

Understanding the mental models of employers in the boutique accommodation industry in Tonga

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FAKATAPUI – DEDICATION

My dearest grandmother, Loumaile Natalia Kapetano Tupou, a true lady of Lapaha and the queen of my heart, I dedicate this dissertation to you. From the day I was born, you were there to nourish my body, mind and soul with strength, courage and love. You have been my prayer warrior, encouraging me from a young age to have faith always and I will forever hold and cherish our memories in my heart. You are the root of my being. Forever and always, I love you mama.

To my dearest parents, Sesika Fifita and Solomone Malele Tau-‘o-Tonga Fifita of Tatakamotonga, Tongatapu, I also dedicate this dissertation to you. I am forever grateful to you both, for the many sacrifices you have made in order for the better futures of your children and I, I am indebted to you. Thank you for your never-ending love, support, encouragement, discipline, prayers and guidance. May the Lord continue pouring His love and blessings upon you both, always.

To my siblings – my baby sister Heilala Fu’itahi ‘Alaha He-Vanua Fifita, always have faith in all you do my little nurse, *ke ‘alaha aipe ho ‘ofa*. To my little-but-tall brother, Samisoni Tu’u-‘I-Anse-Vata Fifita, may you hold your name close to you always and know that you can overcome all that you believe in. And lastly, but definitely not the least, my baby brother, Kisione ‘Alofa ‘O Vakatalata Fifita. May your heart continue to grow in love and happiness, seek the good fortune of His favour and continue shedding love and light around those who love you.

LAUANGA - ABSTRACT

Human resource management (HRM) has been traditionally viewed as an administrative function and a personnel management through policies and practices (Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholts, & Younger, 2008). Contrasting traditional views on HRM, in this present day and age, HRM has been seen as an asset and support function that contributes to an organisation's overall performance and achievements (Chopra, 2017).

Conducting a research on mental models is “fundamentally concerned with understanding human knowledge about the world” (Gentner & Stevens, 2014, p. 1). It is important to understand the mental models of different employers as it develops an insight into their different HRM processes, revealing their individual knowledge and comprehension of how they came about their current HRM processes. Their individual knowledge and understanding of the world is where they stimulated their individual HRM processes and it also allows insight to how they also improved and morphed their initial mental models of their business to reflect their current business situation. The understanding of the mental models that are used in human resource management by managers, business owners, and employers is significant to establish the link between the importance of people management as a strategy towards organisational development and successful businesses.

The need to understand boutique accommodation industries as opposed to larger corporate hotel businesses is because the larger franchise hotels in Tonga are internationally owned and is likely to have strict policies on recruitment, whereas, micro businesses may have different processes. Limited research in pacific nations support these assertions. A study by Naidu and Chand (2014) is a pioneering research that comparatively analyses the best HRM practices used by hotels in Tonga and Samoa which strongly influenced the motive of this research to make effort in understanding the mental models of employers in the hotel business in Tonga.

This research purposes to serve as an exploration that includes an insight to various literature reviews on the current knowledge of human resources management and employers' mental models. The

limited but previous works spanning academic articles, journals, research studies, books and more, shall be used to validate the position that shall be taken by the researcher when tackling the current topic of inquiry. The findings of this paper will be based on current literature reviews and the study taken through interviews.

The final purpose of this research is to look at understanding mental models of employers in hotel industries in Tonga and the HRM practices within hotels in Tonga. It focuses on employers' main idea of an employee in Tonga, how they searched and recruited employees and how they retained their employees. Contrary to westernised ideals in employing talent with some experience, skill or knowledge, key findings that were evident when conducting this research were that hotel employers in Tonga recruited employees based on individual virtues such as trust or commitment. Furthermore, a recurring evidence among hotel employers in Tonga was through providing a source of attachment (Baron, Burton & Hannan, 1999) within their hotel business.

The contribution of participants' in this research will use pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participant and their business and their information will create a mental model within the hotel businesses in Tonga.

This study contributes to a wide gap in current literature of HRM in accommodation in Tonga and generally, the South Pacific. Theoretically, the findings of this study hopes to contribute to ongoing discussions or potential interest of further research into the validity of the best HRM practices in Tongan businesses within the accommodation industry through understanding employers mental models.

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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.”

Jessica Elizabeth Atarmon Fifita

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Tu’a ‘ofa ‘Eiki atu.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

In accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC), ethics approval was finally granted on 12th of December 2018 by AUTC with reference number 18/369.

LUSIA KI TAULANGA – PROLOGUE

‘Ikai ngalo ‘eku tupu’anga.

Never forget your roots.

My name is Jessica Elizabeth Atarmon Fifita and I was born in Tofoa, Tongatapu, to loving parents, Solomone and Sesika Fifita. I am the eldest of four children; I have a little sister who is now a nurse, a brother who is preparing for his final high school exams and a younger brother who is embarking on the crazy world of teenage-hood. I am a product of parents and grandparents from the village of Tatakamotonga and Lapaha, *ta’ahine ‘o Loto Mu’a*.

While growing up, my family and I travelled as my father worked for an organisation within the private sector that allowed us the opportunity to reside in different countries within the South Pacific. To date, I have lived in four countries within the South Pacific, prior to migrating to New Zealand in 2004. Throughout my schooling years, I have attended primary in Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia, before settling into my high school years in New Zealand.

Although we traveled a lot while growing up, my parents always made sure that we returned back home to Tonga for Christmas and New Year’s, allowing us to be in touch with family, friends, our land and our home. It was and always has been a humbling experience returning back to my motherland, as it is a constant reminder of the opportunities that many of us who reside in developed countries take for granted.

Returning home was always a highlight for me year-to-year, as it influenced my deeper love and gratitude for my own culture and tradition, deeply connecting me back to my roots. Further to that, my parents have always instilled in me the importance of Tonga’s four golden themes – *anga faka’apa’apa* (respect), *anga fakatōkilalo* (humility and openness to learning), *tauhi vaha’a* (keeping relationships alive and well) and *mamahi’i me’a* (loyalty and a passion in life). These values, along with the prayers and guidance of my parents, are what have kept me humbled throughout the years.

The travels I experienced from a young age provided me with a deeper connection of love and embrace of the different cultures, traditions, values and the diversity of every country I have visited in the South Pacific. Although we may be similar in some of our cultural ways and understandings, we were still vastly different and unique. Being exposed to different ways of living throughout the Pacific nation, the various tradition and cultures influenced my strong belief in seeking ways to connect my love for my ow country. My interest in diversity and passion of my own culture encouraged me to seek ways of enhancing my educational, professional and personal journey and to return back to my homeland with my experience and knowledge and give back to my community. Hence, this research is a fundamental basis and first step in achieving that goal as I have the opportunity to study and return back to my roots, and hopefully, apply my theoretical knowledge and experience to giving back to my community.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This study is based on the interest of Human Resource Management (HRM) in Tonga within the hotel industry and will focus on the understanding of mental models of employers in accommodations across Tonga. The experiences, knowledge and understandings of the employers in the hotel business in Tonga will be expressed in their own voice capturing their reason, drive and motivation in the accommodation industry and the recruitment of their staff members within their hotel business. Their personal and professional experiences provide an insight to the understanding of employers or managers in the hotel business where it is becoming a critical factor in the country's economic benefit.

The participants in this research vary in age, gender and social class within the Tongan community and will provide both similar and different viewpoints of mental models of employers within the hotel industry. They individually have a vast experience in the tourism industry and in the business sector and combined together, they share a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience in their respective fields.

Mental models are abstract and internal representations of a situation, real or imagined that is derived from a narrative or other form of input (Ehrlich & Johnson-Laird, 1982). It is the cognitive intelligence of individuals that explain their thought processes on the real world based on behaviour and experiences that influence decision making. In this study, the term mental model is used to describe the experiences of hotel employers in the hotel businesses and their experiences and it projects a visual of an ideal of an employee that they would employ within their hotel business.

1.2 Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is located in the South Pacific Ocean, consisting of 176 islands, 36 of which are inhabited. Three of the main largest islands are Tongatapu (the main island), Ha'apai and

Vava'u (World Atlas, 2019), with a population of 109,708 (Worldometers, n.d.) throughout Tonga.

1.2.1 Culture and Society

The Kingdom of Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, a unique political system in the South Pacific Region. It is the only country in the South Pacific that has never been formally colonised by any other nation state, and so has been able to preserve its aristocratic system of government and its traditional cultural value. In recent decades, Tonga has undergone rapid social, cultural economic, political, technological and demographic changes that have resulted in significant changes to the nation with implications of migration, economic and social planning and development.

The cultural atmosphere of Tonga is generally relaxed (iExplore, n.d.), "time slows, and people smile" (Terry, 2014, p.11) and because of their basic understanding and knowledge, there is a need to understand the processes of boutique accommodations, in particular, recruitment processes to understand where they locate their employees and how they retain them.

The context of understanding the mental models of employers in Tonga is important as it is expected to be widely different from western ideals. Tonga's cultural influence is heavily impacted by religion and Christian values which influence their way of life and their way of working. Sunday's are considered Holy Day's and therefore, no businesses operate on this day (Tonga Holiday, 2014). Tonga is a country with a reigning monarchy and is not colonised, therefore, all land in Tonga is owned by the king and nobles, government and foreigners cannot buy nor own land (Campbell, 2008).

Tongan people have a strong social class system with three main levels, King (*Tu'i*), Chief Nobles (*Hou'eiki/Nōpele*) and Commoners (*Tu'a*) and much of their obligations derive from their Christian values and beliefs (Lopeti, 1997; Campbell, 1992). Due to the country being ruled by a monarchy, the King of Tonga finalises all decisions made by the government and nothing is pushed through without the King's acknowledgement (Countries and their Cultures, 2018).

1.2.2 *Economy*

Tonga's economy is heavily influenced, impacted and reliant on three industries which are tourism, construction and fishing (Countries of the World, 2019). Agriculture is also another main source of income in contributing to the GDP through exports of its agricultural products including squash, taro, bananas, cassava, vanilla beans and more.

Many of the Tongan immigrants in developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand, send back remittances to their families back in Tonga (Va'a, 2001). This includes cash or monetary transactions via online banking, clothing, food, appliances and equipment – anything that may have an economic value. The remittances are to support their Tongan families back home with their daily living expenses that are culturally defined as *kavenga* for special occasions such as weddings, funerals or church events.

1.2.3 *Employment Legislation and Minimum Wage in Tonga*

Tonga is a developing country in the South Pacific and with a government that is still heavily ruled by monarchy. There is a reasonably sound infrastructure with a well-developed social service, however, the government faces high unemployment particularly among the young adolescents. Additionally, the government also undergoes pressures for democratic reform which impacts a steady upward movement in improving employment in Tonga (Countries of the World, 2019).

New Zealand and other well-developed countries have legislations in place, easily located online, such as the Minimum Wage Act (Minimum-Wage.org, 2019), to ensure fair agreement among employees and employers prior to commencing work within the employers workplace. In comparison to Tonga, in-depth research has been made to find a legible bill or legislation that is in support of employment agreements or similar documents that support employers and/or employees. In this instance, Attorney General's Office (2019) does not currently display a bill or legislation that is in support of employment, jobs or careers for either employers or employees. Similarly, the Ministry of Commerce and Labour also does not have a visible employment bill or

legislation on their website online. However, after much research online and via reliable sources in Tonga, there is work being put in place to push forward for more support for employers and employees in Tonga. Furthermore, it is evident that Tonga has in-place the Contract Act 1988 (Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute, n.d.) to support subjects in Tonga for goods and services being supplied. There have been discussions and agreement that there is awareness on perhaps updating various bills and legislations and also providing legal support for both employer and employee in Tonga, an example is creating or enforcing a Minimum-Wage Act (Minimum-Wage.org, 2019). This act will allow a steady and standard rate that can be legally agreed upon by both employer and employee, furthermore, it is hope that it will impact turnover for young adolescents in Tonga, particularly in the hotel industry.

Tonga's cultural ways is where "time slows, and people smile" (Terry, 2014, p.11), however, the influence of neighbouring countries and the western world of their economic and political governments will impact Tonga in its economic and political growth.

1.3 Tourism

Tourism has expanded and experienced continued growth over the years, becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO, n.d.). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, n.d.), tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce while also becoming one of the main sources of income for many of the developing countries.

Although Tonga differs considerably to its western neighbours such as New Zealand and Australia (World Population Review, 2018), the tourism industry in Tonga is estimated at \$150 million in value per year and employs more than 2,000 people (Census of Tonga, 2006).

Ministry of Tourism has steadily improved over the years through strong marketing campaigns such as advertising, communications via media and visiting journalists, joint ventures with various tourism agencies from developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand along with reputable airline organisations and the use of the world wide web and social media

(Ministry of Information & Communications, 2014). Further to that, they have strongly maintained a strong support towards various national events such as the Miss Heilala Festival, a beauty pageant hosted on an annual basis that allows the winning contestant to travel to neighbouring Pacific Islands to not only compete in the finals of the pageant but to promote the tourism of Tonga.

Reputable airlines includes Air New Zealand, Virgin Australia and Fiji Airways provide their services to Tonga and have frequent and regular flights to and from Tonga to neighbouring countries in the South Pacific.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study has been influenced and prompted on the basis of concerns on the limited and available study on HRM in the hotel and accommodation industry, particularly in the context of the Pacific Islands and more specifically, Tonga. Much of the literature is limited in regards to a focus on the tourism industry, however, it has been seen as a gateway for future research in terms of understanding Pacific notions of employers and HRM in benefiting the overall development of the Pacific economy (Naidu & Chand, 2014). The research conducted by Naidu and Chand (2014) is the first of its kind in the current literature that focuses on developing countries, and more specifically, Pacific Islands being Samoa and Tonga, and the study of the hotel businesses. Their research has been a strong influence in the reasoning of this study.

Thus, the importance and significance of this current study is because it solely focuses on employers within the hotel industry in Tonga, understanding their ideals (mental model) on the HRM processes within their business. It provides a mild understanding as to how employers in the Tongan community perceive idealistic understandings of the employers mental models process and how they expect their employees to perform and how they retain employees.

1.5 Potential contribution

The tourism industry generally has a high staff turnover; however, it is especially obvious in Tonga which brings the importance of wanting to study this field within a developing country. It is expected that a developing country has different processes versus a developed country such as New Zealand, therefore, the interest in understanding the mental models of employers in this industry. Furthermore, further knowledge from employers regarding their mental models will help to identify key areas that would influence employers mental model processes that can contribute to future research and strategic decisions from employers in the tourism and accommodation industry.

1.6 Research question

This research examines the employers of hotel businesses in Tonga and their mental models. The questions are qualitative in nature and are semi-structured with prompting questions that leads to an open discussion and *talanoa* between researcher and interviewee. In order to achieve the objectives of this research, sub-questions were pre-meditated that would help to open up the floor for the participant to freely and comfortably provide information that would be relevant and supportive to this research. The key focus of this research is *employers mental models* and what employees ideally looks like from the visual and perspective of an employer in the hotel industry in Tonga. My research question is:

- What are the HRM processes of mental models of employers within the boutique accommodation business have
- How does it influence the business(es) they manage?

Interpretivism was important in this interview process as it allowed the researcher to observe the body language, behaviour and responses of the participant during the interview and appreciate the differences among my participants based on their knowledge and experience. This research approach will further elaborate in chapter three of this research study.

This study aims to focus on Tonga and its employers in the hotel industry to provide support to current literature, create pathways for new research and contributing information to Tonga's limited research in this field.

1.7 Dissertation structure and chapters

This first chapter outlines the approach in understanding employers' mental models and the current understanding of the current knowledge of tourism. The dissertation begins with a prologue that pre-empt the influence on the researcher, their interest in this field providing an understanding and insight on what impacted the researcher to complete this study. This chapter also details a brief background into understanding the context of Tonga, tourism and the various significance and potential contributions of this study, influenced by the study of Naidu and Chand (2014).

Chapter two is the literature review and it provides the current knowledge and existing research that has been conducted in the field of HRM and mental models. In this section, an articulate understanding of the current literature within HRM and mental models that influences the limited research in this field research of interest and also impacting the findings of this research.

Chapter three details the research design, methodology and method utilised in this research. In this section, descriptive qualitative methodology situates the author in the present moment. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the methodological framework used, *kakala*. It describes how the importance of this framework captures and analyses information gathered for this research.

Chapter four provides detailed insight on the research gathered and will be discussing and interconnecting the information provided by the participants focusing on key themes that are similar among the employers in the hotel industry. Utilising the *kakala* framework, the information will be aggregated and formed in a weaving context by inter-relating relevant information and analysing the participants responses and forming their mental models of HRM

processes within the hotel business and understanding the current HRM practices within the hotels in Tonga.

Lastly, chapter five concludes and summarises various key areas of the research and briefly discuss implications that were evident in the research and recommendations for potential future research.

2 Literature Review

The purpose of this review is to explore current literature that is relevant to this study. The focus of this research allows a vast range of academic and non-academic material to reflect the current knowledge within this field of mental models within the hotel industry in Tonga. The aim of this literature review section is to provide current existing evidence of human resource practices in an industry, such as the boutique accommodation with specific focus on how the literature addresses HR processes and strategies in the perspectives of the managers, and the examples of organisations that have been leveraging through better human resources management and implementation.

A study conducted by Naidu and Chand (2014) is one of the original studies that covers this field of research that focused on two Pacific islands, Samoa and Tonga and the best HRM practices within the hotel businesses in the two respective developing Pacific nations. They conducted a comparative analysis between the two islands and found that Samoa being more developed in comparison to Tonga, was leading its way with HRM practices that were already being instilled and ongoing within small to medium businesses (SME), whether it was a big or small tourism business. The findings of the research also considered both internal and external environmental factors that could impact the HR practices that hotels have.

Additionally, in a study found by Rauch and Hatak (2016), they found that HR practices are important in SMEs and need to implement HR practices that should focus on enhancing skills, motivation and empowerment. These suggests that there are a number of influences that may impact on the kinds of HRM that SMEs in Tonga employs, suggesting that a focus on these factors may help build a picture for Tongan HRM and perhaps, Pacifica HRM influences.

This research intends to focus on understanding these differences through examining the mental models of employers in the accommodation industry in Tonga. Mental models are generally known to be the views of an individual's knowledge and behaviour to be different to the views of the world. Mental models are the mental models that SME owners have on how to

hire and manage employees in their businesses (Burton, 2001). These mental models influence the kinds of practices that owners adopt in their organisations and represent an important starting point for understanding how HRM and organisation practices evolve in a region or country (Baron et al., 1996; Baron et al., 1999a; Baron et al., 1999b). This research study thus intends to examine how mental models of HRM processes influences practices that SME owners utilise (Ho and Wilson, 2007; Ho et al., 2011). It is hoped that these mental models will help us extend a theory of HRM in Tonga.

2.1 HRM processes in Tonga and the Pacific

Over the years, the human resources management department of most organisations have undergone transformations in which an argument has arisen whether it should be included within strategic organisational development. While some argue that human resources have over the years lost its core functions of people management, it has consequently been viewed as an extension of the returns on how it can bring to the business or how profitable it will be. In an article by Ulrich et al., (2008), they further reiterate how the global business in the market today is competitive and identified that HR should have more of an active role in contributing to the organisational performance, delivering results and the process of transforming HRM systems to compete effectively in the global market (Kim & Briscoe, 1997).

It is evident in the minimal literature found that there is less attention being paid to the Asia Pacific region for any HRM policies (Kramar & Parry, 2014), whereas, developed countries with a stronger government in place such as the United States of America (USA) and Europe have strategic HRM policies in place. It has been observed that the mental models of human resource practitioners and managers in Tonga and by extension of the South Pacific geographical region have not been efficient in 'people management'.

In an article by Dewettink and Remue (2011), they suggest that future researchers should comparatively analyse best HRM practices used in different geographical settings, strongly supported by Naidu and Chand (2014) in repeated research of analysing HRM processes within

the Pacific Islands. Furthermore, Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade and Drake (2009) also addressed the need for researchers to focus on best HRM practices in emerging economies.

The human resource strategies, separation of HR functions, matters of occupational health and safety as well as the involvements of the employers in long term organisational strategic activities still seems to be an ideal concept in Tongan organisations. This is further encouraged by the absence of strong legislative systems or standardised labour enforcement systems for the employees. Most private organisations are therefore able to take advantage and manipulate the employee practices as they fit with their organisational needs. This may be one of the key reasons behind the inconsideration of human resources as a crucial part of organisational strategic outcomes as evidenced by the lack of intent to separate the human resources function within most of the organisations as such (Sutherland and South Pacific Commission, 1992).

This notion further triggered the investigation of the mental models used by Tongan employers in the boutique accommodation industry. Given these notions, therefore, it is imperative to clearly understand the mental models which underpin the human resources management. This current study is grounded on these principles outlined above.

2.2 HRM and Tourism

Managing employees within the hotel sector has continuously been a challenge for HR managers (Baum, 2007) despite the ongoing support from government agencies, tertiary institutions and hotels implementing their version of best HRM practices. It is not new knowledge that the tourism industry itself has a high turnover, however, the lack of HR management and practices affects the accommodation industry globally. Further to that, there is not a wide range of content in the current and existing literature on what constitutes of the best HRM practices (Finegold, Wagner & Mason, 2000; Devine, Baum, Hearn & Devine, 2007).

Research conducted within hotel industries of developed countries that include countries in the European region, the United States of America (USA) India and China. A study surveying 52 hotels based in India responded to questionnaires that targeted various HR managers and

employees within the 52 hotels (Chand, 2010). Results found that HRM practices created a positive influence on improving the service quality, customer satisfaction and hotel performance. The results found in the study were evident that HRM practices improve the overall hotel service effectiveness, additionally suggesting that management emphasise on the development, analysing improvements, retaining customers and hotel performance as the hotel sector faces increasing competitive pressures within the market.

In another study conducted in large hotels in Australia and Singapore, Cheng and Brown (1998) explored perceptions of HR managers on strategic management of the turnover within the hotel sector. Results found that with the adoption of a range of HR policies and practices of emphasis on the recruitment, selection, induction, socialisation and training and development minimises turnover. Moreover, performance management and remuneration strategies were also seen as a strategic HR process that influenced the minimisation of turnover within the hotel sector in Australia and Singapore.

There are ongoing concerns relating to the management of employees within the global tourism sector that influence six best HRM strategies as suggested by Naidu and Chand (2014). Among the concerns outlined in the study by Naidu and Chand (2014), a few of them include skill shortage, poor rewards and benefits structure and lack of training and development of the employees (Naidu, 2012a; Naidu, 2012b; Naidu & Chand, 2013; Naidu, Prathak & Chand, 2013).

As mentioned previously in this study, no other literature or research focusing on HRM has been conducted in the field of tourism or accommodation industry within Tonga, aside from Naidu and Chand (2014). However, very few limited research have been conducted on small island developing states around the world, of best HRM practices within the hotel sector (Alleyne, Doherty & Greenidge, 2006).

Alleyne (et al., 2006) found that there are five best HRM practices within the hotel sector for small island developing states which are recruitment and selection, training and development, employee consultation, communication and job design.

Among the best HRM practices suggested in addressing these concerns were HRM practices in motivating employees to improve their quality of service and delivery, HRM practices that will encourage employees to improve and enhance their current knowledge, talent and skills, ensuring a best HRM practice in the recruitment process, providing equal employment opportunities. This provides fair compensation and benefits, and lastly, HRM practices that will improve the quality of life. Naidu and Chand (2014) state that “hotels can improve the quality of its workforce by implementing best human resource management” (p. 798).

Over the years, Tonga has had its fair share of political instability that has impacted growth within the hotel sector (Naidu and Chand, 2013). Drawing from the research literature conducted by Naidu and Chand (2014), they found that through implementing an HRM practice within Samoa and Tonga’s hotel sectors, it will strengthen all HRM practices. An example of this is, through a consultation and cooperation practice, it will simultaneously strengthen other HRM practices such as recruitment and selection and training and development practices. Overall, findings from the research conducted by Naidu and Chand (2014) showed that there are 15 best HRM practices in the hotel sector in Tonga which were; internal promotion, equal employment opportunities, merit-based recruitment, talent and experienced-based recruitment, seasonal recruitment, work culture and ethics, teamwork cohesiveness, rotation of tasks and activities, in-house training and development, right staff at the right place of service, merit-based pay, financial incentives and bonuses for good performance and appreciation and recognition of good performance.

Other HRM practices that were not the best for hotel sectors in Tonga included employee consultation and communication. The reason being, many of the hotels in Tonga are solely owned and operated by sole traders who make unilateral decisions without discussing with employees. Further to that, many hotels in Tonga perceive that setting aside resources for employee consultation and cooperation will be a waste.

Although a couple of the best HRM practices within the hotel sectors of Tonga include in-house training and development and recognition of good performance, Tonga's hotel sector "focuses less on career development or practice performance management" (Naidu & Chand, 2014, p. 808). This is due to the limited, qualified human resource managers within the hotel sector to implement the performance management practices. Furthermore, it is perceived that setting aside resources for career advancement practices is wasteful. In addition to the limited and qualified human resource manager available in Tonga, the employment law is outdated and also needs to be revised and renewed.

Naidu and Chand (2014) reinforce Baum's (2007) research where the difference in contextual variables, best HRM practices that are used in hotel sectors in developed countries, differ from those in developing countries. Furthermore, it is important to note that the best HRM practices within hotel industries differ based on internal and external environmental factors due to its geographical setting (Naidu & Chand, 2014; Cambre, Kippers, van Veldhoven & De Witte, 2012; Richards, Chillas & Marks, 2012).

Therefore, as suggested by Naidu and Chand (2014), there should be a focus on where HRM comes from, more similar studies should be repeated in other Pacific Island countries so that there are more research in this field and lastly, longitudinal research design should be conducted as it will enable future researchers to examine the best HRM practices within hotel industries in the Pacific Islands.

2.3 Mental Models

Mental models are abstract and internal representations of a situation, real or imagined that is derived from a narrative or other form of input (Ehrlich & Johnson-Laird, 1982). They allow individuals to integrate information across sentences and provide a basis of understanding and reference in the making (O'Rourke & Bunting, 2018). Mental models are often and generally seen as the cognitive intelligence of an individual and their explanation of their thought process on the real world and is built on past experiences and knowledge. It is the first stage of the

cognitive process of decision making that is suggested by rational choice and by behavioural concepts.

Grenier and Dudzinska-Przesmitzki (2015) have asserted the importance of mental models towards the organisational decision making when trying to understand, predict or provide solutions to some problems. Furthermore, mental models are grounded on the experience, learning and observation, to understand the dynamics of process such as management activities of an organisation. Therefore, some of the factors that should inform the specific mental model to be used by the senior leadership, the employers could include profitability, survival and employee management. It is important to note that mental models are evolving models (Gentner & Stevens, 2014) as people formulate these mental models purely off their own understandings and experiences.

An article by Pfeffer (2005) states that “in the managerial knowledge marketplace, there is little evidence of much diffusion of ideas, innovative business models, or management practices” (p. 1). Most organisations do not implement best practices based on the available insights or experience and most companies also do not act by underpinning their strategies on the best evidence that is available. This inability to ensure efficient management practices or innovative business models has been typically linked with one principal factor that can explain the challenges – the mental model or the mindsets of the senior leadership of the organisation.

The mental models of others are highly relevant as the behaviour of others has an impact on us and therefore we need to manage it as best we can. However, there is an inaccuracy to the representation of mental models in making decisions and is seen as a misconception of a strategic idea as it simplifies real-world strategic settings by allowing actors involved to limit their thoughts and actions based on behaviour and theoretical ideas (Menon, 2018). Mental models are incomplete and tend to be selective as our brains contain only those elements of the situation that we choose to pay attention to (Jongste, 2018).

Drucker (1994) argues that the distinction between the success and failure of an organisation, doesn't lie in the use and implementation of wrong strategies but rather, "the right things are being done poorly and fruitlessly" (p. 95). The strategies that had been successful in the past may not give the same results due to the inappropriateness with the modern market dynamics. The author goes on to explain that typically, an organisation may be blinded by assumptions that have been obtained about market dynamics over a period of time to understand the developments, which in the end would lead to failure. Deming (2000) further clarifies that in order for a steady organisational growth, this can only be achieved by the correct mindset that ensure continuous improvements within the overall management functions of employees by employers.

The paradox becomes clear when comparing the financial marketplaces and the managerial knowledge market. The financial markets are characterised by rapid and efficient diffusion of important information about new products or services. Innovativeness in debt securities, junk bond, price risks etc., can all get copied easily by the competitors, but this is not the case with mental models. Within this field, as asserted by Pfeffer (2005) above, it is not easy to successfully imitate the management techniques, especially when they encompass the language of employee and putting people first.

It is important to note that there are some observations about mental models that can contain some inaccuracies which concludes that mental models are incomplete as they are based on the principles of an individuals own experience and knowledge which can be limited. Mental models can be a process that is not detailed nor observed in a professional situtaion and can create bias opinions or human error as behavioural patterns differ (Gentner & Stevens, 2014).

However, studies have shown that the role of mental models of employers have benefited their company that increased profitability and prolonging the survival of the company along with the reduction in the level of employee attrition (Armstrong, 2009). Similarly, employers' mental models based on personal and professional experiences help ensure their strategic HRM

processes differ to their competitors by considering training and development of employees and inputting HR planning which can increase productivity levels by employees (Chang & Chen, 2002).

2.3.1 Employers and Mental Models

This paragraph will flow on from the previous knowledge on what mental models are and discuss what employers generally think of what the ideal or great employee looks like and what their mental model perception is.

A few good examples on the difficulty in understanding the management mental models, including human resources, include examples such as Southwest Airlines, Toyota the automaker or Whole Food, the grocery superstore. These companies have managed to establish themselves as industry leaders for several years, yet no other organisation has been able to imitate their management models successfully, even with companies like Toyota allowing plant tours to their competitors, they are still not able to learn and catch up to the levels of quality and productivity. The former CEO of the Southwest Airlines observes that, what differentiated his organisation from other airlines, was that he went for a culture of ensuring care for his employees in totality of their lives and not just when they are at work. An article by Campbell (1992) discussed how the founder and leader, Herb Kelleher, instrumented in shaping the culture of Southwest Airlines and focused on three key values that Kelleher adopted, promoted and elaborated which were humour, altruism and challenge and transformational leadership (Quick, 1992).

The notion of mental models derive from the research conducted by Burton (2001) and Baron, Hannan and Burton (1999), where three recurring dimensions were found among employers and employment practices in various emerging companies and organisations. Analysis of the interview transcripts presented a variety in employment models as it slightly differed among the different organisations. The models labeled by Burton (2001) and Baron (et al., 1999) were engineering, star, commitment, bureaucracy and autocracy and the dimensions were nature of

employees' attachment to the firm, basis for selecting new employees and the mode of coordinating and controlling work as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Five Basic Employment Model Types Based on Three Dimensions of Employment Relations

Employment Model	Attachment	Selection	Coordination / Control
Engineering	Work	Skills	Peer / Cultural
Star	Work	Potential	Professional
Commitment	Love	Fit	Peer / Cultural
Bureaucracy	Work	Skills	Formal
Autocracy	Money	Skills	Direct

(Burton, 2001)

The engineering model involves attachment to work through challenging tasks, selected due to specific skills and abilities to work within a project team and is peer-group controlled. The star model represents organisations within science and academia where their attachment is through challenging work, selected for growth for long-term potential and is adaptable to working autonomously and professional control. The commitment model is heavily reliant on emotional attachment to work and is a family-like environment, they are selected based on their cultural fit to the organisation and is peer-group controlled. Bureaucracy model is a modern organisation and is based on challenging work, opportunity and development growth, selected based on skills and qualifications for the role and is formally controlled within the business. Lastly, the autocracy model is purely driven by monetary value, selected based on skills and the ability to perform specified tasks and is closely and directly coordinated and controlled.

This research wishes to challenge the common misconception among organisations, in which the mental models of the employers perceive that the various human resource initiatives do not contribute significantly to the needs of the customers or their employees as such (Sont, 2013).

Unlike the significance that has been attached to the financial and operational objectives of the organisation, the employer's mental models are not generally confident in human resources as far as the strategic contribution to the organisation is concerned. The models commonly used show how human resources may influence the organisation's goals and objectives and can evidently be seen as a great opportunity for competitive advantage and innovation levels that may not be easy for competitors to mimic (Becker, Ulrich & Huselid, 2001).

3 Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature, hence, this chapter will describe the research methodology used in this study. An overview of the methodology on the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher and the study is important to understand as it outlines an understanding of the research method adopted. Secondly, the theoretical framework for this research will be explained and lastly, an overview of the research design and how the data was collected and analysed.

3.1 Ontology

The research takes a relativist ontological position as they will also focus and take into consideration the experiences of their participants (Killam, 2013) through observing them throughout the interview, which is the main source of data collecting for this research. An ontological assumption is the belief of a researcher on the basis of reality and guides the researcher's understanding of their research (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Relativism, described by Guba and Lincoln (2005) is a belief that there is more than one reality and that it is influenced by experiences and social interactions.

3.2 Epistemology

Grant and Giddings (2002) define epistemology as "the nature of the relationship between enquirer and what can be known, what counts as knowledge, and on what basis we can make knowledge claims" (p. 12). The importance of epistemology forms how the research will be conducted, which affirms the methodology and methods suitable for this study to answer the research question. A subjective epistemological position aims to explain the individual human behaviour (Bryman & Bell, 2011) of each participant in this research.

3.3 Paradigm

An interpretivist paradigm will drive the views of this research. Interpretivism is to understand the human nature (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and is an approach that shapes the human behaviour

where individuals have their own experience, knowledge and background that contributes to the existing reality (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2009). An article by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further reiterate that interpretivism allows interaction between researcher and participants to understand their viewpoint on their reality based on their individual experiences.

3.4 Theoretical Framework Methods – Kakala Framework through Mental Mapping

This research is focused on exploring and understanding employers' mental models in the hotel business in Tonga. Understanding HRM processes is a complicated issue itself, particularly when it is in an industry with a high staff turnover. Furthermore, retaining employees for respectable tenure in the tourism industry is a problem and management ideally would like to see more employee loyalty within their hotel business. Therefore, it is key to address the issue with employers and understand what they see and their own experiences.

Conducting research in Tonga with Tongan people, employers and/or individuals who have resided in Tonga for quite some time have adapted to the lifestyle and therefore, it is important to approach this research and the participants with a Tongan understanding and perspective of how to build trust and relationship. *Tauhi va* is a Tongan proverb that translates to strengthening cultural ties between one another and can be adopted and seen as a way of building that relationship between employee and employer.

Furthermore, the methodologies specifically chosen for this research is based upon the cultural appropriateness within the Tongan community. As a Tongan migrant residing in New Zealand, this has influenced the researcher's decisions in opting for the *talanoa* method to utilise as a research tool while in Tonga.

The people of the Pacific have a way in communicating and are all interconnected with their approach of communication and relating to one another, through a familiar and common

approach. The *talanoa* method relates to the Pacific community in general and an ethnographic approach to being eye-leveled with Tongans.

Following a method that has been specifically chosen for this research, the theoretical research framework that will be adopted for this study will use the *kakala* framework. *Kakala* is a Tongan past-time that many of the Tongan women of which they produce a beautiful garland (Thaman, 1988). During this process, there are three main key steps in producing this beautiful *kakala* and that is namely *toli*, *tui* and *luva*. The *Kakala Framework* is used as a guide to provide infrastructure to this research dissertation. It is important that this framework was adopted for this research as it accommodates the Tongan and Pacific research.

3.4.1 *Toli*

The first is *toli* in literal meaning is 'picking' or 'choosing'. *Toli e kakala* translates to 'picking the flower'. The term *toli* is not specifically used in the context of a flower and can be used for any item or thing. For the purposes of Thaman's *kakala* framework, it focuses on picking the flower from the tree, however in this case and for research purposes, *toli* emphasises the importance of choosing, selecting and recruiting participants for the study for interviews or *talanoa*. Similar to the literal meaning of picking or choosing the flower from the tree, choosing the right and blooming flower is key to being able to produce a beautiful *kakala* or garland. The intricate process of recruiting and selecting participants for this research is critical so that when recruiting and selecting relevant participants, the assumption is that relevant and enough information is passed through to be able to process a detailed analysis of the data.

3.4.2 *Tui*

Secondly is *tui*, which translates to 'weaving' or 'threading' the flowers together to produce the garland. This is an important aspect when producing the garland because the gentle strength of being able to join together intricate and soft flowers and producing a strong garland to be able to wear around the neck or the hips is important. This symbolises the interlinking, interconnecting, collating and analysing of the data and information gathered from the

interviews. Being able to produce a strong connection among the participants and the information provided is important and will be shown through intricate attention to detail through key themes that are identified among the participants.

3.4.3 *Luva*

Lastly is *luva*, which is presenting or gifting the final product of the garland. This emphasises the presenting of the findings in an eloquent and meaningful way to its audience. The *kakala* framework highlights the importance of the Tongan ways, tradition and values – similar to the Tongan people weaving and presenting a beautiful garland, the approach in this research is similar in collating and presenting the findings in a way that is mindful of the participants and the audience.

3.5 Method and Methodology

As mentioned earlier, there is minimal-to-no research written on hotel employers in the Pacific Islands, especially Tonga, therefore it is important to adopt an appropriate methodology for this field of study in order to maintain a direct communication with the participant while providing a common approach that will make the participant feel at ease.

The methodology supporting this research is through descriptive interpretivism and the method is an interview or *talanoa* with participants who are employers within the boutique accommodation and hotel industry in Tonga. The *talanoa* method (Vaiotele, 2006) is an appropriate method for the targeted participants which is a culturally accepted form of approach among the people of the Pacific and is better known as a friendly conversation. The *talanoa* process was conducted with a variety of employers within the hotel industry in Tonga, who have agreed to participate in this research in understanding the mental models of employers in the hotel industry in Tonga.

As this research is a descriptive qualitative methodology in nature, the *talanoa* process is reliant and utilising reflexivity to gather reliable information of the participants.

Semi-structured interviews (Rocco, 2003) have been utilised in this research and are a set of interview questions that have been prepared for the *talanoa* between research and participant. The pre-determined questions allows opportunity of the researcher to explore themes or uncover truths (Schatz, 2012), however, it also allows freedom for a *talanoa* or natural, free-flowing conversation between the participant and researcher.

The questions that have been pre-determined prior to the interview initially focuses on the participant and allowing insight to the participant and their backgrounds and experiences to build trust for a *talanoa* with the researcher. The questions allow the participant to reflect on their past experiences and aspects of their working environments and perceptions and relating to current influences of their individual processes. As the participant allows further insight about their individual experiences, the interview turns informal and becomes conversational and creates a *talanoa* atmosphere. Questions about the participants interest and involvement within their hotel business allowed a deeper understanding of their hotel business, further detail into their HRM processes and their mental models of employees through HRM processes.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

The participants chosen for this research were targeted to employers of hotel or boutique accommodations in Tonga, thus, limiting my target audience. The intended participants were recruited via a participant advertisement that was distributed among hotels in Tonga, inviting employers in the hotel businesses to volunteer to participate in the research. Contact details of the researcher was provided in the participant advertisement so that interested participants are able to directly contact the researcher on their own free will and could enquire about the research or volunteer to join the research.

Prior to the *talanoa* with participants, they were briefed on the purpose of the research as well as the researcher's background and interest in this field. They were given a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) that detailed the main information they required about the research. Any questions, queries or concerns that the participants' had, were all answered by the

researcher. Due to the nature of Tonga's cultural ways, there were not many queries that the employers had regarding their participation in the research, as they were well-briefed prior to consenting to this research. Participants were friendly, open and willing to share their current knowledge and experiences within their field of expertise in tourism and business management.

A consent form was signed by the participants as a formal process of their acknowledgement of what will happen and their understanding and acceptance of how the information will be utilised in the research. As explained to volunteering participants prior to the *talanoa*, they acknowledged the option of receiving transcripts of their interview and was given the option to omit or redact any information that they wish to not add in the final output of the research. However, any information regarding them or their hotel was overwritten by using pseudonyms and the information provided will be aggregated. The interviews were conducted within the workplace of the employers in a public setting such as the restaurant during off-peak hours and lasted between 45 and 120 minutes, occurring in January 2019. Through a mutual agreement on space and location of the interview being conducted, it allowed the participant to freely express themselves and answer questions confidently, exploring their past experiences.

The participants in this are informed and aware that they will/do have limited confidentiality in this research. All employers of hotel businesses in Tonga that participated in this research were of different age, sex/gender, social status with different work experiences but all with similar goals, drive and intention for their business and employees. The interviews were transcribed and participants were given a confidential copy of their own interview to oversee their responses in the *talanoa* and to have the opportunity to omit or redact any information provided. Furthermore, it built trust and reliability between the researcher and the participant, while also ensuring that there will be no misuse of information.

In order to ensure credibility of analysing the data, coding the interviews was important to identify key themes that were evident among the responses by participants. As the research is qualitative in nature, there was a constant comparative analysis among each transcribed notes

from the *talanoa* focusing on the details of the data gathered which were then coded (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is important because the information gathered is largely descriptive and is important when identifying and systematically categorising key themes that are able to weave together and develop ideas, thoughts and experiences that are similar and different among the participants. Along with coding, a constant comparative analysis will maintain consistency when discussing the findings gathered from the information by the participants. It allows in-depth analysis and identifying the similarities and the differences within the key theme or category identified from the coding and being able to intricately *tui* or weave, interlinking and interconnecting subcategories. For instance, a category or key theme among participants could be 'location' and can be expanded to a subcategory referencing to 'in-land', 'city' or 'outer-islands'. This in-depth comparative analysis allows a consistent comparison when discussing the findings, providing an overview of the data gathered.

Coding provided a thematic analysis formed from an in-depth analysis of data coding. Braun and Clarke (2006), states that the first important step for a researcher is to become familiar with the collected data. Becoming familiar with the data through repetitive listening and understanding of the interviews provide a deeper comprehension of the *talanoa* provided by the participant. Through multiple and consistent playbacks of the recordings, it allows the researcher a refined understanding of the information gathered and visualising emerging themes from the participants.

A written transcript is also typed by the researcher following the recordings of each participant, allowing the researcher to code, highlight, colour code and take notes of various information that the participant shares through the interviews creating meaningful understandings, themes and sub-themes that occurs and recurs among the participants. This allowed the researcher to visualise the themes and draw relationships among each one of them to create a strong data gathered from the stories, *talanoa* and experiences of each participant. The three key themes that the were evident were through recruitment of employees, retaining employees and

managing employees. These key themes reflected the three dimensions by Burton (2001) which were selection (recruitment), attachment (retaining) and control or coordination (management), which will be utilised later in the findings. Sub-themes were then identified among these key themes that were voiced out by each participant in various ways that interlinks, weaves and *tui* with the main themes.

Due to the researcher being of Tongan descent, the researcher was confident in the credibility of its research participants. However, for the purpose of the research, the aid of semi-structured interview questions and iterative questions (Shenton, 2004) in the beginning of the *talanoa* allowed the participant their moment to clarify and confirm factual details prior to continuing the interview.

4 Findings and Discussion

This chapter reflects the concept of *luva* in the *kakala* framework, where the information gathered by participants will be weaved and interlinked, showing common themes and understanding of the HRM processes. The findings will be articulately presented through initially discussing a broad profile of each employer. To maintain their confidentiality, each employer will be named EMPTBU1, EMPTBU2, EMPTBU3 and EMPTBU4. The findings will then discuss the various themes and sub-themes that were found from the interviews conducted, which will interlink with similar ideas and HRM processes among the four employers of each hotel.

4.1 Profile of employers in hotel businesses in Tonga

The participants who volunteered to participate in this research are employers and/or owners of their hotel business in Tonga. They are a range of men and women who each have vast experience and a wealth of knowledge in their respective roles. The participants will remain confidential and will be utilised in this research under pseudonyms. They are not in any particular order.

Similarities and differences were found among the participants that volunteered and contributed to this research. The great thing about these participants is that they differ in the types of accommodation they provide in Tonga and although they differed, they adopted similarities in the way they operate, particularly in the way employers see their employees and HRM recruitment process.

4.1.1 EMPTBU1

The participant employs between 10 to 15 employees within their hotel business and has been around the tourism and hospitality industry for many years. Their background in business management also supports their frame of mind in terms of how a business should be, how they run their business and how they manage their employees. As mentioned above, the people of Tonga are not solely motivated by monetary value. As such, one of the key driving factors that

the employer EMPTBU1 noticed was their employees enjoy being rewarded with incentives such as food or meals – whether it be a team luncheon, team dinner or meals provided throughout their shift.

When EMPTBU1 was recruiting for talent to join their hotel business, they initially searched for assistance from supporting schools that taught tourism and hospitality. They employed a few potential candidates, however, EMPTBU1 received a frequent turnover. This influenced their change in recruitment and selection process to decrease turnover within their business. This will be discussed further in the key themes discussion.

4.1.2 EMPTBU2

Employer EMPTBU2 employs between 10 to 25 employees within their hotel business and has a wealth of knowledge and experience in international tourism, along with in-depth knowledge of Tonga, business and the hotel sector in Tonga. Their vast experiences internationally has influenced their decision to assist Tonga within the hotel sector to improve internal HRM processes and build the hotel industry within the tourism field in Tonga.

When EMPTBU1 recruited for talent in Tonga, they adopted similar recruitment strategies from abroad, however, EMPTBU1 realised that driving factors of potential employees in Tonga differ from the driving factors of people overseas, particularly in developed countries with a modern outlook on their organisation, such as the autocracy employment model (Burton, 2001) who are driven by monetary value. Furthermore, political instability in Tonga have impacted employer business decisions from the lack of legislations that support employment. EMPTBU2 found that creating written agreements were not providing any great impact due to high turnover among the people of Tonga, due to their cultural ways and values. Further insight into the recruitment processes of EMPTBU2 will be explored in the key themes discussion below.

4.1.3 EMPTBU3

The employer EMPTBU3 owns an accommodation business in Tonga that has been running successfully for the past decade. It has recruited employees with no experience and all vary in age and are all local from neighbouring villages nearby.

EMPTBU3 is passionate about its Tongan people and drives to provide opportunities for their local Tongan people, giving them a sense of attachment and belonging within their hotel business.

4.1.4 EMPTBU4

EMPTBU4 is a founder and owner of a boutique accommodation business in Tonga and employs a very small number of employees on a casual and seasonal basis. When the business initially started, EMPTBU4 was managed by immediate family members, however, as time passed by, EMPTBU4 decided to provide opportunities to local people of the village. As the accommodation is not a large business, EMPTBU4 employs solely on seasonal basis on peak occasions when they see fit, otherwise has a permanent employee who maintains the accommodation all year round.

4.2 Mental models of hotel employers in Tonga

This section provides further detail into what mental models are and how it influences employers within hotel businesses. Burton (2001) reinforces the notion that “employment models are an important feature of an organization that shape the future organizational evolution” (p. 24). Furthermore, as stated by Gentner and Stevens (2014), mental models are continuously and consistently modified as time passes and progresses in order to get a result that satisfies all parties.

In the instance of financial issues within a business or hotel business, employers’ initial reaction when facing financial problems would be to consider an avalanche of employee layoffs. Similarly, when an organisation is sustainably progressing and making healthy returns, employers still look at ways of decreasing the number of employees to reduce organisational costs and increase the

returns to the investors. Recurring layoffs and inefficiencies among companies impact the mental models by HR managers resulting in further disparities between the HR and strategic organisation goals. Thus, managers tactically become oblivious to the significance of people management and failing to recognise the efforts of their employees as well as their importance in the overall success of the organisation. Mental models of employers are inflicted and widely impacted by similar experiences and thus, influencing their future business decisions.

It is evident that hotel employers in Tonga are aware that turnover within their business is high, therefore impacting the overall financial productivity of the organisation. Grounded on this logic, this study attempts to examine the current mental models of employers in Tonga to provide insight on their current HRM practices and the consistency between the organisational strategies and strategic human resource management in a researched context that enables the delivery of better performance and competitive edge (Burton, 2001), similar to the case of Southwest Airlines, Toyota and Whole Foods companies.

As opposed to developed countries with developed HRM process within hotel accommodations, many of the employers in the Tongan hotel business industry is particularly interested in a key area when recruiting potential employees, which are the *virtues*. Virtues are values that are lived out by individuals in their daily-life. Virtues for a Tongan are strongly influenced by their Christian faith and the Tongan culture, are the four-golden themes of a Tongan which are *anga faka'apa'apa* (respect), *anga fakatōkilalo* (humility and openness to learning), *tauhi vaha'a* (keeping relationships alive and well) and *mamahi'i me'a* (loyalty and a passion in life). These values are some of the key virtues that Tongan people appreciate and display in their daily life.

It was evident that the ideal employee for employers in the hotel sector Tonga, regardless of age, race, experience or qualification, enjoyed recruiting a candidate who is driven, committed to the role and wants to learn and grow, which relates to the attachment and selection dimension as stated by Burton (2001). This will be further explained in detail in the Themes

section of this research. Following is a summary table of each employer and their current mental model within their individual hotel business.

Table 2. Summary of participants (hotel employers in Tonga) and their current mental model

	EMPTBU1	EMPTBU2	EMPTBU3	EMPTBU4
Employees	10 – 15	15 – 25	10 – 25	3 – 5
Driving Factor	Incentives	Incentives	Opportunities	Stability
Experience	None	Minimal	None	None
Qualification	None	None (sans chef)	None	None
Model Employee	Values / Drive	Values	Values / Growth	Values

The table shows the four differing employers and their current business model. It presents the number of employees that each employer manages within their business, the driving factors that employers have for their employees, the relevant work experience their employees have, current or relevant qualification needed and lastly, what a model employee each hotel employer perceives that their employees should have.

The table presents that the current mental model of the hotel employers participating in this research shows that when considering a potential employee to work for their hotel business is influenced by an employee who is driven, motivated or has work ethic values that will go a long way. A model employee is what employers have understood as to what the employee has and what drives them in their work-space. The importance of the summary of Table 2 allows a visual insight of the mental models of employers in the hotel business in Tonga have. In the discussion, a detailed understanding of whether the mental model reflects and shape the hotel business or whether it is modified as time passes and experiences change.

The star, autocracy and bureaucracy employment model as presented in Table 1 (Burton, 2001) is not a driving factor for employers and employees in Tonga as it focuses on monetary, skills and formal factors, which is ideal if Tonga were a developed country that has been is similar to their western neighbour's such as New Zealand. However, it is clear to see that the hotel sector in Tonga are heavily driven by skills and experience. The engineering and commitment model

influences the HRM processes of hotels in Tonga, as evident in the interviews conducted which will be further explained in the discussion section of this research.

The star, autocracy and bureaucracy employment mental model are all based on skills, driven and motivated by work and is controlled and coordinated on a professional and formal manner. However, the engineering and commitment model influences the HRM processes of hotels in Tonga as it is evident that employees are recruited based on values and fit along with finding a sense of belonging within the hotel business, a familial place that is controlled on a flexible level based on the understanding of the Tongan culture and ways.

Model employee is what the employee has in terms of skills or experience and what drives them in their work-space. When conducting the interviews with the participants, it was clear that there were similar themes that recurred among the employees in the way they recruited, retained and managed their employees.

Table 2 has provided insight to the current mental models of hotel employers in Tonga, displaying that their current mental models is reflected upon the human resources they have and adapting their knowledge of Tonga's culture, people and resources to reflect on their HRM processes.

4.3 Key Themes

The Five Basic Employment Model and the Three Dimensions as presented in Table 1 by Burton (2001) along with the knowledge of Tonga's background, the understanding of hotel employers background and their ideal views of employees within their hotel business, draws a basic view of the model presented in Table 2. This allowed further insight into categorising themes and recurring mental models of the hotel employers.

Table 3 will present key themes and sub-categorised themes that were evidently emerging, repeating and conveyed by the employers who participated in this research. The data was thematically analysed producing three key themes using the dimensions provided by Burton

(2001) and various sub-themes. The table below will help with a clearer view and understanding on the relating themes and sub-themes. The dimensions provided by Burton (2001) will be presented as key themes; selection for recruiting talent, attachment for retaining talent and coordination and/or control on how employers managed their employees and how it influenced their hotel business. Within the key three themes were sub-categories of themes that emerged from the information provided by the participants that will be detailed further below.

Table 3. Themes and Sub-themes

THEMES	DESCRIPTION
Selection	Recruiting talent.
<i>Location</i>	Where potential employees resided impacted on the reliability of hiring them as the industry relied on commitment of these employees towards their hours and days worked.
<i>Qualification</i>	Potential employees were not overlooked if they did not have the qualification, however, for specialised roles such as a Chef or sometimes a bartender required the specifics qualification to be considered for the role.
<i>Experience</i>	If the potential employee did not have the right qualification, relative work experiences were considered. Furthermore, if the role was a simple role that employers/management could see that was easily taught, the potential employee was considered.
<i>Virtues & Values</i>	Relating to experience, if the potential employee lacked the experience the employee is searching for, they (the potential employee) would still be considered based on their personal values and virtues and whether they were dependable or reliable.
Attachment	Retaining talent.
<i>Opportunity</i>	Employees within the business would be kept motivated through employers providing growth and learning within their role. This gave the employee enough reason to stay to learn more and gain more.
<i>Incentives</i>	Team bonding events or travels were a couple of ways of retaining employees. This included things like team lunches hosted by the employer and various trips around Tonga or neighbouring islands/countries. This gave employees the sense of belonging and appreciation by employers.

<i>Family-like environment</i>	Employees felt belonged and enjoyed working with their colleagues and was a very familial-type environment which retained the employee longer than others.
<i>Support</i>	Employees would stay longer with an employer because they were able to support their family with things such as education and basic necessities for their family and home. They would receive great support from their employers.
Coordination and Control	Management of staff members from employers and how their HRM processes influenced.
<i>Staff turnover</i>	Politics heavily impacting hotel business owners on managing their employees and their businesses.
<i>Flexibility</i>	There is some flexibility on how employers manage their employees which requires a lot of trust.
<i>Micro-managing vs macro-managing</i>	Similar to flexibility, a lot of employers do not micro-manage their employees but at times will consistently keep an eye on employees as Tonga is a culturally and traditionally relaxed island and differs very much from western ideals of employees self-managing.

4.3.1 Selection – Recruiting talent

While recruiting for talent for each of the employers, each employer initially started recruiting in ways that they thought was the best for them based on their knowledge and experience. As each individual participant have an extensive wealth of experience and are knowledgeable in their field of expertise, they also differed in work experiences coming from a range of background in gender, age, race and work experience. Each employer started recruiting in their way that they knew best based on their personal work experiences. However, as they adopted their thoughts of their best ways of recruiting employees, they realised that it was not efficient nor relatable to many of the Tongan people as the people of Tonga viewed life differently and was not driven by similar goals as people do in developed, westernised countries.

“I think the biggest challenge in Tonga is finding basic staff.” – EMPTBU2

Location

Finding basic staff to recruit and employ in Tonga due to a number of reasons but a key theme that was repeated among the participants was finding an employee who is able to attend work based on reliability. All participants mutually found that the location of the residence of their employees heavily impact their decision in terms of employing potential employees. Employers of hotel businesses in Tonga found that it was ideal for many of the hotel employers in Tonga to recruit talent locally for different reasons.

“All my employees are now local. I did start off recruiting a specialised role off-shore and realised that we have potential here in Tonga.” EMPTBU1

EMPTBU1 reflected on their past experiences and decided to try recruiting within the same pattern but later realised that there was potential people in Tonga that they can employ. They initially started by recruiting off-shore due to specific skills and experiences they were seeking, such as their chef and kitchen staff, due to the specialisation of their roles within their hotel business. This was due to the menu that they created and the difficulty that they found in searching and interviewing candidates who were not right for the role. Recruiting locally for EMPTBU1 meant providing opportunities for people in Tonga. Employing locally for EMPTBU1 particularly meant employing people of Tonga within the Tongatapu region (mainland).

“We employ the locals – locals meaning from this district.” EMPTBU3

“Employing someone locally is convenient for both parties – they are only a minute away, able to get to work on a convenient time and also able to get to work promptly if I needed them to be there.” EMPTBU4

EMPTBU3 continued to recruit locally within close distance of the hotel business and the people of the local village and has since recruited 50+ employees over their time, with some of their employees moving on to bigger and better things in life. Some of their previous staff have continued to further their education, others have flown overseas to broaden their experiences and some have learned and grown within the business.

EMPTBU3 and EMPTBU4 realised that through recruiting local people of Tonga to their hotel businesses also provided other avenues for the potential employees. Although EMPTBU4 has a

small business, their current business model is very much similar to EMPTBU3 as they also wanted to provide opportunities to their local people. However, in contrast to EMPTBU3, EMPTBU4 recruits seasonally and employs a very small handful people throughout the year due to peak seasons of visitors to Tonga. As EMPTBU4 employs a smaller accommodation business in comparison to the other participants, EMPTBU4 differs in HRM processes.

Furthermore, among the participants were various comments that reflected upon utilising local organisations that provided support, experience and training that assisted various youths of Tonga in searching for a job. Participants commented briefly on aiding support from an organisation in Tonga when recruiting their employees but found a 100% turnover within the first week of recruiting them.

In summary of the location sub-category, it is clear to see that the above displays a strong sense of how important it is for the hotel employers in Tonga build the credibility of their Tongan people by providing opportunities to grow within the business.

Qualification

Staff qualification is not entirely a demand or need within the tourism industry as training becomes the determining factor in career growth or opportunities (Ubeda-Garcia, Marco-Lajara, Sabater-Sempere & Garcia-Lillo, 2013).

"I'm trying very hard to work on people without any skills but to teach them the skills." EMPTBU2

EMPTBU2 is open to recruiting employees without the necessary qualification and skill because they believe that if the individual has the right attitude and the willingness to learn, they are easily taught the skills and knowledge required for the role within their hotel business. They believe that through recruiting an individual without the required or needed qualification, they are able to provide more for the employee such as upskilling. Tourism has a high turnover and EMPTBU2 believes that some of the roles and responsibilities within their hotel business is easily taught. As they are quite flexible in their ways of working, EMPTBU2 believes that through teaching the skills to a newly employed individual with no specific qualification provides the

individual with the need and want to continue in that role for a longer length of time, thus reducing high turnovers.

“...being a receptionist doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll stay put in the reception area the entire day.” EMPTBU2

*“What we do from the beginning until now, we employ those that doesn’t have a qualification and we give hope to the kids and the local people nearby. Most, if not, all our employees are not qualified. We seek various upskilling opportunities to send our employees to to improve their knowledge, skills and experiences.”
EMPTBU3*

Similar to EMPTBU2’s belief, EMPTBU3 is open to seeking potential employees who are not qualified and is open to providing training to upskill the less-qualified employees. EMPTBU3 understands the land and the people of Tonga and is familiar with the way the Tongan community thinks and acts. They are aware of some of the local families situations and have seen their neighbouring villages near their hotel business and try to provide a sense of hope and foundation for the local people by providing opportunities without fussing over whether they have any sort of qualification or not. Their approach and belief in having a qualification does not mean much to EMPTBU3 and believes the skills and experience can be taught.

“Qualification comes after I look for someone who truly wants to work.” EMPTBU4

EMPTBU4 also does not search for potential employees who have the necessary qualifications required to work for their hotel business. As the hotel business for EMPTBU4 is small with only a handful of employees and seasonal workers recruited, EMPTBU4 does not recruit employees based on qualifications. EMPTBU4 looks for individuals that are willing to work and do the work as needed.

Evidently, qualification is not a must for many of the participants and this is influenced by their understanding of Tonga and its people. Through the decision of overlooking qualification at recruitment stage for potential employees, it provides other avenues for these potential employees that can shape the mental model processes of employers within the hotel industries in Tonga.

Experience

Searching and recruiting for employees with the experience required for a successful business is significant for the overall productivity of the business to be successful. EMPTBU1 reflects on their experience when they tried to recruit employees who had the right experience they needed but was from overseas.

“I made the mistake of thinking it was greener on the other side of the fence where I bought a chef from overseas and they weren’t conducive to what was happening over here. Then I sent him back and I brought a guy from New Zealand and then realised that actually, the guy I had here all along was the one leading the way, so I gave him the opportunity to prove himself.” EMPTBU1

EMPTBU1 realised after recruiting off-shore, that it was not ideal as it was not cost effective or efficient with the business. Following that, EMPTBU1 realised that Tonga did have potential in employees and started to look for assistance within organisations in Tonga that assisted youths and young adults in Tonga with searching for a job. They provided the support and training of various industries to prepare them for the real world. EMPTBU1 decided to employ a few candidates from the organisation, however it was evident after the first week that it was not the best option for the hotel business. EMPTBU2 similarly went down the same pathway and was concerned when there was a 100% turnover with candidates that were recruited through the local organisation in Tonga.

“We tried this place in town where they do get contacts for people who are looking for jobs but there was no success with that one.” EMPTBU3

EMPTBU3 also searched for assistance elsewhere but was not successful and decided to recruit their own employees and decided to focus more on local people from neighbouring villages and trial how it would go. Fortunately, it was something that worked for them as they saw potential in many of their local people.

“We just bring them in and we started teaching them everything at work from how to serve customers to bartending.” EMPTBU3

EMPTBU3 realised that it was easier to bring in local people of Tonga to their business and train them in contrast to employing people with the skills and talent as it proved more difficult to retain talent within the hotel business.

“Tonga is a small, developing country. Experience is not something I look for, the important thing is finding someone who wants to work and will work. Experience comes after all that. An example here is, I have employed someone who is an experienced painter and have also employed someone who is not an experienced painter. The person with less experience actually did a better job than the experienced painter – in my eyes.” EMPTBU4

EMPTBU4 did not recruit people who was qualified academically or had the exact experience within the field of the role they were recruiting for. EMPTBU4 offered opportunities to local people of Tonga who valued work ethic while also providing an individual with an opportunity to support themselves and their families. EMPTBU4 does not fuss over experience or qualifications, but focus on work ethic, loyalty and reliability of the potential employee.

Relative work experience is evidently not a must nor a need that is mandatory or demanded from the participants. Through their own experiences, it was clear that some may have adopted past experiences and thoughts on employing experienced or skillful employees that can do the job but have found that the opportunities are right in front of their door-step with current or potential employees who are willing to upskill or are looking for the opportunity to learn and grow. These employers of their hotel businesses have also realised that recruiting talent without the required or mandatory experiences that many of the westernised countries and ideals have reduces a high turnover within their business and allows opportunity and growth. Furthermore, skills and experience is not the key factor that they search for and found that work ethic is essential when recruiting for that right talent as it provides opportunities, learning and growth as well as the desire to stay within the organisation. Following below is a sub-theme that echoed among the participants during the interviews.

Virtues and Values

It was evident that following the interviews, the employers of hotels in Tonga are particularly drawn to employees who hold particular values and work ethic.

“The biggest challenge in Tonga is not just about looking for a waiter or waitress or housekeeper; it’s finding the right people that actually want to work.” EMPTBU3

“The most important thing for me is finding someone who is worth the value of my money. If I am paying someone X amount of money, I’d like the work to be worth X amount of money.” EMPTBU4

Due to the cultural ways of Tonga and the local understanding of their way of life, Tonga is particular about work ethic. As it is a country strongly influenced by Christianity and enforcing a hierarchy nationwide, Tongan people are respectful of their wise elders. Although they are not particularly driven by similar things such as western countries, for example, monetary values of sorts, they believe in hard work, regardless of the job.

It is generally known that hospitality and tourism industry has a high turnover, however, with the minimum support of legislations in Tonga, the turnover is undoubtedly high within a few days. It was important for these hotel employees to recruit talent that was fresh, willing to learn, willing to grow and gain experience, skills and build their opportunities both locally and internationally. When selecting and recruiting these potential candidates, it was evident that identifying key values such as work ethic, commitment and dedication to the role was important as people with the right skills and experience did not stay for a long time.

As there is no legislation supporting employees or employers, high turnover is expected within the tourism industry as employees and employers are not legally binded to one another based on written agreement, as opposed to western countries when accepting a contract.

“When I started the hotel, I did employment contracts with everybody. There are other hotel businesses in Tonga that are renowned overseas and are an international trade which have stringent standards that have to be kept up with in accordance to their other hotel overseas but the challenge is finding people and then finding a way to keep them... But when you find people who are just looking to work and wanting to learn, I try my best to work on those without the skills so that the turnover reduces, while also providing them with a sense of accomplishment and opportunities.” EMPTBU2

EMPTBU2 realised that the lack of support from political standards impact their business and keeping employees. However, finding employees who are willing to learn and can be taught was great as it reduced high turnover which was great from a business perspective but from an employee’s perspective, allowed just the mere fact of having a job.

EMPTBU1 also recruited employees who were willing to do the work and was not afraid of flexibility and picking up other tasks and responsibilities.

“With my team, I multitask. I don’t want someone to say “sorry I’m just the manager here”, I said, if you look at me, I do the cooking, I clean the toilets or whatever and that’s how you’re supposed to take it. I don’t put my manager’s job on and say “sorry, that’s my job and I can’t do that because it’s beneath me” and I said, there’s no such thing as that.” EMPTBU1

Summarising the selection (recruiting employees) section shows a growing pattern among the participants where employers recruit employees based on differing reasons but all interlink with one another. Differing from western ideals of qualifications and experiences required to be considered for a role, recruitment of employees in Tonga are different due to cultural and geographical differences.

4.3.2 Attachment – Retaining talent

An article by Cunha and Cunha (2004) identify that the best HRM practices within hotel sectors are staffing and employee incentives, career development and performance management. Due to having no legal requirements for a minimum wage for the people of Tonga, money is not a driving factor for employees and therefore, it impacts their attendance, reliability and timekeeping when it comes to work. It is already clear that the hospitality and tourism industry has a high staff turnover regardless of where in the world you are. However, in a small developing country such as Tonga, without an employment act or legislation that supports employers, staff turnover is extremely high where in some occasions, employees hired today will not return tomorrow. Retaining talent is important for the hotel businesses as it gave employees a sense of stability and steadiness in life while also improving overall productivity within the business. Retaining talent is through visualising talent among current employees, providing the opportunity to give them more growth within the role and as an individual.

“We take our teams to local places and sometimes we take some of them on overseas trips – of course we do fundraising and all that, but anything to give the opportunities to our employees.” EMPTBU3

Opportunity

Employers of hotel businesses in Tonga found that it was ideal for many of the hotel employers in Tonga to recruit talent locally. They realised that through the provision of creating

opportunities for their local people, it gave them the sense of satisfaction and improved self-esteem.

“We saw some of the kids and people in our village and we started thinking that we have to try help them somehow. We don’t employ qualified chefs or qualified this or qualified that. We give the opportunity for those that cannot get a job.” – EMPTBU3

“We look at potential in our staff, so we train them and offer them opportunities.” EMPTBU4

“In our company, we look at potential in our staff, so we train them and offer them opportunities. If I hear of opportunities being taught within certain areas that I see my staff learning, I send them to that to gain more experience” EMPTBU1

It is clear to see that majority of employers of hotel businesses in Tonga finds it strenuous to seek what they are looking for in potential employees as past experiences have influenced their mental models of seeking candidates with the skills and knowledge within their field. However, as Tonga differs expansively to western and developed countries, mental model of employers in search of employees had to alter and change significantly. Their HRM process altered to seeking and recruiting local people in Tonga and employing many candidates who lacked the experience, the knowledge or the skills required. This developed opportunities for their employees and created a sense of belonging for potential employees who were seeking employment. The sense of belonging and attachment to the business implemented motivation and the strive to do better for many employees because they envisioned a better future. With the consistency of employers seeking or providing upskilling opportunities, it was imperative to continue this model for their employees as it created longer tenure from their employees within their business.

Incentives

Along with opportunities to upskill and gain more knowledge within the industry, employers also attempted to adopt other ideas that they have previously worked with to trial whether it would also impact their businesses.

“We implemented things like pay rises.” EMPTBU2

EMPTBU2 employs between 10 to 25 employees within their business and decided to implement a pay rise within their contract or written agreement. As mentioned earlier on, employment legislations are yet to be heavily enforced within the tourism industry in Tonga, however, EMPTBU2 decided to trial this avenue to see whether it improved the turnover within their business. A trial and error process was made and EMPTBU2 realised, the people of Tonga are not particularly motivated by money.

“Tongans aren’t particularly motivated by money. One of the greatest motivators for my staff is food. In saying that, I implemented lunches for staff and it helped tremendously for a while.” EMPTBU2

EMPTBU2 realised that incentives such as providing on-site lunch for staff was a great motivator for employees. Similarly, EMPTBU1 also implemented staff luncheons and dinners or staff events during peak season such as Christmas functions. Implementations of staff luncheons or dinners created a great way for team building and bonding.

“I have staff meetings with my managers once a week or once a month and we also have a – we do performance interviews every year.” EMPTBU1

“I’ve sent my head chefs overseas to spend a week or two learning in a different kitchen, picking up new skills.” EMPTBU1

Family environment

Creating a sense of attachment to the hotel business was not overly echoed throughout the interviews with the various employers because the nature of Tonga and its people is friendly and familial. When one becomes familiar with their surroundings, the walls start to crumble and individuals can trust one another. Enforcing or having to create a family type environment within hotel businesses in Tonga was not required as individuals were able to get along. As the employers were recruiting locally, many of the employees were already familiar with one another and already understood the way of their culture and traditions.

However, it was clear that with EMPTBU3 and the way they run their business was very much driven by family, creating a rippling effect from owners to their employees. They created a very close-knit family environment. They were uniquely different from other participants in this

research as they recruited mainly from local districts and not far and wide within Tongatapu. Due to recruiting from close-by villages, the local people were already very familiar with one another and were closely related or family-friends.

“Our staff turnover is not high, so we’ve been able to pick up on the things that are and are not working and we talk to our employees when we are making a change. We have kids come and work here and they stay for years.” EMPTBU3

The owners created a sense of belonging for the employees, they do not have a high turnover. As they created opportunities for their local people, they find it hard to actually find more work for potential employees from the local, neighbouring villages. The work of their employees are always highly recognised and appreciated by the owners (EMPTBU3), hence their turnover being extremely low.

Support

The tourism industry is an ever-increasing and popular industry that will continuously provide opportunities for people as time goes on, however, with modern times comes different wants and needs. Although Tonga is still a developing country in comparison to their developed neighbours such as New Zealand and Australia, similar things are also required for the people of Tonga. This includes flexibility in work hours.

“I’ve seen the family members of my employee come support [her – my employee] with work. The convenience of employing them is because it also suits the flexibility they require working with us.” EMPTBU4

EMPTBU4 realised that the convenience in hiring employees who resides close to work is not only convenient for the employer but also for the employees. They started to see a trend in the daily life of a particular employee regarding their days and hours being divided throughout the week and realised the employee’s other obligations to their family. The support of EMPTBU4 to the daily routine of their employee outside of their work-life assured the employee and provided them with a sense of recognition and pride in their work. Because of the support of the employer to the employee allowing work-life balance and flexibility, it is clear to see that the employee feels supported as they have been with the business for more than five years’.

Another way of support was creating ongoing meetings and performance management for employees within the hotel business.

“When I started the hotel, I started doing weekly meetings and then went on to do fortnightly meetings and it was a great motivator for people, it really was.”
EMPTBU2

“ We actually have staff meetings with my managers once a week or once a month and we also do performance interviews every year.” EMPTBU1

EMPTBU2 and EMPTBU1 found that it was a motivator for their employees creating consistent meetings and performance interviews as it provided employees the opportunity to get feedback on their performance and find ways to improve their work. The support of employers in the continuous improvement of their employees gave employees a notion of feeling recognised for their work and recognition in opportunities for growth.

4.3.3 Coordination and Control – Management of Employees

It was evident from the interviews and *talanoa* with the participants that there were a mix of micro-managing employees and allowing some flexibility, trust and reliability on the employees depending on the size of the hotel businesses.

Staff turnover

Staff turnover within the hotel industry in Tonga is extremely high, which was experienced by each of the participants for this research. After adopting previous experiences into their HRM processes within their hotel business, they realised it will not work as the market they previously worked with is different to the Tongan market and their way of work. However, after trial and error and finding what works and what doesn't work, employers realised what works for them individually within their hotel businesses. Nevertheless, EMPTBU3 found that during a particular season, they lose their staff to New Zealand and Australia for seasonal work such as pick-packing, commonly known in Tonga as *toli*.

*“I can tell you one thing here in Tonga that impacts our staff leaving that is *toli**. Whenever they get the opportunity to go *toli**, they don't come back.”* EMPTBU3

EMPTBU3 finds this beyond their control and cannot force their employees to stay. Many Tongans have taken the opportunity to go overseas to New Zealand or Australia for picking and packing season. This is because it provides further opportunities for their families back in Tonga. This includes a means to find an opportunity to migrate to a developed country for more opportunities for families or more money to support the family back home to build a bigger and better home environment, better education and educational resources or start a business. EMPTBU3 realises this opportunity impacts their employees and is the only factor that results in staff turnover, particularly during picking and packing season.

Flexibility

EMPTBU4 implemented for their staff is flexible working hours off-peak season. EMPTBU4 allowed their staff to continue overseeing the accommodation during off-peak season when not many guests are arriving and allowed the flexibility for the employee to complete such hours required as long as the work required to be done was completed for the day or week. It is evident that flexibility is primarily suited to MSMEs because of the number of employees employed within the business. As a micro-business, reliability is heavily important between employee and employer in order for the success of the business as there are not many staff members to rely on to complete various tasks and duties. This leads to micro-managing vs. macro-managing among different hotel businesses in Tonga.

Micro-managing vs. Macro-managing

EMPTBU4 does not micro-manage their employee but relies heavily on trust and communication. Due to the business being very small with only a handful of employees, it was evident that the hiring of the right employee for the role meant a lot of trust went into the recruitment process and was shown the processes from beginning to end as the relationship has been well-over five years. EMPTBU4 travels constantly and requires employees that they can rely on to oversee the business while they are overseas. Due to that, micro-managing is not on

EMPTBU4's agenda, hence, the importance of also hiring employees who conveniently reside close to the hotel business.

Similarly to EMPTBU4, EMPTBU3 and EMPTBU4 also do not micro-manage their employees and require them to use initiative in their role.

"Hierarchy is not an extensive thing we have here, we don't have management type seniority – we all work together as one and if I need to pull any of them aside, we tell them." EMPTBU3

"With my team, I multitask. I don't want someone to say "sorry I'm just the manager here", I said, if you look at me, I do the cooking, I clean the toilets or whatever and that's how you're supposed to take it. I don't put my manager's job on and say, sorry, that's my job and I can't do that because it's beneath me, and I said, there's no such thing as that. Once people start working here, after about the second week, I want them to start using their initiative and so-forth around here." EMPTBU1

EMPTBU1 and EMPTBU3 employ more than 10 employees and therefore has a bit of flexibility on managing their way of work, coordinating their employees and having control over what they do around the business. However, they appreciate employees who are able to think on their feet, use initiative and problem-solve if they must. Upon recruiting their employees, they look for the values and try to identify work ethics from their employees which is key as it impacts the way employers manage their employees in the long run. As the employers are familiar with the Tongan people and their culture, coordination and control of their employees within their business is influenced by their understandings of the Tongan way. In contrast to HRM in developed countries with structured processes, coordination and control differs vastly. Employers in developed countries approach their employees in direct formal and professional approach, however, in Tonga, because employers are culturally aware of Tonga, approaching and managing their employees is influenced from a cultural perspective and is direct and informal. EMPTBU1 and EMPTBU3 are both able to directly approach employees and informally pull them aside or have a brief discussion on what needs to be done around the hotel or what can be improved. Furthermore, among managing employees and their hotel businesses, the participants have all resonated how they individually do similar work to their employees and also assisting them with anything that needs to be done around the hotel. This impacts time on

micro-managing their employees which they do not have time for and thus believe that their employees should be using initiative while employed within their hotel.

“It’s an all-rounder’s job in a hotel in Tonga. It’s not a General Manager’s position to check housekeeping and back of houses and the restaurant – there’s no room for supervisory roles here. It’s very much a one person do it all – together. I have to supervise them constantly, it’s a constant, constant job being the owner.”
EMPTBU2

In comparison to EMPTBU1 and EMPTBU3, EMPTBU2 similarly employs around the same number of employees, however, finds that they need to constantly supervise their employees and therefore supervises their staff on an ongoing regular basis. This impacts their management style and the way of coordinating and controlling their employees, and as mentioned previously, EMPTBU2 implements ongoing performance management to regulate work performance. EMPTBU2 believes that ongoing and regular supervision of their staff allows improvement in skills and experience and provides future growth within the business or opportunity for the individual to further their knowledge. Similar to developed countries with HRM processes, EMPTBU2 adopts both a cultural informal and professional approach through ongoing performance management with their staff to support individual growth in work experience, skills and knowledge of the tourism industry.

Coordination and control of employees by the participants showed a varied ways of managing their employees, however, successful within their own ways.

4.4 Discussion summary

The data gathered and discussed above allowed insight to the mental models that each employer had based on experiences from the past and their current ongoings in shaping their organisation. It is evident that although the participants all differed in terms of hotel businesses and their own individual experiences, they are similar in ways of business processes and their mental models of their business. The three main themes will be summarised further below and supported by the research conducted by Naidu and Chand (2013; 2014) and the best HRM practices.

4.4.1 Selection

Naidu and Chand (2013; 2014) found 15 best HRM practices in hotels in Tonga. This included seasonal recruitment and workplace culture and ethics which were evident in the findings from the *talanoa* with the participants who employ their own boutique accommodation in Tonga.

Recruiting and selecting potential employees for their individual hotel businesses, the participants all vary in ways of searching for talent based on their personal experiences. However, after experiencing their initial ways of recruiting employees, they realised that Tonga is definitely not the same as the western world. Location was a key indicator in searching for the right talent as finding talent off-shore was not successful for either party – employer and employee. This is due to the cultural differences of Tonga and developed countries and the wide difference in market including population, cultural understanding and awareness, pallet and appetite and financial differences. As Tonga is a developing country, the Tongan people are not particularly driven by monetary values, thus impacting the cultural differences and understanding how employees and employers work in Tonga. Recruiting off-shore employees heavily impacts turnover and recruitment processes for the employer because although the employee may have the skills and experience, being knowledgeable of the market that they are recruiting for and working for is key. Identifying the demands of the local people and country is important and should educate themselves in understanding the market they are eventually

going to work for as it will help the individual know the type of market they are catering for. Location was key to the hotel employers and have since realised that recruiting the Tongan people from nearby villages is key in building strong relationships and providing opportunities and other avenues that is convenient for both employer and employee.

Upon realising the importance of location when recruiting the potential employee, the employers realised that this impacts any skills, experience or qualification supporting locals nearby. However, what they lacked in was what also provided these employees other avenues that could potentially allow growth and a future for them and their families. In hindsight, what mattered the most to the employers was work ethics shown by potential employees – their reliability, commitment and willingness to learn and grow. This gave employers a bit of burden lifted from their shoulders and eventually, reduction in staff turnover.

4.4.2 Attachment

Work attitudes among employees and employers are critical when building good work relationship and identifying personnel practices which influence (strategic) decisions by employers in the workplace and their mental models. Naidu and Chand (2013; 2014) found that internal promotion, teamwork cohesiveness, in-house training and development and incentives and appreciation or recognition of good performance were the best 15 HRM practices in hotel businesses in Tonga which were also displayed and expressed by the participants in this research, as mentioned previously in the findings.

When employers are formulating strategic decisions appropriate for the workplace, it is important that they create a work environment that is relatable to their employees that will ideally retain their employees. For instance, employees may perceive work as a personal achievement or a drive for career experience, growth and opportunity for personal development and the workplace environment will be a driving and motivating factor for them in regards to remaining in the workplace. However, employers may be more concerned on the overall organisational productivity and will have an ideal mental model in their workplace.

In reducing high staff turnover, employers had to find ways in retaining the talent within their hotel business as it shaped the success of the business. As the hotel businesses are SMEs and employ a handful number of people to 15+ employees, finding ways was somewhat easy and natural in retaining employees. As many employees being recruited did not have a lot of the skills and experiences generally acquired had it been in a western or developed country, it was only natural that employees felt the excitement of learning and growing. As employers tried to teach those without the necessary skills and experiences, employees were given hope as they were learning different things. Employees were able to see potential futures from growing opportunities just from learning from their employers on basic tasks within the hotel. Additionally, training and development is also considered a best HRM practice within hotel businesses (Adam & Urquhart, 2009; Chen, Cheung & Law, 2012) as it provides employees with a sense of purpose and belonging within the organisation.

In the findings within the study by Ubeda-Garcia (et al., 2013), it was evident that job satisfaction was reflected by effective and ethical leadership. Ethical leadership is described as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Trevino & Harrison, 2005, p. 120).

Throughout the *talanoa* with the participants, it was clear that more enforcement around recruiting talent was the challenge, as mentioned by EMPTBU2, because trying to find people who want to work and will work is particularly challenging, especially in Tonga due to cultural differences to the western world. Enforcing and creating a sense of attachment or belonging in the business was not needed because Tonga’s cultural ways and their understanding of their people and country simply works in a family-like way. However, other areas such as providing that extra support in other ways like flexibility in hours, continuous meetings or performance management, allowed the employee to feel appreciated for their work and recognised for what they have done and their contribution to the overall success of the business. In summary, the

findings for this particular research evidently shows that employers did not need to go through a detailed process of implementing an environment for employees to feel a sense of belonging as it came natural to employer and employee based on cultural awareness and understanding of the Tongan way.

4.4.3 Coordination and Control

As stated by Naidu and Chand (2013;2014), included in the top best HRM practices within hotel businesses in Tonga was the rotation of tasks and activities. Employers in Tonga found that when employing employees, they look for the work ethic and value that employees may have as the role is not one-dimensional, but requires an individual who is happy to do a range of tasks and not remain within one department of business or what the role is labeled. Ideally, employers searched for employees who were able to do a multitude of tasks and activities within the business, who showed initiative in their role and provided overall support to the business. This influenced the ways of managing employees for each employer.

It was clear that in the findings, micro-managing and macro-managing were two distinct sub-themes that emerged from the *talanoa* that slightly differed among the participants. As EMPTBU1, EMPTBU3 and EMPTBU4 showed similar ideas in coordinating and controlling their way of managing their employee, providing macro-management with minimal supervision of employees, EMPTBU2 required constant supervision of their employees, as a means of pushing their employees providing opportunities to continuously grow in knowledge, skills and experiences. Naidu and Chand (2013;2014) found that one of the best HRM practices in hotel businesses included having the right staff at the right place of service. Reflecting on participant EMPTBU4 and their way of control and management of employee reflects on Naidu and Chand's (2013;2014) HRM practice that through the continuous supervision of their employees, it allows them to grow in experience and knowing their strengths and weaknesses within the hotel and thus being the right staff in the right place.

Throughout this research in gaining an understanding of the mental models of employers in the boutique accommodation industry in Tonga, it was evident that the initial mental model employers had of employees altered and changed with time to suit the current HRM process they have in place. It is clear to see that their current process continues to alter as the market changes but ultimately, have found a base process that they can rely on to continue their business.

5 Conclusion, Implications and Recommendation

The mental models of employers within the hotel businesses in Tonga are heavily impacted by political barriers that lack support for both employers and employees, hence the high turnover of employment in Tonga. The lack of legislative support also heavily impact HRM in general for many organisations in Tonga, that can allow manipulative practices that would not be accepted should it be in developed countries with western ideas and processes. Furthermore, the political instability of Tonga has hindered the growth within the hotel sector and was evident throughout the interviews conducted with the employers within the hotel business.

It was evident that the employers within the hotel business in Tonga adopted similar recruitment and HRM processes when initially searching and recruiting talent for their business. As they progressed, they had to alter certain processes to reflect the Tongan culture and environment as it differed to the western world of HRM processes due to culture and political differences. It reiterated that the overall organisational performance was reliant on a strategic and understanding process of recruitment to ensure a steady progress and improvement within their organisation. Furthermore, investing in consistent HRM practices within the organisation to achieve organisation goals was important (Chopra, 2017) to drive improvement within the business.

As stated previously in this research, it is clear that following this research studied in this field by Dewettinck and Remue (2011), further research for best HRM practices should be explored more in differing geographical contexts.

The wealth of experience and knowledge of the hotel employers in Tonga was evidently advanced, modern and influenced by the western world and their mental models of their business was clearly altered to reflect processes within their business. Understanding the culture, environment and the people of Tonga was pivotal in recruiting employees into their business as they understood that the turnover is high within the tourism industry and especially, in Tonga. This research was intended to understand the employers mental models within

boutique accommodations in Tonga, hence the focus on employers that had four willing participants who owns and employs their own boutique hotel or accommodation in Tonga.

Although there were similarities of the three dimensions between the mental models found for this research and the dimensions by Burton (2001) through selection, attachment and control and coordination, there were also differences among each dimension. For example, in the research by Baron and Hannan (2002), who also adopted the three dimensions for their research in high-tech start-up business, found that when selecting employees for their company, it was important that relative skills and experience was needed so that when the individual commenced work with their company, they were able to carry out tasks effectively without intense training provided. This differed to selecting employees for the hotel industry in Tonga as employers selected employees with hardworking values and work ethic that was committed and driven to strive for the best within their organisation. Baron and Hannan (2002) found that when employees were not expected to be loyal to the organisation but instead, loyal to the project they are completing. Differing to the research conducted above, employers found that employees were attached to their work and the organisation through various supports from the manager themselves, which led to commitment and long-term employability within the hotel business in Tonga. And lastly, control and coordination; which found more similarities in both Baron and Hannan (2002) and this particular research as it equalises between professional and formal control as well as peer-cultural control. There is some professional supervising required among employees to complete the tasks, however, cultural understanding in Tonga acquired less supervising and more trusting – values that employers in Tonga have found important when selecting and retaining employees.

It is evident that the examples from Baron and Hannan (2002) differed to the research conducted above and it is clear this is due to differences in demographics and industry, hotel business in Tonga versus high-tech start-up business in the western world. However, regardless of differences in ways of selecting, retaining and controlling and coordinating employees, both

industries provided similar themes that extracted various sub-themes that coincide well within this research.

The ontological and epistemological paradigm position of the research initially started off as an interview, then became a *talanoa* session between participant and researcher, further allowing insight into the idealistic views and mental models of employers into an ideal or model employee within their business. A deeper understanding on their initial HRM processes were influenced and adopted from past work experiences that they assumed could also be manageable in Tonga. The methodological approach allowed the researcher to observe the participant, enabling the researcher to ascertain different realities, experiences and behaviours of the individual employers' as they individually reflect on their past personal and professional experiences that influenced their mental models of their individual hotel business.

As previously stated, the employers' individually and collectively have a wealth of experience in the business and tourism sector which has been influenced by western ideals and HRM processes. However, through a relativism and interpretivism position of the researcher, it was evident that the employers have been consistently modifying their initial mental model of their HRM processes to reflect the demographic background of Tonga, along with their individual employees. The employers started to understand more of their own business and what they were seeking while also altering their initial thoughts and ideas of HRM processes to align with the Tongan market.

It is important to understand where the mental models of employers of the hotel business in Tonga derives from, as it allows insight and a strong basis on the current understandings of mental models of some of the hotel employers in Tonga. It provides insight to their HRM processes and understanding for their reasons behind their way of recruiting talent for their business. Through the understanding of these current mental models of the hotel employers in Tonga, it provides support for future research on HRM processes in Tonga. Furthermore, it can also assist future researchers on starting points for in-depth research into HRM in Tonga or aid

assistance to various hotel employers on finding ways to retain talent within their business or improve various HRM practices.

5.1 Practical implications

Implications among the research was evident in targeting participants and recruiting them to participate in the research. This is because Tonga is a small island and due to the nature of the small tourism businesses, not many employers were willing to divulge much information. This was due to one main factor. Employers initially thought that private, sensitive and confidential information were going to be asked of and shared, which was not the case. The information required was solely focused on mental models of employers and their thoughts influenced by experiences on how they perceive their employees, how to recruit employees, where they recruited employees from and how they think the ideal employee is. Other minor impacting factors that disinterested employers was that they were quite busy and was not able to schedule a time in to contribute to the research.

Recruiting willing employers within the hotel business in Tonga was difficult due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, due to limited confidentiality provided for any willing participant, employers within the hotel business were not particularly interested in providing information on HRM processes. Secondly, as employers, it was particularly difficult to find time as they were constantly busy. As mentioned above, employers within the hotel business do wear a varied number of roles and are not just managing but do services in the kitchen, floor staff and cleaning, thus making it complicated for employers to fit time within their schedule.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that more research is focused on the human resource management of Tonga and the wider South Pacific to gauge a better understanding on the HRM processes within the developing countries and Pacific islands. Furthermore, it is recommended that there is more research within the tourism industry in Tonga and the South Pacific to have an understanding on their HRM processes and how the rest of the world impacts their industry.

Similarly to the study conducted by Cheng and Brown (1998), hotel employers in Tonga should look at adopting well-thought and processed induction, training and development processes to minimise high turnover. Furthermore, further insight into legislations provided by the government should also be met and upheld within hotel businesses.

Although this study was smaller in-scale to an in-depth research, the willing and voluntary participants from different areas of the accommodation industry in Tonga created validity in finding out different various key themes that were both similar and different among the hotel businesses. However, it is important to note that more participants contributing to this research could have created greater influence and represent stronger validity when drawing out themes from various mental models of employers from different sub-categories of the accommodation business in Tonga. For future research, it is recommended that more candidates should participate in the research to receive stronger data, particularly a range of employers within different sectors of the hotel industry in Tonga. Furthermore, to get a rigorous result in research, it is recommended for future research to look into HRM studies in hotel business in Tonga that also delve into the satisfaction of customers to get an understanding of the HRM processes within the hotel industry and if the productivity or output is improved based on mental models of employers and their HRM processes.

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