample will consist of approximately 15 employees and seven employers selected through a mixed approach comprising snowball, convenience and criterion. The criteria used to select the sample will ensure participants are from a range of roles across the industry including restaurants, bars, hotels and tour operators. An added dimension to help better understand the topic is that the research will not be gender specific; thus participants will be both male and female. This will allow the study to identify gender differences in attitudes to sexual harassment and ascertain what variables influence these responses. Interviews will be conducted in a semi private meeting room (i.e.; the local library) and recorded with participant consent using two recording instruments. Audio transcripts will be fully transcribed following each interview.

#### B.14. How will the data be analysed?

*Please provide the statistical (for quantitative research) or methodological (for qualitative or other research) justification for analysing the data in this way.*

Grounded theory techniques including theoretical coding, will be used for data analysis. The coding process will involve constant analysis of the data transcripts to identify similarities and differences, thus providing a means for comparison so that new conceptual categories and themes can emerge. Coding will also enable the systematic reduction of the large amounts of data that will be obtained during the interview phase (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

#### B.15. Has any peer review taken place (e.g. approval of a PG1, D1, or D9)? ☒ Yes ☐ No

*If your answer is 'Yes', please specify and provide evidence.*

Approval was granted by the AUT Faculty Postgraduate board on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2013 (attached)

### C. General Project Details

#### C.1. Likely Research Output

##### C.1.1. Will the research result in one or more of the following

- |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a thesis               | <input type="checkbox"/> a dissertation              | <input type="checkbox"/> a research paper  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a journal article |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a book                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> conference paper | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other academic publications or presentations |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an exhibition                     | <input type="checkbox"/> a film                      | <input type="checkbox"/> a documentary   | <input type="checkbox"/> some other artwork           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some other output, please specify |  |  |   |

## C.2. *Research Location and Duration*

### C.2.1. In which countries and cities/localities will the data collection occur?

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

#### C.2.1.1 Exactly where will any face to face data collection occur

*If face to face data collection will occur in participants' homes, workplaces, or similarly private spaces, then a Researcher Safety Protocol needs to be provided with this application.*

Interviews will be in a quiet and private office (e.g. a meeting room at the Rarotonga library) agreeable to both the participant and interviewer.

### C.2.2. In which countries and cities/localities will the data analysis occur?

Cook Islands and New Zealand

### C.2.3. When is the data collection scheduled to commence?

April-May 2014 for approximately 3 weeks

## C.3. *Research Participants*

### C.3.1. Who are the participants?

The sample will consist of male and female hospitality employees and employers from the island of Rarotonga. Participants will be Cook Islanders, recruited from a range of jobs across the hospitality industry including restaurants, bars, hotels and tour operators.

### C.3.2. How many participants are being recruited for this research?

*If you are unsure, please provide an indicative range.*

Approximately 15 employees and seven employers

### C.3.3. What criteria will be used to choose who to invite as participants?

The sample will be selected through a mixed approach comprising snowball, convenience and criterion (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Participants will be Cook Islanders or permanent residents, currently, or previously employed in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga. Participants can be male or female and of varying ages between 18 – 55 years. They will be recruited from a range of roles across the hospitality industry on Rarotonga, for example, restaurants, bars, hotels and tour operations.

#### C.3.3.1 How will you select participants from those recruited if more people than you need for the study agree to participate?

The researcher will not interview more participants than needed. Once sufficient data has been collected from each group (i.e.; employees and employers) data collection will end.

### C.3.4. Will any people be excluded from participating in the study?

☒ Yes ☐ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer C.3.4.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer C.3.5 and continue from there.*

#### C.3.4.1 What criteria will be used to exclude people from the study?

For this study to be of value to Cook Islanders, participants must be Cook Islanders or permanent residents, currently, or previously employed in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga. The criteria's will apply to both groups of participants i.e. employees and employers. Individuals who are not of Cook Islands ethnicity, do not hold Cook Islands permanent residency or have not worked in the tourism industry for more than two years will not be included in the

study.

#### C.3.4.1 Why is this exclusion necessary for this study?

There is currently a gap in the research and a limited knowledge of the phenomenon of harassment in this location. Furthermore, there is no research focussed on the sexual harassment of Cook Islanders. The criteria used to recruit participants will therefore ensure the rationale and objectives of this study are met.

#### C.3.5. How will participants be recruited?

*Please describe in detail the recruitment processes that will be used. If you will be recruiting by advertisement or email, please attach a copy to this application form*

The researcher has a wide range of contacts in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga. Participants will be recruited through the following steps:

1. Personal contact will be made by the researcher with potential participants explaining the objectives of the research and inviting their participation in the study. This will be done by email and/or by phone due to the researcher being based in Auckland, New Zealand.
2. Consistent with the snowball approach, the researcher will also ask these potential participants to pass on the information to others who can contact the researcher if they too are interested in being interviewed. Alternatively, details of potential participants can be provided to the researcher, so that the researcher can contact them directly.
3. Upon contacting potential participants, the researcher will clarify any queries they may have regarding participation in the study. The researcher will also ensure that participants fully understand the purpose of the research and the reasons for their involvement. Furthermore, that they can withdraw at any time prior to completion of data collection. Communications will be by email correspondence and/or phone.
4. A copy of the 'Participant Consent Form' will be sent to potential participants in advance so that they are aware of the consent requirements for the study.
5. If an individual agrees to participate in the study, a date, time and venue for the interview will be confirmed. The interviews will be held on Rarotonga, Cook Islands.
6. A reminder email will be sent by the researcher to all participants two weeks prior to data collection. Data collection (interviews) will occur between 27 June – 21 July 2014.
7. Prior to the commencement of each interview, the researcher will collect the 'Participant Consent Form'.

#### C.4. Research instruments

##### C.4.1. Which of the following does the research use:

- ☐ a written or electronic questionnaire or survey      ☐ focus groups      ☒ interviews  
☐ observation      ☐ participant observation      ☐ ethnography      ☐ photographs  
☐ videos      ☐ other visual recordings      ☐ a creative, artistic, or design process  
☐ performance tests  
☐ some other research instrument (please specify)

*Please attach to this application form all the relevant research protocols. These may include: Indicative questions (for interviews or focus groups); a copy of the finalised questionnaire or survey in the format that it will be presented to participants (for a written or electronic questionnaire or survey); a protocol indicating how the data will be recorded (e.g. audiotape, videotape, note-taking) for focus groups or interviews (Note: when focus groups are being recorded, you will need to make sure there is provision for explicit consent on the Consent Form and attach to this Application Form examples of indicative questions or the full focus group schedule. Please note that there are specific confidentiality issues associated with focus groups that need to be addressed); a copy of the observation protocol that will be used (for observations); full information about the use of visual recordings of any sort, including appropriate protocols and consent processes; protocols for any creative, artistic, or design process; a copy of the protocols for the instruments and the instruments that will be used to record results if you will use some other research instrument.*

**C.3.6. Who will be transcribing or recording the data?**

*If someone other than the applicant or primary researcher will be transcribing the interview or focus group records or taking the notes, you will need to provide a confidentiality agreement with this Application Form.*

The interviewer will transcribe the interview recordings.

**D. Partnership, Participation and Protection****D.1. How does the design and practice of this research implement the principle of Partnership in the interaction between the researcher and other participants?**

*How will your research design and practice encourage a mutual respect and benefit and participant autonomy and ownership? How will you ensure that participants and researchers will act honourably and with good faith towards each other? Are the outcomes designed to specifically benefit the participants and/or their social or cultural group? How will the information and knowledge provided by the participants be acknowledged?*

This study provides opportunities for employees and employers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry to identify sexual behaviours by customers that are unacceptable in work place settings. Participants will become partners in the research by providing insights into the nature of sexual harassment behaviour by customers. The interviewer will act honourably by treating participants with respect and keeping in mind that the outcomes of this research should ultimately be for *their* benefit. By fostering a mutually beneficial partnership, it is hoped that solutions will be identified for preventing inappropriate behaviour by customers.

**D.2 How does the design and practice will identify of this research implement the principle of Participation in the interaction between the researcher and other participants?**

*What is the actual role of participants in your research project? Will participants be asked to inform or influence the nature of the research, its aims, or its methodology? Will participants be involved in conducting the research or is their principal involvement one of sharing information or data? Do participants have a formal role as stakeholders e.g. as the funders and/or beneficiaries of the research? What role will participants have in the research outputs (e.g. will they be asked to approve transcripts or drafts)?*

Participants will be fully informed from the outset as to the purpose of the research and the importance of their contributions to the study. Their role will be to answer questions about sexual harassment by sharing information about their experiences. They will have the opportunity to review the transcript notes of their interviews, so that they can edit their responses to reflect their intended meanings. By doing so, they can influence the final outcome of the study. Participants will also be offered the opportunity to request the findings of the research when they sign the consent form. In this case, a copy of the findings will be emailed to them upon completion. Copies of the findings will also be made available to industry stakeholders and government departments who have been involved in the research.

**D.3. How does the design and practice of this research implement the principle of Protection in the interaction between the researcher and other participants?**

*How will you actively protect participants from deceit, harm and coercion through the design and practice of your research? How will the privacy of participants and researchers be protected? How will any power imbalances inherent in the relationships between the participants and researchers be managed? How will any cultural or other diversity be respected?*

The findings of this research will be presented in a manner that will not identify the business where participants work, or the participants themselves. Their names or any information that may identify participants will be confidential to the researcher, and not shared with anyone else. Neither the participant or their employer or business will be identified in the research. Participants will be advised that they may withdraw from the study at any time up until the completion of data collection. They will be protected from harm by my guarantee of confidentiality, my understanding of the sensitivity of this topic, and the care I have taken to find appropriate counselling services should they be needed.

## **E. Social and Cultural Sensitivity (including the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi)**

### **E.1. What familiarity does the researcher have with the social and cultural context of the participants?**

A significant advantage to this study is that the interviewer is a native Cook Islander raised in Rarotonga. As such, she possesses a strong understanding of the culture and environment. Additionally, she has first-hand knowledge of the hospitality industry having worked extensively in this field for many years on Rarotonga. For twenty years, her family owned and operated 'The Cook Islands Cultural Village', a popular tourism attraction, while more recently, she managed her own restaurant on Rarotonga. While residing on Rarotonga the researcher was an active member of various organisations including the Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce, Cook Islands Business and Professional Women's Association, Cook Islands Restaurant Association, The Rotary Club and Miss Cook Islands Pageant Association. She immigrated to New Zealand in 2005 and is now working in academia in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at AUT University.

The researcher is familiar with the cultural mores of Cook Islanders, and sensitive to areas and topics that may cause offence. Any social and cultural sensitivity is therefore unlikely to arise.

### **E.2. What consultation has occurred?**

*Research procedures should be appropriate to the participants. Researchers have a responsibility to inform themselves of, and take the steps necessary to respect, the values, practices and beliefs of the cultures and social groups of all participants. Where a research project targets persons from another cultural, social or language group, consideration must be given to the preferences of the potential participants as far as consultation, language and documentation are concerned. Researchers should also be cognisant of potential implications or interest that the process and outcomes of the research might have for other cultures or groups. The purpose of any consultation is to ensure that research practices are appropriate and acceptable. Consultation should begin as early as possible in the project and should continue throughout its duration (the Ethics Knowledge Base (<http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>). All researchers are encouraged to make themselves familiar with *Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Maori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members* (This is able to be accessed through the Ethics Knowledge Base). Researchers may also find *Te Kahui Māngai* a directory of Iwi and Maori organisations to be helpful. This may be accessed via the Te Puna Kōkiri website (<http://www.tkm.govt.nz/>).*

#### **E.2.1. With whom has the consultation occurred?**

*Please provide written evidence that the consultation has occurred.*

To date, preliminary discussions have occurred with:

- AUT staff regarding the application process and research topic, including a member of the AUTC committee, the Hospitality Postgraduate Programme Leader and the Faculty Postgraduate Office.
- Primary and secondary supervisors; Dr Heike Schänzel (primary) and Dr Jill Poulston (secondary). Dr Jill Poulston is an expert in the field of sexual harassment research.
- CEO, Office of the Prime Minister, Cook Islands, regarding the proposed research topic, relevant legislation and application process to undertake research in the Cook Islands.
- CEO, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cook Islands, to discuss the current legal and institutional frameworks operating in the Cook Islands that provide protection against sexual harassment behaviour including the Employment Relations Act, the role of the Ombudsman and the human rights provisions in the Constitution.
- The Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre (Punanga Tauturu Incorporated) and Cook Islands Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre (Te Kaianga O Pa Taunga) to discuss the proposed research topic. Letters of support from both of these organisations are attached to this application.
- Tourism Cook Islands Office regarding the proposed research topic.
- Cook Islands Parliament regarding legislation relevant to the research topic, for example, Employment Relations Act.

**E.2.2 How has this consultation affected the design and practice of this research?** ☒ Yes ☐ No  
The consultations will ensure that the research is undertaken in an ethical manner and with the support of the various stakeholders in the chosen location.

**E.3. Does this research target Maori participants?** ☒ Yes ☐ No  
*All researchers are encouraged to make themselves familiar with [Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Maori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members](#). If your answer is 'No', please go to section E.4 and continue from there. If you answered 'Yes', please answer the next question.*

**E.3.1. Which iwi or hapu are involved?**  
Cook Island Maori

**E.4. Does this research target participants of particular cultures or social groups?** ☒ Yes ☐ No  
*AUTEC defines the phrase 'specific cultures or social groups' broadly. In section 2.5 of Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures it uses the examples of Chinese mothers and paraplegics. This is to identify their distinctiveness, the first as a cultural group, the second as a social group. Other examples of cultural groups may be Korean students, Samoan husbands, Cook Islanders etc., while other examples of social groups may be nurse aides, accountants, rugby players, rough sleepers (homeless people who sleep in public places) etc. Please refer to Section 2.5 of AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures (accessible in the Ethics Knowledge Base online via <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>) and to the relevant Frequently Asked Questions section in the Ethics Knowledge Base. If your answer is 'No', please go to section E.5 and continue from there. If you answered 'Yes', please answer the next question.*

**E.4.1. Which cultures or social groups are involved?**  
Cook Island Maori.

**E.5. Does this research focus on an area of research that involves Treaty obligations?** ☐ Yes ☒ No  
*All researchers are encouraged to make themselves familiar with [Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Maori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members](#). If your answer is 'No', please go to section E.6 and continue from there. If you answered 'Yes', please answer the next question.*

**E.5.1. Which treaty obligations are involved?**

**E.6. Will the findings of this study be of particular interest to specific cultures or social groups?** ☒ Yes ☐ No  
*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer E.5.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer F.1 and continue from there.*

**E.6.1. To which iwi, hapu, culture or social groups will the findings be of interest?**  
The research will be of significance to all Cook Islanders, particularly those working in the hospitality industry. Government departments have also expressed an interest in the research. For example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs have acknowledged the importance of the study in relation to CEDAW (convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women) and the rights of women generally. The Tourism Cook Islands Office has also conveyed their support of this research for the benefit of the industry at large.

**E.6.2. How will the findings be made available to these groups?**  
Participants will be offered the opportunity to request the findings of the research when they sign the consent form. In this case, a copy of the final report will be emailed to them upon completion. Copies of the report will also be made available to industry stakeholders and government bodies who have been involved in the research.

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## **F. Respect for the Vulnerability of Some Participants**

**F.1. Will your research involve any of the following groups of participants?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

If your research involves any of these groups of participants, please clearly indicate which ones and then answer F.2 and the following sections, otherwise please answer G.1 and continue from there.

- ☐ unable to give informed consent?      ☐ your (or your supervisor's) own students?  
☐ preschool children?      ☐ children aged between five and sixteen years?  
☐ legal minors aged between sixteen and twenty years ☐ aged over seventy years?  
☐ in a dependent situation, such as people with a disability, or residents of a hospital, nursing home or prison or patients highly dependent on medical care?  
☐ vulnerable for some other reason (e.g. the elderly, prisoners, persons who have suffered abuse, persons who are not competent in English, new immigrants) – please specify

**F.2. How is respect for the vulnerability of these participants reflected in the design and practice of your research?**

**F.3. What consultation has occurred to ensure that this will be effective?**

Please provide evidence of the consultation that has occurred.

## **G. Informed and Voluntary Consent**

**G.1. How will information about the project be given to potential participants?**

A copy of all information that will be given to prospective participants is to be attached to this Application Form. If written information is to be provided to participants, you are advised to use the Information Sheet exemplar. The language in which the information is provided is to be appropriate to the potential participants and translations need to be provided when necessary.

Those interested in participating will be given a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (attached).

**G.2. How will consent of participants be obtained and evidenced?**

AUTEC requires consent to be obtained and usually evidenced in writing. A copy of the Consent Form which will be used is to be attached to this application. If this will not be the case, please provide a justification for the alternative approach and details of the alternative consent process. Please note that consent must be obtained from any participant aged 16 years or older. Participants under 16 years of age are unable to give consent, which needs to be given by their parent or legal guardian. AUTEC requires that participants under the age of 16 assent to their participation. When the nature of the research requires it, AUTEC may also require that consent be sought from parents or legal guardians for participants aged between 16 and twenty years. For further information please refer to AUTEC's [Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures](#).

Participants will sign a consent form before the interview commences (attached).

**G.3. Will any of the participants have difficulty giving informed consent on their own behalf?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

Please consider physical or mental condition, age, language, legal status, or other barriers.

If the answer is 'Yes' please answer G.3.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer G.4 and continue from there.

**G.3.1. If participants are not competent to give fully informed consent, who will consent on their behalf?**

**G.3.2. Will these participants be asked to provide assent to participation?**

**G.4. Is there a need for translation or interpreting?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

If your answer is 'Yes', please provide copies of any translations with this application and any Confidentiality Agreement required for translators or interpreters.

## **H. Respect for Rights of Privacy and Confidentiality**

**H.1. How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be protected?**

Please note that anonymity and confidentiality are different. For AUTEC's purposes, 'Anonymity' means that the researcher is unable to identify who the participant is in any given case. If the participants will be anonymous, please state how, otherwise, if the researcher will know who the participants are, please describe how participant privacy issues and confidentiality of information will be managed.

Participants will be guaranteed confidentiality. Only the interviewer will know who has participated in the study. Interviewees will be asked for their initials at the start of their



interview, not their names.

**H.2. How will individuals or groups be identified in the final report?**

*If participants or groups will be identified, please state how this will happen, why, and how the participants will give consent.*

Individuals will not be identified other than categorising what sector of the industry they represent, for example, 50% restaurant, 20% hotel, 30% tour operator.

**H.3. What information on the participants will be obtained from third parties?**

*This includes use of third parties, such as employers or professional organisations, in recruitment.*

Nil

**H.4. How will potential participants' contact details be obtained for the purposes of recruitment?**

The researcher has a large network of contacts in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga, thus snowball and convenience recruitment approaches will be used for the study.

**H.5. What identifiable information on the participants will be given to third parties?**

None

**H.6. Who will have access to the data during the data collection and analysis stages?**

The interviewer and the supervisors

**H.7. Who will have access to the data after the findings have been produced?**

The interviewer and the supervisors

**H.8. What plans are there for the future use of the data beyond those already described?**

*The applicant's attention is drawn to the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993 (see Appendix I of AUTECH's [Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures](#)). If there are future plans for the use of the data, then this needs to be explained in the Information Sheets for participants.*

None

**H.8.1.1 If data will be stored in a database, who will have access to that data and how will it be used and for what?**

N/A

**H.8.1.2 Will any contact details be stored for future use and if so, who will have access to that data and how will it be used and for what?**

N/A

**H.9. Where will the data be stored once the analysis is complete?**

*Please provide the exact storage location. AUTECH normally requires that the data be stored securely on AUT premises in a location separate from the consent forms. Electronic data should be downloaded to an external storage device (e.g. an external hard drive, a memory stick etc.) and securely stored. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.*

In a locked cabinet in the research store, AUT, WH Building

**H.9.1. For how long will the data be stored after completion of analysis?**

*AUTECH normally requires that the data be stored securely for six years, or ten years for health related research. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.*

Six years

**H.9.2. How will the data be destroyed?**

*If the data will not be destroyed, please explain why, identify how it will be safely maintained, and provide appropriate informed consent protocols.*

By shredding and deleting of interview recordings

**H.10. Who will have access to the Consent Forms?**

The primary researcher and supervisors

**H.11. Where will the completed Consent Forms be stored?**

*Please provide the exact storage location. AUTECH normally requires that the Consent Forms be stored securely on AUT premises in a location separate from the data. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.*

In a separate locked cabinet in the research store, AUT, WH Building

**H.12. For how long will the completed Consent Forms be stored?**

AUTEC normally requires that the Consent Forms be stored securely for six years, or ten years in the case of health related research. If you are proposing an alternative arrangement, please explain why.

Six years

**H.12.1. How will the Consent Forms be destroyed?**

If the Consent Forms will not be destroyed, please explain why.

By shredding

**H.13. Does your project involve the use of previously collected information or biological samples for which there was no explicit consent for this research?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

If the answer is 'Yes' please answer H.12.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer H.13 and continue from there.

**H.13.1. What previously collected data will be involved?**

None

**H.13.2. Who collected the data originally?**

H.13.2.1 Why was the data was originally collected?

H.13.2.2 For what purposes was consent originally given when the data was collected?

**H.13.3. How will the data be accessed?****H.14. Does your project involve any research about organisational practices where information of a personal or sensitive nature may be collected and / or where participants may be identified?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

If the answer is 'Yes' please answer G.13.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer H.1 and continue from there.

**H.14.1. How will organisational permission be obtained and recorded?****H.14.2. Will the organisation know who the participants are?****H.14.3. How will the identity of the participants be kept confidential?**

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**I. Minimisation of risk****I.1. Risks to Participants**

Please consider the possibility of moral, physical, psychological or emotional risks to participants, including issues of confidentiality and privacy, from the perspective of the participants, and not only from the perspective of someone familiar with the subject matter and research practices involved. Please clearly state what is likely to be an issue, how probable it is, and how this will be minimised or mitigated (e.g. participants do not need to answer a question that they find embarrassing or they may terminate an interview or there may be a qualified counsellor present in the interview or the findings will be reported in a way that ensures that participants cannot be individually identified, etc.) Possible risks and their mitigation should be fully described in the Information Sheets for participants.

**I.1.1. How much time will participants be required to give to the project?**

Approximately 45-60 minutes per participant.

**I.1.2. What level of discomfort or embarrassment may participants be likely to experience?**

Sexual harassment is a difficult topic to research because of its sensitive nature. Questions can potentially be intrusive and probe emotional and distressing issues. Accordingly, the research will be approached with careful consideration to prevent embarrassment and discomfort. The researcher will be sensitive and ensure the relationship built with participants' is one based on trust.

**I.1.3. In what ways might participants be at risk in this research?**

Participants are at risk of emotional distress because of the topic. Discussing personal experiences involving sexual harassment may stir up suppressed feelings and cause emotional distress. The researcher will ensure that participants have the services of a counsellor should they require support. The Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre (Punanga Tauturu Incorporated) and Cook Islands Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre (Te Kaianga O Pa Taunga) have both offered support to participants of this research project (letters attached).

**I.1.4. In what ways are the participants likely to experience risk or discomfort as a result of cultural, employment, financial or similar pressures?**

Sexual harassment is a sensitive issue and not one that is openly discussed in the Cook Islands. Cook Islanders are known for being warm and friendly and may consider that being hospitable and accepting of visitors' behaviour, even if harassing, is simply part of the culture. The extent to which these cultural pressures prevent participants from reporting sexual harassment is unknown, but may become apparent during the study. The research will not present any employment or financial pressures for participants.

**I.1.5. Will your project involve processes that are potentially disadvantageous to a person or group, such as the collection of information, images etc. which may expose that person/group to discrimination, criticism, or loss of privacy?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If your answer is 'Yes', please detail how these risks will be managed and how participants will be informed about them.*

**I.1.6. Will your project involve collection of information of illegal behaviour(s) gained during the research which could place the participants at current or future risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If your answer is 'Yes', please detail how these risks will be managed and how participants will be informed about them.*

**I.1.7. If the participants are likely to experience any significant discomfort, embarrassment, incapacity, or psychological disturbance, please state what consideration you have given to the provision of counselling or post-interview support, at no cost to the participants, should it be required.**

*Research participants in Auckland may be able to utilise counselling support from the AUT Counselling Team, otherwise you may have to consider local providers for participants who are located nationwide, or in some particular geographical area. You can discuss the potential for participant psychological impact or harm with the Head of AUT Counselling, if you require.*

Counselling services will be available, free of charge, to participants through the following organisations:

- Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre (Punanga Tauturu Incorporated).
  - Cook Islands Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre (Te Kaianga O Pa Taunga)
- Letters of support have been provided by both organisations (attached)

**I.1.8 Will any use of human remains, tissue or body fluids which does not require submission to a Regional Ethics Committee occur in the research?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*e.g. finger pricks, urine samples, etc. (please refer to section 13 of AUTEK's [Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures](#)). If your answer is yes, please provide full details of all arrangements, including details of agreements for treatment, how participants will be able to request return of their samples in accordance with right 7 (9) of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, etc.*

**I.1.9. Will this research involve potentially hazardous substances?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

*e.g. radioactive material, biological substances (please refer to section 15 of AUTEK's [Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures](#) and the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996). If the answer is 'Yes', please provide full details, including hazardous substance management plan.*

**I.2. Risks to Researchers**

*If this project will involve interviewing participants in private homes, undertaking research overseas, or going into similarly vulnerable situations, then a Researcher Safety protocol should be designed and appended to this application. This should identify simple and effective processes for keeping someone informed of the researcher's whereabouts and provide for appropriate levels of assistance.*

**I.2.1. Are the researchers likely to be at risk?**
☒ Yes ☐ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer I.2.1.1 and then continue, otherwise please answer I.3 and continue from there.*

**I.2.1.1 In what ways might the researchers be at risk and how will this be managed?**

There is a risk that the researcher might find the interviews upsetting. Her secondary supervisor, Dr Poulston, is an expert in the research of sexual harassment and therefore the researcher will rely on her for advice and support. During the data collection phase, the researcher will maintain regular contact with Dr Poulston and Dr Schänzel (primary supervisor) through telephone calls and emails. While conducting data collection in Rarotonga, the researcher will stay with her twin sister who can also support her. If necessary, the researcher will access AUT counselling services at Rarotonga, or on her return to New Zealand.

**I.3. Risks to AUT****I.3.1. Is AUT or its reputation likely to be at risk because of this research?**
☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer I.3.1.1 and then continue, otherwise please answer I.3.2 and continue from there.*

**I.3.1.1 In what ways might AUT be at risk in this research?**

*Please identify how and detail the processes that will be put in place to minimise any harm.*

**I.3.2. Are AUT staff and/or students likely to encounter physical hazards during this project?**
☐ Yes ☒ No

*If yes, please provide a hazard management protocol identifying how harm from these hazards will be eliminated or minimised.*

**J. Truthfulness and limitation of deception****J.1. How will feedback on or a summary of the research findings be disseminated to participants (individuals or groups)?**

*Please ensure that this information is included in the Information Sheet.*

Participants will be offered the opportunity to request the findings of the research when they sign the consent form. In this case, a copy of the findings will be emailed to them upon completion.

**J.2. Does your research include any deception of the participants, such as non-disclosure of aims or use of control groups, concealment, or covert observations?**
☐ Yes ☒ No

No

*Deception of participants in research may involve deception, concealment or covert observation. Deception of participants conflicts with the principle of informed consent, but in some areas of research it may sometimes be justified to withhold information about the purposes and procedures of the research. Researchers must make clear the precise nature and extent of any deception and why it is thought necessary. Emphasis on the need for consent does not mean that covert research can never be approved. Any departure from the standard of properly informed consent must be acceptable when measured against possible benefit to the participants and the importance of the knowledge to be gained as a result of the project or teaching session. This must be addressed in all applications. Please refer to Section 2.4 of AUTE's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures when considering this question.*

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer J.1.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer J.2 and continue from there.*

**J.2.1. Is deception involved?****J.2.2. Why is this deception necessary?**

**J.2.3. How will disclosure and informed consent be managed?**

**J.3. Will this research involve use of a control group?** ☐ Yes ☒ No  
*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer J.3.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.1 and continue from there.*

**J.3.1. How will the Control Group be managed?****J.3.2. What percentage of participants will be involved in the control group?****J.3.3. What information about the use of a control group will be given to the participants and when?****K. Avoidance of Conflict of Interest**

*Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that any conflict between their responsibilities as a researcher and other duties or responsibilities they have towards participants or others is adequately managed. For example, academic staff members who propose to involve their students as participants in research need to ensure that no conflict arises between their roles as teacher and researcher, particularly in view of the dependent relationship between student and teacher, and of the need to preserve integrity in assessment processes. Likewise researchers have a responsibility to ensure that any conflict of interest between participants is adequately managed for example, managers participating in the same research as their staff.*

**K.1. What conflicts of interest are likely to arise as a consequence of the researcher's professional, social, financial, or cultural relationships?**

Given the researcher is a Cook Islander and the study will be conducted in the Cook Islands, there is the potential for a social conflict of interest. Rarotonga is a small community and it is possible that the participant and researcher may know of each other, which may create embarrassment or discomfort for the participant.

**K.2. What possibly coercive influences or power imbalances in the professional, social, financial, or cultural relationships between the researcher and the participants or between participants (e.g. dependent relationships such as teacher/student; parent/child; employer/employee; pastor/congregation etc.) are there?**

None

**K.3. How will these conflicts of interest, coercive influences or power imbalances be managed through the research's design and practice to mitigate any adverse effects that may arise from them?**

It is critical that the researcher guarantees participants' confidentiality. Care will also be taken by the researcher to avoid interviewing individuals who are personally known to the researcher.

**K.4. Does your project involve payments or other financial inducements (including koha, reasonable reimbursement of travel expenses or time, or entry into a modest prize draw) to participants?** ☒ Yes ☐ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer K.4.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.5 and continue from there.*

**K.4.1. What form will the payment, inducement, or koha take?**

- reimbursement of travel expenses to participants (petrol vouchers)
- refreshments during meetings with participants

**K.4.2. Of what value will any payment, gift or koha be?**

<i>Participant Costs:</i>	<i>Estimated cost:</i>
Meeting costs: room hire and refreshments	\$300.00
Petrol vouchers for participants: 20 @ \$15pp	\$300.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$600.00</b>

**K.4.3. Will potential participants be informed about any payment, gift or koha as part of the recruitment process, and if so, why and how?**

Participants will be informed at the recruitment stage so they are aware that they will incur no financial costs should they participate in the research.

- K.5. Have any applications for financial support for this project been (or will be) made to a source external to AUT? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer K.5.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.6 and continue from there.*

- K.5.1. What financial support for this project is being provided (or will be provided) by a source external to AUT?

- K.5.2. Who is the external funder?

- K.5.3. What is the amount of financial support involved?

- K.5.4. How is/are the funder/s involved in the design and management of the research?

- K.6. Have any applications been (or will be) submitted to an AUT Faculty Research Grants Committee or other AUT funding entity? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer K.6.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer K.7 and continue from there.*

An application will be submitted to the AUT University School of Hospitality and Tourism Research Development Fund.

- K.6.1. What financial support for this project is being provided (or will be provided) by an AUT Faculty Research Grants Committee or other AUT funding entity?

Funding source available	Max funds available
School of Hospitality & Tourism staff research development fund	\$1000.00
Faculty Postgraduate student thesis grant (for masters students)	\$1,000.00

- K.6.2. What is the amount of financial support involved?

Applications will be submitted for the maximum funds available

- K.6.3. How is/are the funder/s involved in the design and management of the research?

The funds will be used to help cover costs associated with conducting the research overseas.

- K.7. Is funding already available, or is it awaiting decision?

Applications yet to be submitted

- K.7.1. What is the financial interest in the outcome of the project of the researchers, investigators or research organisations mentioned in Part B of this application.

## L. Respect for Property

*Researchers must ensure that processes do not violate or infringe legal or culturally determined property rights. These may include factors such as land and goods, works of art and craft, spiritual treasures and information.*

- L.1. Will this research impact upon property owned by someone other than the researcher? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If the answer is 'Yes' please answer L.1.1 and the following sections, otherwise please answer L.2 and continue from there.*

- L.1.1. How will this be managed?

**L.2. How do contexts to which copyright or Intellectual Property applies (e.g. virtual worlds etc.) affect this research and how will this be managed?**

*Particular attention should be paid to the legal and ethical dimensions of intellectual property. Care must be taken to acknowledge and reference the ideas of all contributors and others and to obtain any necessary permissions to use the intellectual property of others. Teachers and researchers are referred to AUT's Intellectual Property Policy for further guidance.*

N/A

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## M. References

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Yin, R (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.**N. Checklist**

Please ensure all applicable sections of this form have been completed and all appropriate documentation is attached as incomplete applications will not be considered by AUTC.

Have you discussed this application with your AUTC Faculty Representative, the Executive Secretary, or the Ethics Coordinator? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Is this application related to an earlier ethics application? If yes, please provide the application number of the earlier application. ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are you seeking ethics approval from another ethics committee for this research? If yes, please identify the other committee. ☐ Yes ☒ No

Section A	Project information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section B	Research Adequacy information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section C	Project details provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section D	Three Principles information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section E	Social and Cultural Sensitivity information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section F	Consent information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section G	Privacy information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section H	Risk information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section I	Truthfulness information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section J	Conflict of Interest information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section K	Vulnerability information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section L	Respect for Property information provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section M	References provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section N	Checklist completed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section O.1 and 2	Applicant and student declarations signed and dated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Section O.3	Authorising signature provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Spelling and Grammar Check (please note that a high standard of spelling and grammar is required in documents that are issued with AUTC approval)		
<b>Attached Documents (where applicable)</b>		
Participant Information Sheet(s)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consent Form(s)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire(s)		<input type="checkbox"/>
Indicative Questions for Interviews or Focus Groups		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Observation Protocols		<input type="checkbox"/>
Recording Protocols for Tests		<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertisement(s)		<input type="checkbox"/>
Researcher Safety Protocol		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous Substance Management Plan		<input type="checkbox"/>
Any Confidentiality Agreement(s)		<input type="checkbox"/>

Any translations that are needed

Other Documentation

✓

**O. Declarations****O.12. Declaration by Applicant**

Please tick the boxes below.

- ☐ The information in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I take full responsibility for it.
- ☐ In conducting this study, I agree to abide by established ethical standards, contained in AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures and internationally recognised codes of ethics.
- ☐ I will continue to comply with AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures, including its requirements for the submission of annual progress reports, amendments to the research protocols before they are used, and completion reports.
- ☐ I understand that brief details of this application may be made publicly available and may also be provided to the University Postgraduate Centre, the University Research Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature\_\_\_\_\_  
Date**O.13. Declaration by Student Researcher**

Please tick the boxes below.

- ☐ The information in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- ☐ In conducting this study, I agree to abide by established ethical standards, contained in AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures and internationally recognised codes of ethics.
- ☐ I will continue to comply with AUTEC's Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures, including its requirements for the submission of annual progress reports, amendments to the research protocols before they are used, and completion reports.
- ☐ I understand that brief details of this application may be made publicly available and may also be provided to the University Postgraduate Centre, the University Research Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature\_\_\_\_\_  
Date**O.14. Authorisation by Head of Faculty/School/Programme/Centre**

Please tick the boxes below.

- ☐ The information in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- ☐ In authorising this study, I declare that the applicant is adequately qualified to undertake or supervise this research and that to the best of my knowledge and belief adequate resources are available for this research.
- ☐ I understand that brief details of this application may be made publicly available and may also be provided to the University Postgraduate Centre, the University Research Office, or the University's insurers for purposes relating to AUT's interests.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B: AUTECH letter of approval



AUTECH  
SECRETARIAT

6 March 2014

Heike Schanzel  
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Heike

Re Ethics Application: **14/19 An inquiry into the experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 5 March 2017.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECH:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 5 March 2017;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 5 March 2017 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor  
Executive Secretary  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Lisa Sadaraka [lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz)

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

WA506F Level 5 WA Building City Campus

Private Bag 92006 Auckland 1142 Ph: +64-9-921-9999 ext 8316 email [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)

## Appendix C: CINRC letter of approval



### COOK ISLAND RESEARCH COMMITTEE

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

PRIVATE BAG, RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS

Phone +682 211-50 Facsimile +682 20-856

Email: [elizabeth.wright@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:elizabeth.wright@cookislands.gov.ck) Web: [www.pmooffice.gov.ck](http://www.pmooffice.gov.ck)

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File ref: 510.3  
Letter no: 14-003

31 January 2014

Lisa Sadaraka  
AUT University  
55 Wellesley St East  
Auckland, 1010  
NEW ZEALAND

Kia Orana Lisa,

#### RE: APPROVED RESEARCH APPLICATION

I am pleased to advise that the National Research Committee has granted approval for your research titled **"An Inquiry in the Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry"** on Rarotonga from April 2014 to May 2014

Enclosed is your research permit issue # 03/14

The following conditions listed below have been imposed by the National Research Committee

-Provide a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at your earliest

-Submit 3 hard copies + 1 e-copy of your final findings to the Office of the Prime Minister by June 2015

Kia Manuia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Elizabeth Wright-Koteka'.

Elizabeth Wright-Koteka  
CHAIRPERSON

PERMIT TO UNDERTAKE

## Research in the Cook Islands

This is to certify that: **Lisa Sadaraka**

Has permission from the Foundation for National Research to do a research in the Cook Islands from: **April 2014 to May 2014**

On the island of: **Rarotonga**

The topic of research is: **An Inquiry in the Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry**

The Cook Islands Associate Researchers are: **NA**

The following special conditions apply to this research:

- Provide a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at your earliest
- Submit 3 hard copies + 1 e-copy of your final findings to the Office of the Prime Minister by June 2015

Permit Issued on: **31 January 2014**

Issued by: **Elizabeth Koteka**

**CHAIRPERSON**

Receipt Number: **Waived**

Reference Number: **03/14**

Signed: 

For enquiries concerning this permit, please quote the Name of the Researcher and the Reference Number to the Chairperson, Foundation for National Research, and Office of the Prime Minister, Rarotonga, and COOK ISLANDS. Phone (682) 29 300, Fax (682) 20 856, or Email: [tina.samson@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:tina.samson@cookislands.gov.ck) Website: [www.pmooffice.gov.ck](http://www.pmooffice.gov.ck)

## Appendix D: Letters confirming counselling support from Punanga Tauturu Inc. and Te Kainga O Pa Taunga



*Rarotonga, Cook Islands, Ph/Fax: (682) 21133, email: [lrto@pti.org.ck](mailto:lrto@pti.org.ck)*

21<sup>st</sup> January 2014.

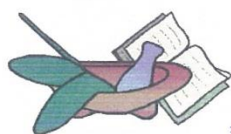
### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Punanga Tauturu Incorporated, (Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre) is located on Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Our organisation provides counselling, support and advocacy for survivors of violence against women. PTI's mission is to eliminate domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and accordingly we are a place where women can seek help and support through the legal process and to also feel safe within their community. In addition we advocate for a positive legal framework that recognises the basic rights of women and children in accessing justice, provision of information and training programmes on legal literacy and human rights and also public awareness programmes on the elimination of violence against women in our communities. PTI is funded by NZAID and our services are provided at no cost to the clients.

I have met with Lisa Sadaraka to discuss her proposed research project on sexual harassment by customers in the hospitality industry in the Cook Islands. I confirm that if participants involved in Ms Sadaraka's research require counselling due to the sensitive nature of her research topic, our organisation would be available to provide the appropriate support.

Kia Manuia.

  
Kairangi Samuela  
Manager



P.O Box 3260, Avarua  
Rarotonga, COOK ISLANDS

## Te Kainga O Pa Taunga Mental Health & Wellbeing Centre

Telephone (682) 20162 Mobile: 50 633  
Email: [tekainga@oyster.net.ck](mailto:tekainga@oyster.net.ck)

16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Te Kainga O Pa Taunga, (Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre) is located on Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Our organisation provides a range of services to the local community including counselling services, stress management, psychiatric assessments and psychological rehabilitation. These services are available at no cost.

I have met with Lisa Sadaraka to discuss her proposed research project on sexual harassment by customers in the hospitality industry in the Cook Islands. I confirm that if participants involved in Lisa's research require counselling due to the sensitive nature of her research topic, our organisation would be available to provide the appropriate support.

Kia Manuia.

Mereana Taikoko  
Reg Psychiatric Nurse



## Appendix E: Employee interview guide for participant interviews

### EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Project Title:**

*An inquiry into employee experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry*

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself...What is your name and occupation? How old are you?
2. Where do you work? How long have you been working in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga? Have you worked in the hospitality industry outside of Rarotonga?
3. Tell me a little bit about your job? Does it involve contact with customers? Is this mainly with tourists or locals?
4. In your own words tell me what your understanding is of 'sexual harassment'? Can you give me some examples of what you might consider to be sexual harassment in the workplace?
5. Do you feel that you've ever been sexually harassed by a customer or customers? If so, can you please tell me what happened?
6. Can you recall how you felt at the time? How do you feel about it now?
7. Did you do anything at the time or tell anyone? If not, do you know why not?
8. How did you cope with this experience ( ignore, discuss, brush off, confront, report)
9. Can you think of anything that may have contributed to this behaviour by the customer(s)?
10. Do you think there are 'cultural' differences in what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour? Can you explain why?
11. Have you ever witnessed sexual harassment of a colleague by a customer(s) here on Rarotonga. If so, can you tell me what happened?
12. Does your workplace have policies and procedures for the prevention of sexual harassment? If so, are you familiar with them?
13. In your view, do you think that sexual harassment by customers in hospitality industry on Rarotonga is a problem? Can you explain why you think this?
14. If yes to above (13), what do you think can be done to address this issue?
15. Finally, is there anything else you would like to say relating to this issue?

## Appendix F: Employer interview guide for participant interviews

### EMPLOYER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Project Title:** *An inquiry into the staff experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.*

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself...Name/age/occupation/industry experience?
2. In your own words can you tell me what your understanding is of 'sexual harassment'? Can you give me some examples of what you might consider to be sexual harassment in the workplace?
3. As a manager/employer, have you ever had an employee report sexual harassment by a customer? If so, can you tell me what had happened to them?
4. What action did you take at the time?
5. Do you have any thoughts on what factors contribute/cause sexual harassment by customers?
6. What do you think are the impacts of sexual harassment are on the employee/workplace?
7. Do you currently have policies and procedures in your workplace on sexual harassment prevention? Are staff aware of these?
8. Do you offer staff training on sexual harassment awareness and prevention? Do you think this is important?
9. Do you encourage open discussion between manager and employees about this issue?
10. What are your views on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry on Rarotonga – do you think it's a problem? Can you explain?
11. If yes to above (10), what do you think can be done to address this issue?
12. Finally, is there anything else you would like to say relating to this issue?

# Participant Information Sheet



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

22 February 2014

### Project Title

*An inquiry into the staff experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry.*

### An Invitation

Kia Orana,

I am Lisa Sadaraka, a student in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand. I was born and raised in the Cook Islands. I am interested in exploring sexual harassment in the Cook Islands hospitality industry, with specific reference to customers as offenders and am conducting a study involving hospitality employees and employers. If you decide to participate in this study I will ask you about any sexual harassment you may have experienced, and your views on sexual harassment and sexual behaviours that offend you. Your name and identity will be kept confidential, as will the name of your employing organisation. Participation in this study is voluntary and if you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection without any adverse consequences.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The study is being undertaken as part of my Masters in International Hospitality Management qualification. The research output will be a thesis. I hope to find out how front line employees in the Cook Islands hospitality industry are treated by customers. In particular, I want to explore whether sexual harassment by customers is a problem in the workplace.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I am looking for approximately 15 employees and seven employers on Rarotonga to be participants in my research. For this study to be of value to Cook Islanders, participants must be Cook Islanders, or permanent residents, or have resided in the Cook Islands and worked in the tourism industry on Rarotonga for a minimum of two years. *All* participants in the study must currently be working, or previously employed in the tourism industry on Rarotonga. Participants can be male or female and of varying ages between 18 – 65 years. They will be recruited from a range of roles across the hospitality industry on Rarotonga, for example, restaurants, bars, hotels and tour operations.

### What will happen in this research?

I will be interviewing in Rarotonga between 1 July to 18 July, 2014. If you agree to participate, we will agree on a place and time for the interview. I will see if you have any questions, then ask you to sign a consent form allowing me to interview you. If you have been sexually harassed, I will ask you tell me what happened, and what you did about it. I will also ask you what it was about the behaviour that made you feel harassed. I will make an audio recording of the interview, and take

notes. If you request it, I will send you the notes of your interview, in case you want to change anything.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

Because this research is about sexual harassment in the work place, you may experience discomfort or embarrassment answering some of the questions. If you disclose an unreported crime, I will encourage you to report this to help prevent a recurrence. However, your privacy will be treated as paramount, and I will not take any action with respect to any incident discussed with me (unless I have reason to believe someone's life is in danger, in which case I am obliged by law to report this).

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

I am a Cook Islander, born and raised. Thus, I possess a strong understanding of our culture and customs and am sensitive to areas and topics that may cause offence. I have first-hand knowledge of the hospitality industry having worked in this field for many years on Rarotonga. If you feel uncomfortable during the interview, we can take a break, you can decline to answer my questions, or you can pull out of the study altogether and the recording and notes relating to your interview will be destroyed. You are also welcome to bring a support person to the interview, should you wish to do so.

If you wish, you can receive free counselling through the Cook Islands Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre (Te Kaianga O Pa Taunga) or the Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre (Punanga Tauturu Incorporated). Both organisations have offered support to the participants of this study.

**What are the benefits?**

The research output will be a thesis for my Masters qualification. It is also hoped that the research will result in other publications, for example, a conference paper. The research will be of benefit to those Cook Islanders working in the hospitality industry. It will provide opportunities for employees and employers to identify sexual behaviours by customers that are unacceptable in work place settings. Recommendations will be made based on the research findings, including procedures for implementing sexual harassment prevention programmes into hospitality workplaces on Rarotonga.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

The findings of this research will be presented in a manner that will not identify the business where participants work or the participants themselves. Thus, your name and any information that may identify you will be confidential to me, and not shared with anyone else. Neither you nor your employer or business will be identified in my work.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

If you participate, you will be given a \$15.00 petrol voucher to reimburse you for the cost of travel to and from the interview location. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Light refreshments will be provided during the interview. It may also take a further 15 minutes if you wish to check your interview notes afterwards.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Please email me within two weeks of receiving this information to express your interest in participating in the research. I require final confirmation before June 16th, 2014 as I will be travelling to Rarotonga to conduct data collection between 1 July to 18 July.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Please respond by email to [lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz) and let me know you are happy to be interviewed. We will then work out an interview time between, between 1 July – 18 July 2014. You will be required to sign a Participant Consent Form prior to the interview. A copy of this will be sent to you.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If you would like the results of the study, you can indicate this on your consent form, and I will send you a copy of the findings upon completion.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Heike Schanzel. AUT University. Phone +64 9 921 9999 ext 6923. Email: [hschanze@aut.ac.nz](mailto:hschanze@aut.ac.nz)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor, Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext 6038. Email: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?*****Researcher Contact Details:***

Lisa Sadaraka. AUT University. Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext 6284. Email: [lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lisa.sadaraka@aut.ac.nz)

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Dr Heike Schanzel. AUT University. Phone +64 9 921 9999 ext 6923. Email: [hschanze@aut.ac.nz](mailto:hschanze@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 6 March 2014, AUTC  
Reference number: 14/19.

## Appendix H: Participant consent form

16 June 2014

page 1 of 1

### Participant Consent Form



Project Title: An inquiry into the staff experiences of sexual harassment by customers in the Cook Islands hospitality industry

Project Supervisor: Dr Heike Schanzel

Researcher: Lisa Sadaraka

- ☐ I confirm that I am between 18-65 years of age.
- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Participant Information Sheet dated 22 February, 2014.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the findings from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participants signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participants contact details or email address:

.....

.....

.....

Date: .....

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 6 March, 2014. AUTEK Reference number 14/19**

*Note: The Participant is to retain a copy of this form.*



## Appendix I: Letter from Dr Matthew Ravouvou



7 July 2014

Christopher Luxton  
Chief Executive Officer  
Air New Zealand  
185 Fanshawe Street  
Auckland 1010

### **Complaint re current in-flight safety demonstrations: Te Kuki Airani (Cook Islands)**

Kia orana Sir,

Air New Zealand has a deserved reputation as one of the best airlines in the world. Superlative service, friendly staff, and key tactical alliances such as the STAR Alliance network have enhanced the brand. The innovation series of in-flight safety procedure videos that have given a very serious topic some levity, which exposing fellow New Zealanders and international visitors to the quirky, wry, acute and sometimes quixotic sense of humour we all share.

However, the current in-flight safety video featuring swimsuit models from Sports Illustrated in the idyllic location of The Cooks Island is reprehensible.

Why? Because it invokes and preys upon the bowdlerised mythology of the Pacific as being inhabited by dusky maidens, to be sexualised and objectified by an unmistakeable male gaze, you have unwittingly or otherwise, perpetuated this harmful myth. That this sort of association would be made by a company has venerable and reliable as Air New Zealand is a monumental misjudgement of modern sensibilities. In plain English, it is tacky and tawdry, both for the offensive caricature of Cook Islanders, and of reducing women to mere sexual objects. Come on now, it is 2014.

I speak for several Pacific Island bodies who fight silly, unthinking stereotyping on a daily basis. It is not funny, kind, or remotely clever. This video is a lemon. It should be retracted, incinerated and disposed of. If you would care to send me the name of the 'creative' ad agency who successfully pitched this idea to Air New Zealand, I will convey the supreme displeasure of the New Zealand-based Cook Islands Association of New Zealand in the same frank and candid manner in which I am holding you accountable for this travesty; this grievous cultural insult.

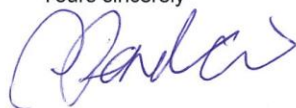
I would like to know how much negative feedback Air New Zealand has received; however in the final analysis the matter is not a popularity contest, it is about doing what is right, not acting like buffoonish, neo-colonising dullards who think sex and errant mythology as any whatsoever to do with in-flight safety. The ad is deeply flawed; culturally unsafe, and unbecoming of an otherwise excellent national carrier.

I would like to seek assurance from you that when you commission advertisements in the Pacific Islands in future that you consult with the people of those islands, and take heed of the advice they supply. No right-thinking Cook Islander finds this advertorial as anything but a boorish white *palagi* male reverie. That is certainly not the Air New Zealand I held in high esteem.

I await your response to the very real issues I have presented to you. Correspondence on this matter should be addressed as follows.

Dr. Mathew Ravouvou  
Hei Arikinui Kuki Airani ki Aotearoa  
The Cook Islands Association of New Zealand  
C/- P.O. Box 10933  
The Terrace  
Wellington 6011

Yours sincerely



**Dr. Mathew Ravouvou**