Can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?

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Can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?

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Contents

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 nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Signed   _____

Denise Schitko

October 2009

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I hope that this research goes towards awareness of disability issues and helps in the creation of a truly inclusive environment for all travellers.

This research was approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 14 May 2007. AUTEC Reference number 07/62.

Abstract

This study aims to determine whether the attitudes of students (and therefore future employers) towards people with physical disabilities can be modified by exposing them to the needs of disabled people, or whether perceptions of the needs of the disabled are too entrenched for education to effect any change. It also evaluates whether attitudinal changes are enduring and therefore continue to influence students' responses to the disabled after a period of time has elapsed.

Respondents were students on the Diploma of Hospitality Management at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), enrolled on an Accommodation Operations paper. A compulsory assessment for this paper was a group assignment that considered facilities offered by accommodation providers for guests with disabilities. Respondents were surveyed before (n = 54) and after (n = 24) the assignment to determine any attitude and knowledge changes. Both surveys were undertaken at the end of lectures. The surveys were distributed in class, so the number of respondents relates to the number of students in class during the particular lecture selected for survey distribution. Respondents were then invited to join a focus group to explore their feelings and opinions about disabled people. Another focus group was undertaken with students who had completed the disability assignment the previous year. The focus group was to assess whether or not the awareness of disability issues was still apparent after a period of time had elapsed. These findings would then prove whether or not exposure to such issues still influenced respondents' attitudes.

The second survey responses and comments made during the subsequent focus groups conclude that awareness of disability issues may be heightened with exposure to barriers, both physical and attitudinal, that are experienced by people with impairments. Understanding of disability issues is the first step in the removal of barriers and will help lead to the creation of a more inclusive environment for staff and guests in the hospitality industry. An inclusive environment is particularly desirable as more hotels are required in response to increases in tourist numbers. With increased visitors' arrivals, it is reasonable to expect that tourists will have varying abilities, and therefore, modification of facilities to suit their needs will

benefit a large number of people. The research also concludes that the knowledge gained in the assignment was still influential after the conclusion of the assignment.

Students who have studied issues for people with impairments, as future managers, will have the knowledge and understanding to provide a more inclusive environment for guests that meets both social and legal obligations. Such an environment will be beneficial to both guests and potential employees with physical disabilities.

Introduction

Disabled people are the world's largest minority. It is estimated that around ten per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, experience disability. This figure is increasing through population growth, medical advances, and the growing numbers of people living to older age (United Nations' Department of Information 2006).

In New Zealand, one in five people will experience some form of long-term disability during their lifetime (Workbridge, 2008), though many of them will adjust to their disability (temporary or permanent), will remain in employment, and be self-sufficient. Schitko (1998) comments that 'an aging population, allied to a growing incidence of accidental injuries, suggests that this proportion may well increase in future years' (p. 1).

The New Zealand tourism and hospitality industry is a major contributor to the country's economy and requires a large workforce. It would therefore be logical to assume that a portion of this workforce will be employees with some form of disability, but personal observations suggest that this is not the case. Perhaps one of the main challenges of hiring people with physical disabilities in hospitality is its emphasis on the physical appearance of employees (Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen & Watt, 2003). Groschl (2006) notes that 'the limited awareness, understanding and communication between employees with and without a disability seem to limit the attraction and integration of persons with disabilities' (p. 1).

This study considers whether the attitudes of a group of hospitality students towards people with physical disabilities can be changed by exposure to the needs of disabled people, or whether perceptions of the needs of disabled people are too entrenched for education to effect any change. Many of the student participants were hospitality employees, and may well go on to become employers in the future, so their attitudes towards disabled people will be influential in the acceptance or otherwise of disabled guests and disabled employees in hospitality operations. The first part of the study tests whether an attitudinal change is evident at the completion of a student assignment that focused on disability issues, requiring observations of both physical and societal barriers in accommodation operations. The second part of the study tests whether any detected attitudinal changes were still apparent a year later. By exposing students to changes that provide inclusive access for disabled

guests and employees, this research hopes to assist future employers to consider the potential labour force represented by the disabled community.

1.1 Disabilities issues

Groschl (2006) suggests 'one reason why persons with disabilities have been an almost untouched source of non-traditional labour is the complexity of defining the term 'disability'' (p.3). Indeed, rather than addressing the concept of 'disability', a more common approach has been either to define the character of disabled people or to analyse the nature of difference between the abled and disabled communities. For example, a New Zealand Ministry of Health (2007) definition of 'disability' states that:

> A person with a disability is someone who has been assessed as having a physical, psychiatric, intellectual, sensory, or age related disability (or a combination of these) which is likely to continue for a minimum of six months and result in a reduction of independent function to the extent that ongoing support is required (para.5).

This definition suggests that a disabled person is someone who has a long term disability and needs support. However, 18% of disabled people (nearly 121,000) live in a one-person household (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

Figure one: Type of Disabilities
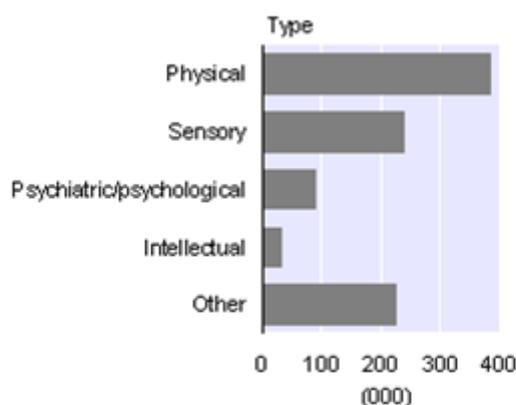
Note: People may have more than one type of disability.

(Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

Figure 1 illustrates that physical impairment is the most common form of disability, with '12% of adults aged 15 years and over (having) a physical disability - (an

estimated 383,500 adults) representing ... two-thirds of adults with disability' (Statistics New Zealand, 2007, p. 4).

This research focuses on people with a physical disability rather than those with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities. The main type of disability focused on is mobility restriction as this is the main area of disability identified (figure 1), although some references to impaired sight and hearing loss are also included.

In attempting to distinguish between abled and disabled communities, The New Zealand Disability Strategy (2001) notes that:

> Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. Disability is the process that happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have (State Services Commission, 2002, para. 3).

Mobility impairment is usually visually apparent and accommodation providers' interpretation of disabled guests in hospitality is typically focussed on guests with restricted mobility. Most accommodation will have rooms for wheelchair users but seldom are rooms modified for blind or deaf guests. This may be because modification of accommodation is required to comply with the New Zealand Building Act (2004) and addresses accessibility to public buildings for people with disabilities. However, given the Oxford Dictionary (1991) definition of hospitality as a 'friendly, welcoming, and generous treatment offered to guests or strangers', it appears reasonable to question the narrow nature of this interpretation. To be truly hospitable accommodation needs to be accessible for everyone: accommodation that is not accessible is clearly not hospitable.

1.2 The hospitality industry

The arrival of international hospitality providers in the New Zealand market, such as Sheraton, Hilton, Accor and Langham, has introduced overseas levels of service to the New Zealand hospitality industry. As a direct response to this increase in accommodation operations, universities and polytechnics have developed more hospitality training courses to equip students with the skills to work in this industry. However, as course content has developed, there appears to be very little

consideration of the accommodation needs of disabled guests or to the employment of disabled people. In Rhodda's (2007) discussion of research on growing awareness (worldwide) of disabled travellers and methods of attracting such niche-market tourists, she notes that in recent New Zealand tourism strategies the needs of international or domestic tourists with disabilities are not mentioned anywhere.

Goodsir (2008) suggests that in commercial hospitality operations, when guests pay for goods and services used, the employee (as an agent of the host) receives remuneration for being friendly and looking after the guest. As such, guests' perception of product quality is based on the interaction they have with employees, and employers must therefore ensure that every service encounter will positively influence the customers' evaluation of the hospitality experience. If this is the case, there is a need for accommodation providers to learn how to adapt their facilities to better service the disabled market, and indeed to better meet the needs of a disabled sector of the workforce. As Ross (2004) noted, a demographic change in many Western countries will result in a reduction in the number of youths, leading to a situation where:

> shrinkage in the traditional pool of cheap and flexible labour means that previously ignored or underutilized groups, such as individuals with a physical disability, (will be) deemed suitable for employment (p. 525).

Hospitality operators who do not provide suitable access for all guests and employees will miss a significant economic opportunity, as disabled travellers represent a potentially lucrative growth market (Rhodda, 2007).

Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) suggest that training is the means by which a change in the attitudes of non-disabled people towards those with a disability can be effected. As Human Resource Development Canada (cited in Groschl, 2006) reports, 'if the environment is adapted to the person, the disability can change or even disappear' (p.3). Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) also conclude that:

> operators and service providers need to be moved from the mindset of just wanting to meet their legislated human rights obligations to exemplary service provision. (By adapting a) more holistic embrace of attitudinal modification to accommodate the tourism experience, the service and experience would then be lifted from the banal to the truly memorable. This internalization of positive attitude by industry service personnel would

influence both personal and societal attitudes towards people with disabilities and help in the creation of a more civil society (p. 565).

The comments above provide a strong measure of support for the importance of incorporating data on disability issues in generic subjects in training programmes, particularly those that prepare students for work in the hospitality industries.

1.3 Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to test students' attitudes and perceptions both before and after a group assignment (studying facilities required for disabled guests in hospitality situations) to assess if any attitudinal changes occur regarding disabled people following exposure to disability issues. The research question 'can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education' is addressed by responses to the following question themes:

- Issues regarding personal interaction with people with disabilities.
- Evaluation of facilities provided by the hospitality industry for people with disabilities.
- Opinions related to the employment of disabled people within the hospitality industry.
- Impressions of the public image implications for businesses that employ people with disabilities.
- Commentary on whether the assignment research heightened awareness of disability issues

Data for this research were collected in surveys conducted at the beginning and end of a semester. The surveys were distributed in class, so the number of respondents relates to the number of students particular lecture who chose to participate in the research during the lecture in which the surveys were distributed. In addition, to collect in-depth personal impressions and experiences, a focus group was held with students who had just completed the assignment. Participants were encouraged to express their views about how they would feel when interacting with disabled customers and employees. Another focus group was arranged with students who had completed the same assignment a year earlier, to provide a longitudinal view of the impact of the disability study on the attitudes of respondents. This approach is

designed to test whether, after a year, participants still showed awareness of barriers for disabled people.

If the hospitality industry improves its awareness of the needs of disabled guests, then logically, barriers (both attitudinal and physical) will be reduced while simultaneously access is improved for disabled employees. However, to be able to make appropriate changes, an improved understanding of disability issues is the necessary first step. If this research can show that a positive change in attitudes towards people with disabilities can be brought about by exposure to the barriers these guests experience in hospitality situations, then a case can be made for inclusion of disability issues in mainstream education.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter Two reviews literature that considers attitudes towards the disabled community and establishes the scope of the research questions. An important component of this review is a discussion of the need for improved awareness of disability issues in the hospitality industry, which notes the main reasons for a growth in the number of disabled people (and potential travellers). A brief background of hospitality operations in New Zealand is provided, with specific attention to issues around acceptance of guests and employees with disabilities, and a focus on recent examples of both poor and good industry practices. Aspects of New Zealand law relating to issues specific to disabled people are also addressed, and the impact of these issues on the hospitality industry is noted. Finally, the review addresses the question of whether the introduction of disability issues to students on hospitality programmes will change attitudes or whether pre-existing beliefs and prejudices continue to influence respondent's opinions towards disabled guests and employees. Antonak and Livneh (1988) suggest 'attitudes are … of importance in attempting to predict future behaviour, a cornerstone of psychological research' (p. 13). This lends support to the centrality of the research question and a further area of interest is whether any attitudinal changes could still be detected a year after completing the disability assignment.

Chapter Three details the research methodology selected for the study. A written survey was distributed before, and at the completion of, a student assignment researching disability issues in accommodation operations. Data from questionnaires were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and results generated themes for questions for the two focus groups. Limitations of the research and the ethics application process are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four contains the research findings. Data resulting from completed surveys are compared on a before-and-after basis, to reveal any changes in attitudes towards disabled guests and employees. Data from the focus groups compare responses from students who had just completed the assignment with those of students who had done so 12 months earlier, to assess whether findings from the assignment still influenced their attitudes towards disabled people.

Chapter Five analyses and discusses the findings. Changes in the pre- and post-assignment survey responses are compared, and comments from the focus groups analysed and linked to the literature. This discussion includes illustrations of observations by respondents in workplace situations, and considers whether hospitality providers need to be more aware of disabilities issues.

Chapter Six summarises and concludes the research. Implications for hospitality operations that do not adequately accommodate the disabled community, either as a guest or as an employee, are also given. Inclusion of disability issues within generic topics in mainstream education for hospitality students is suggested, and recommendations for further areas of research are identified.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

New Zealand, like many other competitor destinations, is actively promoting itself to potential tourists. An annual increase of 4% in the number of tourists is expected over the next decade (O'Connor, 2007). Various contributing factors influence the expected growth, such as a progressive opening of political borders for travellers (in China and some other communist countries) and significant improvements in technology to provide more (and faster) travel options. An example of such technology is the launch of the Airbus A380, a new generation aircraft that can carry up to 853 passengers in one flight (EADS, 2009).

An important reason for the anticipated increase in tourist numbers is the growing longevity of people, coupled with the retirement of the 'baby boomer' generation (those born in the 20 years following the Second World War). In its publication *New Zealand's 65+ Population: A Statistical Volume*, Statistics New Zealand (2007) published research predicting that, by 2051, the 65+ population is expected to make up a 'quarter or more of all New Zealand residents' (p.1). This research also notes that in Japan, Italy and Greece, where low fertility rates are experienced, a third of the population will be 65 years and over within the same time frame.

As tourist numbers continue to rise, it seems logical to expect that older tourists will have different levels of physical ability. In New Zealand, for example, Statistics New Zealand's Disability Survey of 2006 showed that 16.5% of the population was registered as having a disability of some type, (although temporary disabilities such as broken limbs were omitted from the data). It is logical to assume that not all travellers will have the same level of physical ability, so a substantial number may require some modification to facilities, or extra assistance, during their trip. Tourism operators will therefore need to ensure that they can provide a range of facilities, adapted to meet the multiple requirements of visitors with various levels of ability. Darcy (2004) notes that disabled visitors usually choose to travel in the company of friends or family members, thus creating an even larger potential market.

New Zealand could be branded as an inclusive and welcoming destination. If this were to occur, infrastructural facilities and interpersonal attitudes would need to cater for the varying abilities of visitors. The possibility that deeply embedded prejudices will still control attitudes, even after prolonged contact with the disabled community, can be damaging to a country's reputation and image as seen through the eyes of temporary visitors (Patston, 2001). This review, therefore explores past research on a range of attitudes towards the disabled community, in order to determine whether exposure to issues for disabled people (through education) changes attitudes regarding the acceptance and inclusion of this group within the community.

The first section of this chapter establishes clear definitions for the primary conceptual elements as used throughout this thesis, whilst the second section outlines the importance of the disabled travelling community, and its relevance to the hospitality industry, offering a number of examples of the ways in which the industry has typically responded to that community. In the third section, disabled travellers are considered separately in terms of their importance as a discrete market segment, and as an unavoidable compliance cost. The fourth and final section summarises the review and notes an identifiable gap in the literature.

2.2 Conceptual definitions

In order to effectively consider the scope and scale of industry attitudes towards travellers with a disability, it is necessary to first clarify what is meant by the terms 'attitude' and 'disability'.

Definitions about disabilities issues suggest that the causation of the structural features of society impact on the ability of people with impairments to operate in the same manner as people without impairments, and that the disability actually lies within our society rather than in the person. Oliver (1990) suggests that 'it is nonsensical to talk about the person and the disability separately and, consequently, disabled people are demanding acceptance as they are, as disabled people' (p. xiii). Similarly, Sullivan (2000) likens the use of the term 'disabled people' to that of 'Maori people', reasoning that, just as a reference to indigenous people as 'people with brown skin' or 'people with racism' would not be appropriate, so any reference

to disabled people as 'people with a disability' is also inappropriate. The use of suitable terminology is a sensitive area and the public response to 'political correctness' sometimes deems certain terminology no longer appropriate.

Daruwalla and Darcy (2005), note that 'a person's attitudes are a reflection of their knowledge and belief about an object' (p. 551) suggesting that increased levels of knowledge can influence beliefs and therefore attitudes. Conversely, it is possible that an individual's attitudes can be significantly moulded and shaped by their own (or some else's) exposure to various issues. As Vickery (1995) states: 'attitudes can be gained knowingly or unknowingly, and can be shaped by personal experience or being told third hand' (p. 5). Vickery also suggests that 'there is no defined rule book for gaining a set of attitudes, and how one person may shape their attitudes will be entirely different from another person' (p.5), and further researchers' commentary adds that each individual will also possess both personal and societal attitudes.

To Daruwalla and Darcy (2005), personal attitudes are the internal opinions and beliefs the individual holds about something, someone, a situation or an object, while societal attitudes 'refer to prevailing beliefs espoused by and influenced by governments, cultural orientation, historical background or other prevailing conditions'(p. 552). These authors also note the possibility that societal attitudes may be in variance with personal ones and that 'greater accountability (is) demanded in personal rather than societal attitudes' (p. 552). This suggests that a situation may arise where a person offers an opinion that adheres to a socially accepted belief, although in actual fact they are personally opposed to that particular belief. An example of such a situation could be a verbalised statement to peers agreeing with a particular belief that is politically correct but, when completing a questionnaire where anonymity is ensured, a totally opposite opinion is given.

One interesting and publicly expressed attitude contrast can be noted when considering the Disability Discrimination Act's (DDA, 2005) definition of a disabled person as 'someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. To emphasise the distinction of terms, the Auckland City Council website contrasts the concept of disability, on the one hand, and people

with impaired performance on the other In particular, 'disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments' (para. 2). This inter-use of terms suggests confusion may exist in the public sector as to what 'disability' and 'impairment' actually mean.

Impairment has been variously described as 'lacking part of, or all of, a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body' (Oliver, 1990, p. 11), and as 'an anatomical, pathological or psychological disorder, which is defined and described symptomatically or diagnostically' (Thomas, cited in Vickery, 1995, p. 6). In this context, Oliver (1990. p. 11) continues to state that:

> disability (is) the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities (p. 11).

It is of interest that Oliver's definitions are still in current use today by many researchers.

For the purposes of this study, however, the term 'disabled people' is used instead of 'people with a disability,' in keeping with the observation offered by Sullivan (1991):

> many disabled people argue that the lived reality makes their disability more than an appendage, it is an essential part of self (and) in such instances to talk about the person and the disability separately is nonsense (p. 2).

2.3 Importance of disabled people to the hospitality industry

Hospitality is a major component of the tourism industry, as the majority of visitors need accommodation and food services. The following table, provided by Statistics New Zealand (2008) indicates a 4% increase in accommodation demand for New Zealand properties during February 2008, compared with the same period in the previous five years.

Figure 1.5: Year growth in accommodation usage

Guest Nights
By accommodation type
February 2003–08

Guest nights (million)

	Feb-2003	Feb-2004	Feb-2005	Feb-2006	Feb-2007	Feb-2008

Accommodation type
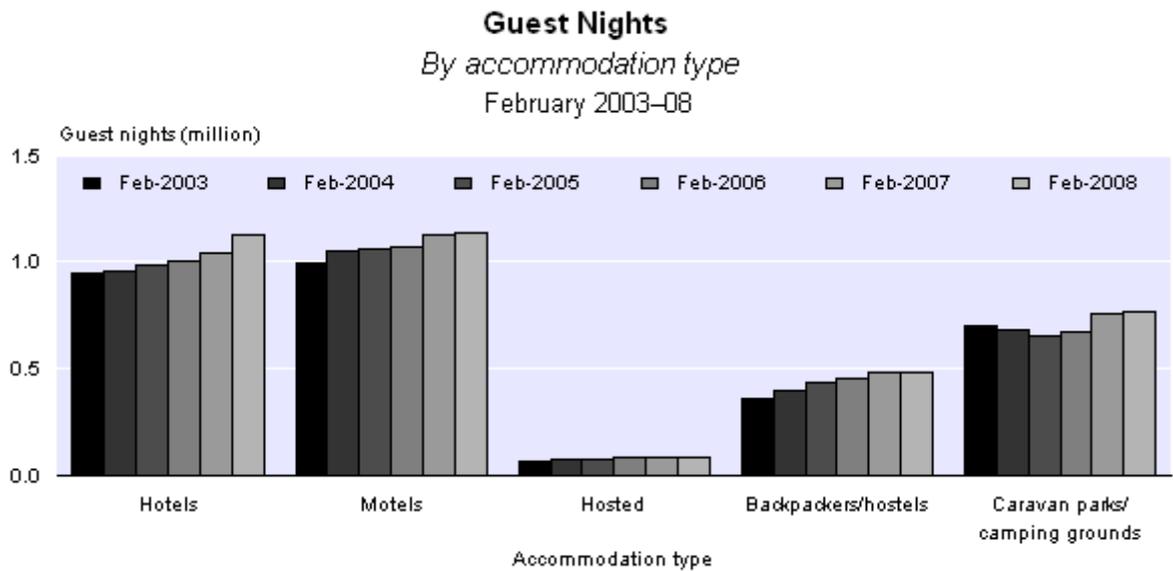
(Statistics New Zealand, 2008)

To cope with an annual increase in visitor arrival numbers, more accommodation is planned and some is already under construction. Examples of proposed developments include the Pullman Hotel, Auckland (290 rooms), the Hilton Hotel, Dunedin (100 rooms) and Queenstown (106 rooms), and the Westin Hotel, Queenstown (177 rooms). There are significant staffing implications within this level of growth. In a recent statement from the Hospitality Standards Institute (HSI), chief executive Steven Hanrahan reflected on a report prepared by Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL) 'warning that New Zealand's hospitality and tourism industry needs to employ 100,000 more people to maintain and grow the industry to the year 2010' (New Zealand Hotel Council, 2007).

As the tourism industry expands, and as more employment opportunities occur, there is significant evidence that the potential of a disabled workforce is being under-utilised (Groschl, 2006; Nickson *et al.*, 2003). Robyn Hunt of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission states that 'People with disability have a much lower rate of employment - 60 per cent of those with disability are employed compared to 80 per cent of working adults - based on information from Statistics New Zealand' (Statistics New Zealand, 2007, p. 1). Traditionally, the tourism industry has employed staff that fit the image of the industry: young, energetic and visually attractive (Whiteford & Nolan, 2007; Groschl, 2005). However, these attributes may be seen as more important than the actual ability of a staff member,

for older applicants or those that are overweight, together with disabled people, are seldom considered to be suitable employees. Schultz and Schultz, cited in Ross (2004) describe:

> a physical discrimination based on physical attractiveness, (is) termed beautyism, wherein those regarded as more physically attractive are deemed to possess more desirable personal and social traits, to be more sociable, dominant and mentally healthy than less physically attractive people (p. 524).

Nickson *et al.* (2003) state that 'employers determine who is aesthetically acceptable during recruitment and selection processes'(p.186) and go on to suggest that aesthetic skills are considered more desirable for hospitality works than technical skills. Ross (2007) suggests that an anticipated shortage in hospitality employees will mean that 'previously ignored or under-utilised groups, such as individuals with a physical disability, (will) be more likely to be deemed suitable for employment' (p. 524). However, the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust (EEO) states research has shown that the employment of disabled people makes good business sense, cited benefits to the workplace including:

1   Attracting and retaining the best of the talent pool, including latent talent.

2   Improving customer service.

3   Strengthening workplace morale and productivity.

4   Being a good corporate citizen.

5   Complying with legislative requirements and meeting international standards.' (EEO, 2007, para. 4).

With expected increases in patronage, there is not only a need to pay greater attention to Human Resource Management issues relating to the disabled community, but also a need for hotels to be hospitable to every guest. Often just a small modification of a facility will make a facility more user-friendly for those with a disability. However, the challenge, before such modifications are undertaken, is to ensure that adequate steps are taken to ensure hospitality providers fully understand the requirements of disabled travellers. In this respect, industry attitudes towards disabled people are far from ideal, as illustrated by the following examples from the tourism and hospitality industry.

2.3.1 Discrimination in air transport

At the launch of Pickering's (2000) book 'Accessible New Zealand', the Minister for Disability Issues, the Hon. Ruth Dyson (Minister for Disability Issues) commented that 'there is a serious problem with our priorities when people can fly to the moon, but access to aircraft is an undignified process' (New Zealand Government Executive, 2000). Indeed, Pickering (2000) herself had stated, in her description of aircraft travel in New Zealand:

> The smaller airports with smaller aircraft have forklifts to assist with boarding a wheelchair. Or, if a forklift is not available, ground crews will carry the passenger and transit chair up the stairs (p. 334).

Minister Dyson later commented that using forklifts to board disabled people on to an aircraft is unacceptable in the 21st century. She noted that we need to address social priorities, as men have travelled to the moon but access to an aircraft is still an undignified procedure for some.

Air New Zealand's policy in 2004 required all disabled passengers to have their own support person, effectively doubling the cost of air travel for these travellers. Following a complaint to the Human Rights Commission in 2005, the airline introduced a mechanical lifting service for disabled passengers to transfer them from the wheelchair to the aircraft seat (New Zealand Herald, 2008). This new policy of the national carrier's (in which the New Zealand Government has an 80% shareholding) demonstrates that even market leaders in the tourism industry are advised to re-think their policies with respect to disabled people.

2.3.2 Discrimination in land transport

The Christchurch Press (2008) report an incident regarding the experiences of a disabled couple travelling on the Tranz Alpine rail service between Christchurch and Greymouth. Their initial embarkation in Christchurch took approximately 30 minutes, so on arrival in Greymouth they decided to remain on the train, as the effort to get on and off was too great. However, this meant they could not use the disabled toilet facilities at Greymouth station, and the absence of appropriate on board facilities meant that they did not have the use of a toilet for over 11 hours.

However, there is some evidence that companies are adapting their facilities to better accommodate the needs of the disabled society. An example is found in Stagecoach New Zealand, who state that 49 percent of its bus fleet now has a super low floor (SLF) facility. Another 177 buses will be replaced by new ones with a SLF, and the entire fleet will offer SLF access by 2014 (Human Rights Commission, n.d.). This action by Stagecoach appears to indicate an intention for their services to be inclusive for all customers.

2.3.3 Discrimination in the accommodation industry

Hospitality staff's negative attitudes can be readily observed in the way that physically disabled guests are referred to by hotel employees. On a field trip to Auckland hotels during August 2007, students reported comments from staff such as '*we don't have people like that (blind) staying here*' in response to an enquiry regarding the number of sight impaired people that had stayed during the previous year. Another response was '*dogs are not allowed in the hotel*' when replying to a question regarding the provision of facilities for guide dogs. These statements suggest an uninformed attitude of staff members towards disabled guests, and illustrate a lack of training about legal issues relating to guests with disabilities. In New Zealand, it is illegal to ban guide dogs anywhere except in:

☐ Animal enclosure areas at zoos (zoo management will look after your dog).

☐ Some hospital departments, such as the burns, oncology, and intensive care units. (RNZFB, 2003 p. 10).

Another example that illustrates a lack of understanding of legal issues was reported in the New Zealand Herald on 12 February, 2008. The article related the experience of a blind couple, accompanied by their two guide dogs, staying at the Central Terrace Heights serviced apartments in Wellington during January. On check-out, Mr and Mrs Godfrey were charged $85 for cleaning dog hair from the carpets. The apartment manager attempted to justify the charge stating that 'many Wellington hotels would not let guide dogs stay, but (they) did not discriminate and did blind people a favour by accepting them' ('Blind couple', 2008).

Conversely, the image of a business that incorporates inclusive business practices often gains support from the general public, although it is acknowledged that people

may have prejudices about being served by a disabled person (Groschl, 2006). A commendable way of removing such prejudices has been used in the Foxes Academy training hotel in Somerset in England. Foxes Hotel is a unique establishment, staffed by young people with special needs, and open to fee-paying guests. Each year, about 900 people stay in the property. Students are taught main-stream hospitality subjects and graduate with City and Guilds Hospitality and Catering Level 1 (Foxes Academy, 2008). The academy has been the recipient of many awards, including the Educational Award for a Small Organisation at the Springboard Annual Awards (2007), and the Beacon Status which recognises excellent practice (2008). The success of Foxes suggests that disabled employees are seen as major contributors to an overall positive impression and are a major selling feature (Foxes Academy, 2008). Foxes:

> dispel the myths that people with learning disabilities cannot undertake meaningful and productive jobs in the real world, and that they cannot be employed in kitchens because of health and safety fears (Brooks, 2007, para. 9).

2.3.4 Car parking issues affecting people with disabilities

There has been much media attention on the plight of disabled drivers who find their specially designated parking spaces used by drivers without disabilities (eg. Wairarapa Times-Age 2006, NZ Listener 2006, Palmerston North City Council press release 2006, Disability Resource Centre Newsletter 2006). 'Research undertaken by CCS Disability Action found that 50% of vehicles using a public mobility parking space were doing so illegally' (Wilson, 2008 para. 7). Disregard for the rights of disabled drivers by ignoring the specially designated parking spaces highlights the general attitude of many in the community.

On 17 January 2008, an amendment to the Land Transport Act came into effect enforcing a penalty of $40 for the use of mobility car parking without a valid permit. This fine was increased to $150 effective 26 June, 2008, (Wilson, 2008) though it remains nominal when compared to international fines ($2926 in England, $545 in New South Wales and $784 in Chicago), but it will at least be an enforceable deterrent and will help eliminate misuse of parking spaces (Wilson, 2008). This penalty will only apply to public parking areas, but private parking owners (such as supermarkets) are being urged to adopt the principles of the new

legislation and monitor the use of their mobility parking spaces (Wilson, 2008). Personal observations during recent visits to supermarkets, universities and private parking buildings reveals that misuse of mobility parking is still wide spread.

2.3.5 Food and beverage issues

The Blind Cow Restaurant in Zurich, Switzerland, has had disability as a major attraction and selling feature. The restaurant is exclusively staffed by blind people and operates in complete darkness – flashlights, lighters and even luminous watches are banned. The owner (Rev. Jorge Spielmann) wanted to provide employment for blind people, and to allow sighted people to experience the world without light. Guests are led to their tables, and the a la carte menu recited by the waiter. Without a visual experience, guests concentrate more on the taste and aroma of the food and wine, and waiters are identified by the sound of bells on their shoes (Butler, 2008). Rev. Spielmann stated 'although we wouldn't wish blindness on anyone, we just want people to have the opportunity to experience our world on our terms' (Butler, 2008, para 16). This novel dining experience has proved so popular that the restaurant is booked out months ahead, for both dinner and lunch.

The success of the Spielmann restaurant has attracted visits from American concept designers, and Blind Cow franchises are expected to open in Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco (Butler, 2008). The unique approach used in this business promotes disability as an asset and this novel approach suggests that a person without a disability is the disadvantaged party. In the above example, the blind waiting staff would be more at ease in the complete darkness than the guests, and assistance from the staff as to where, for example, items were on the table would be required. This hospitality model shows how the 'dis' can be removed from 'disability' and so lead to an inclusive society, and raises the important question of whether hospitality operators' view of responsibility to the disabled community is most appropriately seen as an opportunity or as a threat.

2.4 Important market segment or necessary compliance issue?

Burnett and Baker (2001) suggest that travel-related businesses do not understand the disabled as consumers and instead the emphasis has been on 'satisfying a set of

costly rules for a customer group that is often not even desired' (p. 4). This research sets out to test whether education of hospitality students can change their attitudes towards disabled people.

To understand the importance of disabled travellers to the travel industry there is a need to recognise the size of this sector in relation to economic value. The size of the disabled market has been researched extensively (McKercher et el, 2003; Burnett & Baker, 2001; Rhodda, 2007). Grady & Ohlin (2008) in a 2002 study that found disabled travellers completed 31.7 million trips per year in the United States of America and in '2005 more than 21 million (U.S.A.) adults with disabilities travel(l)ed for pleasure and/or business' (p. 161). These observations suggest hospitality providers need to be aware of this potential market for economic reasons – particularly in the current economic situation worldwide.

Darcy (as cited in Rolling Rains Report, March 2004) has highlighted some common myths held by tourism providers regarding disabled travellers, including the following key elements:

1 People with a disability are a small market anyway so why bother?

2 It is easier to ignore this market and its needs (than to cater for them).

3 The market tends to travel in large groups and is therefore too difficult for the average establishment to cope with.

4 I've never seen anyone in a wheelchair at my establishment before so why should I provide facilities now?

In his research undertaken for Tourism New South Wales (1998), Darcy refuted these statements one by one:

1 Of 2700 responses received from the disabled community, 77% had undertaken at least one domestic trip in the previous year, and 13% had been overseas. These data indicate that the disabled market is an important sector to be considered. As a side benefit, other mainstream sectors, such as families with young children and pregnant women, could also find suitably modified facilities more user friendly.

2 It is illegal to deny access for this market (either intentionally or unintentionally) under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and, as it is a large sector that can be marketed easily through aligned societies, it makes economic sense to do so.

3   Most people with a physical disability travel with a partner, or a caregiver, who does not have a disability, so group travel is not the preferred option.

4   Operators who do not have appropriate facilities will never gain access to this market; a modification of facilities is required to attract disabled travellers.

Darcy's comments clearly show that disabled people do travel, and that are many indications that the size of this market with significant disposable income should be of major interest to tourism providers from an economic perspective. This market should be of interest to all travel and tourism providers and the introduction of truly inclusive services makes sound financial sense. As Darcy concludes (1998):

> Fundamentally, people with a physical disability want to travel.... the tourism industry as the key provider of travel services...can identify constraints and barriers and work with people with a disability and relevant organisations/agencies to bring about improvements (p. 65).

Many developed countries have formal regulations designed to ensure guaranteed access to public buildings for people with disabilities (e.g. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990; UK Disability Discrimination Act 1995; Australian Commonwealth Disability Discrimination 1992; Spanish Law of Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination and Universal Access for Persons of Disability, 2003). In New Zealand, all new buildings must comply with the following principle contained in the Building Act (1991): 'reasonable and adequate provision for people with disabilities to enter (must be provided) and (to be able to) carry out normal activities and processes in buildings' must be incorporated in the construction or alteration to any building used by the public (State Services Commission, 2002, para. 2). Thus, the needs of anyone who may work or visit the building must be considered, such as members of the public, potential employees with a disability, and employees who subsequently develop a disability (temporary or permanent). Compliance with these Acts will ensure ease of access for people with all levels of ability.

Commenting on the ways in which these laws have been adopted by the lodging industry, Upchurch and Seo (1996) suggest that American operators have been generally negative regarding these changes to access, citing a financial liability and vagueness in the wording of the ADA legislation as the main reasons for their discontent. However, the financial burden of compliance was discounted by the

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, noting that, when altering a building, not all facilities need to be accessible – only car parks and drinking fountains. The two underlying principles of the ADA legislation are:

1 The business will achieve an economic gain through the spending of the disabled guest.
2 The disabled customer's life will be enriched and more productive.

Another reason given for non-compliance was that 'the disabled market was not considered a major sector' (Upchurch & Seo, 1996 p. 54). Upchurch and Seo found that some American lodging operators were not in compliance regarding the use of Braille on menus and other information sheets, provision of non-slip surfaces, audible and visual signage in elevators, accessible drop off areas at entrances, and use of handicapped symbols for toilets and entrances. Compliance would cost a minimal amount, and the improved accessibility could attract '43 million potential travellers' (p. 55).

On 30 March 2007, New Zealand – together with another 80 nations - signed a United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention is an acknowledgment that societal barriers and prejudices are themselves disabling and, to allow disabled people full participation in society, they must be removed. The main elements of this agreement focuses on inclusiveness in the community, as disabled people are often treated separately and tend to be marginalised by the wider community (Office for Disability Issues, 2007). Another element focuses on the need for a change in attitudes; the suggestion is made that this will come about by more interaction by the wider community with disabled people. The third element is accessibility; both physical and communication technologies, such as signage in Braille, are required. This Convention was ratified by the New Zealand Government on 24 September 2008. As a result Government policies can be now better monitored and will be instrumental in removing barriers that prevent disabled people fully participating in society. There will be more pressure for hospitality managers to ensure their facilities and services are completely accessible.

2.5 Attitudes towards disabled people

In terms of the general attitudes held by mainstream society towards people with disabilities, Daruwalla (1999) states that:

> Research on attitudes of the general public towards people with disabilities concludes that the public verbalises favourable attitudes towards people with disabilities, but (they) actually possesses deeper unverbalised feelings which are frequently rejecting (p. 61).

Many New Zealanders are prepared to provide financial support for the disabled. For example, the annual appeal for guide dogs raised NZ$ 685,000 in 2008, by nearly 5000 volunteers (RNZFB, 2008). In addition, IHC (Intellectually Handicapped Children) Society raises NZ$1,000,000 in a series of appeals throughout the year (Naylor, personal communication, April 14, 2008) indicating that many New Zealanders will happily donate their time and money to assist societies and foundations that support disabled people. However, their generosity does not always extend to the inclusion of disabled people in the wider community, as Sullivan (1994) has stated:

> In capitalist society, (such as New Zealand) where judgements of character and worth are increasingly being made on the basis of outer appearances, there is very little to commend physical disability; it is the antithesis of corporeal legitimacy and, as such, marked out and excluded from the mainstream in a variety of ways (p. 12).

Suggestions could be made that whilst many of the general public make a show of support for disabled people and so display social responsibility; on a personal level they are unwilling to provide an inclusive environment (Sullivan, 1994).

Exclusions are evident also in the employment market, despite the findings of an Equal Employment Opportunities Trust (EEO) report of 2005 that 48% of disabled respondents had university degrees (half of these were at postgraduate level) and 22% had trade or other vocational qualifications (EEO, 2007). Despite this qualifications profile, and despite the provisions of the Employment Equity Act (1990) and the Human Rights Act (1993) (that state it is unlawful to discriminate in employment based on disability) disabled people are poorly represented in employment. Indeed, a report from EEO (2007, para. 7) states that '44% of disabled adults are in the work force, compared with 74% of people without disabilities, and

disabled people aged between 25-44 years have the highest unemployment rate (64%) of any group'. These statistics show a continued reluctance to employ disabled people regardless of current laws.

Some notable exceptions to the employment of disabled people are found in some industrial workplaces. For example, New World Supermarket in Remuera, Auckland, employs staff with a mild intellectual handicap to collect and return their trolleys, for which the staff receive standard remuneration. While undertaking informal research, the author asked an acquaintance why she shopped at this store, as the price of various goods had increased significantly over the last six months and there were other cheaper supermarkets close by. The informant said she chose to support this particular store as it employed (and so supported) disabled workers. Her image of this business was of its inclusive employment programme, and so she was willing to support the business even though the goods for sale were not the cheapest in the area. This was an interesting comment regarding the selection of supermarket from this person who displayed a regard of social issues more important than the cost of goods on sale. However, other shoppers may be more driven by price sensitivity than social consciousness when deciding where to make their purchases. Other Auckland supermarkets, such as Foodtown Greenlane, Pak 'n Save Mt Albert, and Foodtown New Lynn also employ disabled staff, and their inclusive employment policy shows that these businesses have accessibility for both disabled employees and shoppers in their establishments.

Eight percent of McDonald's Restaurants' (NZ) workforce has some form of disability (Bagshaw, 2006). This company originally employed just a few people with intellectual disabilities as a trial but, after six months, they rethought this strategy as customer feedback indicated that 'people enjoyed working with them, people enjoyed having them serve on the counter, and they turned out to be capable of far more than ..... had (been) predicted' (Bagshaw, 2006, para. 7). Since then, McDonald's management has included disabled people in its print and television advertising (Hardin, Hardin & Lynn, 2001). McDonalds has also launched McJobs, that gives meaningful employment to physically disabled people. Could a similar approach work equally well in the hospitality industry?

Hospitality is labour intensive and has the potential to offer multiple employment opportunities to the disabled community. As visitor numbers increase each year, more and more employees are required. Statistics from the Ministry of Tourism New Zealand (2007), show an increase in international visitor arrivals of 2.7% between December 2006/2007 and an increase of 10.4% in domestic visitors between September 2006/2007. It is this statistic, as much as any other factor, that has been responsible for growing interest in the design and delivery of hospitality training programmes in New Zealand's tertiary institutions, - and these programmes have a significant responsibility to include an appropriately balanced curriculum. As Wheeler (1994, cited in Ross, 2004) notes:

Education programmes that are charged with the preparation of individuals for hospitality employment need to expose students to critical ethical, professional and legal issues, all of which will undoubtedly confront them (p. 528).

Educational institutes should ensure current issues are covered in the course material and the application of law changes and social policies requires constant updating of resources. One current issue is the inclusion of disabilities issues in mainstream education that will then provide hospitality students with the skills and knowledge to work with disabled guests and staff members.

However, Rhodda (2007) could not find any reference to disabilities issues in any of the tourism texts used in New Zealand's universities and polytechnics published in the last 10 years. Those examined were by Collier (2003), Collier and Harraway (2006), Hall and Kearsley (2001), Harraway (1998), and McLure, (2004). However, the Accommodation Operations paper (214406) offered at Auckland University of Technology as part of the Diploma in Hospitality Management programme has recognised the importance of the disabled industry, and a group assignment that exposes students to disabilities issues is part of the assessment criteria. The recommended text (Payne and Schitko, 2006) includes a section on disabled guests that provides background information for the group assignment which researches disabilities issues in the hospitality industry.

In New South Wales Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) carried out attitudinal research using two groups of 175 students, state-based tourism employees and government

employees. The first group received only lecture and video instruction related to disability issues, while the second group had video, role-play and personal contact with disabled people. Although the maximum time spent on this training was just two hours, results showed that the second group experienced significantly greater attitudinal changes than the first group, and that students who were more advanced in their study, and had been working for some time in the hospitality industry, were more likely to experience permanent attitude changes than were first year students. The results of this study suggest 'repeated exposure and practical knowledge ... enhances knowledge and behaviours of service personnel' (Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005, p. 5).

The research described in this thesis builds on the work of Daruwalla and Darcy by assessing the extent to which attitudinal change occurs amongst students, when they are required to study the needs of physically disabled people over a semester. The research not only aims to find out if student attitudes changed during their exposure to disability issues, but also to see whether this attitude change was still evident after a year. The research seeks to test whether or not attitudinal changes persist over time, and are new attitudes applied to work situations. It also considers the possibility that previously held prejudices will return eventually and influence encounters with disabled guests.

2.6 Summary

Community attitudes towards many marginalised groups are gradually changing. The legal recognition of civil unions, including same sex partnerships, and the approval into law of the Prostitution Reform Act (2003) indicates a growing tolerance amongst the general public of minority groups but disabled people are not yet benefitting fully from this change in values. Prejudices and attitudes that have been entrenched for centuries will take many years to be eliminated (Patston, 2001) and, as Ross (2004) suggests:

> Holding negative stereotypes in regard to particular groups, whether they be cultural, gender, age or physical ability groups, can result in the rejection of able, well-motivated and valuable workers who hold the potential to become distinct assets to the organisation and the industry (p. 524).

In relation to the population of interest to the current research, there is a growing body of research that results from an investigation of accessibility issues for the physically disabled (particularly for mobility restricted) travellers. Physical barriers that prevent the physically disabled gaining employment in the hospitality industry have also been well documented (e.g Sisson, 2002; O'Neill & Knight, 2000; Ross, 2004) but attitudinal barriers regarding employment issues were, until recently, not considered.

Attitudes are formed from a learned response to the environment and include assumptions derived from knowledge and belief systems, such as the idea that an emotional display is unmanly or that a person with a physical disability using a wheelchair is also deaf. By introducing new information it may be possible to change attitudes, because information is the means by which people change attitudes and perceptions (Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005). Part of this learning, education programmes (including those in hospitality), have the potential to expose students to critical ethical and legal issues they will be confronted with during encounters in the workplace (Ross, 2004). Students who have been exposed to an overview of disability issues are likely to enter the workforce with an improved understanding of their ethical responsibilities towards the range of people with whom they will interact (Ross, 2004).

However, Daruwalla and Darcy (2006) suggest people may 'take on particular attitudes in order to be consistent with their peers, to fit into certain environments or simply to avoid attracting sanctions by going against prevailing ideas and trends' (p. 552). This suggests that outward displays of attitude may not necessarily be the inwardly held attitude as people tend to 'fit' into society's accepted practices.

Kleeman and Wilson (2007) suggest that a means to bring an attitude change is to have direct contact with 'representatives of the group about which the negative attitudes are held' (p. 11). Exposure to the group about whom a negative attitude is held may change an individual's feelings towards this group as the original attitudes may be based on a lack of knowledge about the attitude referent. Antonak and Livneh (1988) suggest that 'if the mechanism underlying the development and structure of attitudes are discerned, they may be used to alter people's reactions to

various human interactions' (p. 13). This links the research to the goal of detecting any attitudinal change as a result of exposure to disability issues.

An attitude change towards guests with physical disabilities is likely to lead to an attitude change towards co-workers with physical disabilities. As graduates may be the next generation of managers, those who have an informed understanding of attitudinal barriers for physically disabled people will be in a strong position to be influential regarding employment of this potential workforce.

Methodology

2.6 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods employed to collect and analyse the research data. The validity of findings is strengthened by triangulation of the approaches used. The use of both qualitative and quantitative questions provided opportunity to collect data from two different angles. Davidson and Tolich (2003) suggest 'triangulation refers to using different research methods to hone in on an event from two or three different methods. It is the heart of qualitative research's validity' (p. 34). A combination of qualitative and quantitative questions is used to collect data on the same topic. The use of both methods allowed the identification of themes from the quantitative questionnaire to be introduced to the qualitative focus groups. Koch (cited in Sutcliffe, 2007) suggests 'congruence between research methodology, the research question and the researcher's own view adds to the validity of a study' (p.37). The use of different sources of information showing the same findings enforces the validity of the research. The research is ontological in nature as it explores how respondents viewed disability issues in their own environment, and their personal perceptions regarding the presence of physical and emotional barriers for disabled people before and after an assignment on these issues. Ontological research uses quotes and themes of participants to provide evidence of different perspectives (Creswell, 2007).

2.7 Rationale for selection of methods used

The research was conducted at AUT in the School of Hospitality and Tourism. Participants were enrolled in the first year of the Diploma in Hospitality Management, studying an Accommodation Operations paper. The paper had a compulsory group assignment that required students to research facilities for disabled guests in three Auckland accommodation operations. The respondents were the researcher's students.

To commence the research, respondents were invited to complete a survey prior to the start of a group assignment covering disability issues in hospitality operations. The same questionnaire was used at the end of the assignment. This was to test for

any attitude changes that may have occurred following respondents' exposure to situations experienced by disabled people.

The advantage of using both qualitative and quantitative questions (in a written survey and interview questions for focus groups), allowed identification for themes in the questionnaires that could be expanded on during the focus group discussions. First year students were invited to join the focus groups to provide an opportunity to consider responses immediately after completion of their assessment on disability topics. Second year students, who had completed the same assessment during the previous year, were also invited to join a focus group. Although this was not a longitudinal study, in that data was collected from two different cohorts, the comparison of data collected at two different times provided insights into whether attitudinal changes were likely to persist over time.

One-on-one interviews were not used as it was considered that a group situation would allow participants to participate more freely (as noted by Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

2.8 Research design

In preparation for the data collection, discussions were held with representatives of various foundations and societies that focus on disabled people, such as the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (RNZFB) and the CCS Disability Action (CCS). Advice from CCS, RNZFB and the AUT Disability Resource Centre was sought regarding the nature and wording of survey questions. Dr Ralph Buck, Associate Professor of the dance studies programme at University of Auckland and the Head of Dance Studies at the National Institute of Creative Art and Industries (NICAI) was also consulted. Dr Buck introduces NICAI students to members of the special needs class at Pakuranga College (Auckland) where the benefits of dance are used to remove barriers that 'limit and constrain our view of the world' (Dr R Buck, personal communication, August 9, 2007). His aim is to 'help students become increasingly inclusive – not to see disability as a dilemma - to train themselves not to see the disability, but to see the human'. Dr Buck shared experiences about how his students had responded to the special needs class and how the personal contact had removed attitudinal barriers for the students. Insights

from this consultation were invaluable when designing the questions for the survey. For example, question 6 (I would be happy working with someone who has a physical disability) was developed after learning how Dr Buck's students had responded to disabled students. After graduation a couple of his students sought full time employment at Pakuranga College working with disabled people.

In the literature review (Chapter 2) the work of Antonak and Livneh (1988) was considered regarding comments on various surveys about 'Attitudes Towards Disabled People' scales. The scale 'Interaction with Disabled Persons Scale (IDP)' developed by Gething (1991) was also considered. For his thesis (Disability awareness workshops: do they change teachers' attitudes) Vickery (1995) selected the 'Issues in Disability Scale' that he felt covered more current issues. However, none of these surveys included questions that fitted with the assignment criteria and covered the specifics of what this research was assessing. Consequently it was decided to adapt relevant items from selected surveys to develop the questionnaire and to use other questions that better covered issues from the assignment, such as Question 6 relating to the conversation with Dr Buck.

The survey questionnaire was checked by a colleague from the Languages Department at AUT to ensure the wording was appropriate for both domestic and international students, and questions were clear and unambiguous. Also, a colleague from the AUT Disability Resource Department reviewed the survey to ensure questions were valid and reliable. At this stage some wording was altered to improve clarity.

The draft questionnaire was pilot tested with two further colleagues to test whether the questions were clear and appropriately worded. Participants included international students, so the wording had to be easily understood by everyone, particularly those for whom English was their second language. While the small pilot survey (three AUT staff reviewing the survey form) might be considered a limitation of this research, feedback from colleagues provided helpful suggestions for improvement in the survey design that enhanced the quality of the questions. The timing of the first survey was another consideration, as participants needed to complete the questionnaire before commencing the assignment; as a consequence there was insufficient time for a larger pilot study.

2.9 The survey

The survey was used to collect data from a number of respondents regarding their personal views before and after the class assignment on disability concerns. The survey responses provided information about the respondents' own attitudes, to allow evaluation of any changes that could be attributed to the assignment. Ticehurst and Veal (2000) noted that questionnaire-based surveys are acceptable when 'individual's own accounts of their behaviour and attitudes are acceptable as a source of information' (p. 49).

2.9.1   Survey form

The questionnaire is designed in two sections. The first section contains 20 statements designed to determine the extent of each respondent's interaction with disabled people. Some statements are factual in nature such as 'I have never interacted with anyone who has a physical disability'. Other statements are judgmental, requiring the opinion of the participant: 'I think companies that employ physically disabled people improve their image in society'. The Likert scale of 1-5 allowed participants to give one of the following responses – 'strongly agree' / 'agree' / 'disagree' / 'strongly disagree' or 'no opinion/not applicable'. This scale was used to ensure response options were mutually exclusive by allowing only one answer for each respondent (e.g. Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

The 20 questions fall into three major themes:

Personal ability/ personal belief	Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19
Belief of ability of disabled people	Questions 8, 9, 11,
Response to current hospitality operations	Questions 13, 15, 17, 18, 20

The second section focuses on the participant's personal characteristics. The collection of demographic information was required to show any variable changes in the analysis. This section includes questions on gender, age range, whether the participant has worked in the industry, for what length of time, and in what type of position. These questions allow an overview of the ages and genders of the

participants and also provide data on their industry experience. Data on respondents' cultural or ethnic identity was not included as one class included three students of particularly distinctive cultures. (One student was Polynesian, one was Maori and one student was South African). An identity question would have allowed identification of the respondents and as anonymity was guaranteed this was not considered appropriate. The survey instrument is provided in Appendix 1.

2.9.2 Participant selection

All students enrolled on Accommodation Operations (a core subject on the Diploma in Hospitality Management) were invited to participate in both the survey and the focus group. This paper had a compulsory group assignment requiring research of facilities for disabled guests in three Auckland hotels and so sought to expose students to disabilities concerns.

For many students, the research and interviews conducted by them during the assignment was the first contact they had with disabled people, except for a few students who had family members or friends with some type of impairment. The object of the assignment was to help students consider how facilities in accommodation might be barriers for disabled guests and how changes could be made to better meet the needs of this group. All students were invited to complete the survey both prior to the commencement of the assignment and after the final presentation of their work.

2.9.3 Student preparation for the assignment

 In preparation for the assignment a staff member from the AUT Disability Resource Centre spoke to the students about issues they may encounter during their study of this subject and resources they could access. During this presentation two videos were shown. One showed barriers experienced by an able bodied person in a world designed exclusively for disabled people. This video highlighted attitudes in a hospitality situation in a reverse role, that is, the disabled were advantaged rather than the abled being advantaged. The second video detailed an interview with Mark Bagshaw (IBM accessible technologies), a quadriplegic. Bagshaw discussed the spending power of the disabled community and how barriers (both physical and attitudinal) prevent disabled people from integrating into the community. The

information sheet given to each group member detailed the type of impairment the group was to research, such as sight, mobility or hearing, and gave details of an appropriate initial contact (e.g. the Deaf Society). Students were also advised that information could be collected from the AUT Disability Centre.

During the semester the students were also given details of contacts at support centres such as Ripple Trust (community and governmental response to disability issues) and Yes Ability Achievement Centre (accessible show home modelling best practice in design). In order to assess whether or not accommodation providers had adapted facilities to cater for disabled people the participants needed to interview societies that support such disabilities, such as RNZFB and CCS. The students' assignment research indicated how facilities in various accommodation operations could be adapted to better fit the needs of disabled guests whilst still catering for other guests. The students then visited a minimum of three accommodation providers to judge whether or not each property could comfortably accommodate disabled guests.

During the interviews, students considered not only the guest rooms, but also the public areas and any procedures that were in place should an emergency (such as a fire) occur. Whilst interviewing, the students also gained some insight into the impressions and attitudes of various staff members towards disabled guests. The students' research findings were presented to an industry panel in the form of group presentation accompanied by a written report. The panel included representatives from CCS, AUT Disability Centre, RNZFB and Ripple Trust.

2.9.4 Survey preparation

Although all students in the class were invited to be part of the research, if any felt they did not want to participate there was no obligation for them to do so. Students also had the right to abstain from completing the questionnaire. If they did so it was regarded as a withdrawal. Students were able to withdraw at any time during the data collection period. To ensure they completely understood the purpose of the research, and the terminology used, 'Participants Information Sheets' were distributed. A copy of the Information sheet is presented in Appendix 2.

Before the survey forms were distributed, the facilitator gave each student a copy of the consent form and discussed the contents. Students had the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the process, and if they did not want to continue to participate in the research they were free to leave the room. Verbalised information was also re-enforced with written information, so there was an on-going point of reference for students to check should they want to refer back to the conditions of the research. As this study was undertaken with students of the researcher, the survey forms were distributed and collected by other lecturers. As the facilitator was always a third party with no teaching relationship with the students, there was no pressure for students to participate. This process also meant the researcher was unaware which students had decided not to participate in the survey. The forms were numerically coded in three batches representing the three classes surveyed. This allowed the researcher to match responses from each group pre and post the assignment, without identifying individual respondents.

2.9.5   Survey process

The first survey was completed prior to the distribution of the group assignment on disability issues. As it was presumed that participants would have had little contact with disabled people at this stage (unless a family member or a friend was in this category), this initial survey was to assess attitudes towards disabled people prior to any significant contact with them. Responses from this survey were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software.

The second survey was offered at the end of the semester after students had completed their assignment. By the time the second survey was done, all students had been exposed to disability issues for several weeks, so a better understanding and consideration of disability issues was anticipated. This second survey was also analysed using SPSS and the described coding method.

Both surveys were completed by an appointed and uninvolved third party to ensure anonymity for the students and to allow them to answer truthfully rather than give answers they thought the researcher/lecturer would like them to give. As the questionnaire was quantitative in nature (using a Likert scale of 1-5), it was not

possible for the researcher to determine how individual students answered the survey, so complete anonymity was assured.

Both surveys were distributed and completed at the end of a lecture so the number of respondents corresponded with the number of students in the lecture. As the sample size of the second survey was small (24 respondents), chi-square tests were not taken. Data collected in the surveys tested the effectiveness of the intervention as a method of extending respondents' knowledge and behaviour in relationship to disability issues and disabled people. The researcher transcribed the survey forms using numerical coding to cluster results, allowing comparison of responses in each class before and after completion of the assignment. Once the data were entered, random checks were undertaken to test for accuracy of entry.

Quantitative results are presented in Chapter 5 (Results).

2.10 Focus groups

Focus groups allowed facilitation of a discussion between respondents rather than one-on-one interviews. The focus groups provide an opportunity for respondents to interact with other members of their group as well as with the facilitators (Ticehurst & Veal, 2000). A copy of the questionnaire used for the focus groups is in Appendix 3.

2.10.1 Focus group questionnaire

The questionnaire used for the focus groups was designed to draw out responses from the participants and was intended as a guide for the facilitators. The ten questions used were probes to allow facilitators to follow up on points mentioned or not mentioned by the respondents. The questions guided the facilitators to the main themes that arose from the quantitative surveys. The qualitative questions were designed to encourage the participants to talk 'along the thematic lines of the research and (only) prompt (participants) to bring out the main points of what they have to say' (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 148). Themes included questions about if (in the opinion of the interviewees) hotels could be more user friendly for disabled people and to determine the role of hospitality in training staff to assist when required. Participants were also asked whether they thought staff with a disability

would be able to work in the hospitality industry and how they (themselves) would feel if they were working with or employing this person.

2.10.2 Focus group selection

At the conclusion of the semester, students who had just completed the paper were invited to join the focus group whilst the information and learning was still fresh in their minds. Another focus group invitation was extended to students who had completed the paper twelve months earlier. This was to assess whether the information and research done by the students had had a lasting impression and if the class exercise altered the students' attitude towards people with disabilities.

2.10.3 Focus group preparation

Before the focus groups took place, the researcher met with the members of the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI), who were facilitating the groups, and briefed them on the topics for the participants. The questionnaire had been approved by the AUT Ethics Committee and was designed to guide the discussion and introduce areas in an effort to encourage participants to share their thoughts and experiences. A meeting room was booked for the focus groups and facilitators away from the lecture rooms, in an effort to create a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere.

Phillimore and Goodson (2004) suggest 'to ensure a good recording, aid facilitation and provide the opportunity for all group members to voice their opinions, it is suggested that six to ten participants is the right number'(p. 303). The first focus group therefore had nine student participants, which gave everyone the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The second group had 15 students, which resulted in several people speaking at once making transcription difficult with some loss of data. The facilitators said that although the number of participants was more than the ideal for a focus group, it was hard to refuse entry to students who were so keen to be part of the study.

2.10.4 Focus group process

The NZTRI facilitators who led the focus groups gave participants a copy of the consent forms and the process was verbalised to ensure participants were aware that

they could terminate the discussion and/or leave the room at any stage. The signed consent forms were collected by the facilitators, and the discussions and later passed on to the researcher. It was estimated (by both the researcher and facilitators) that the groups would require about 45 minutes to undertake the discussion. Interestingly, the first group (second year students) were still talking about their experiences after one and a half hours! Once they relaxed and warmed to the topic they had a lot of information to share. The second group – 1st year students – took an hour to finish their discussion. The skills of the facilitators to broaden the discussion also led to a synergistic effect of group interaction that allowed participants to react and add to the responses of other group members. Refreshments were served at the conclusion of the focus groups.

Davidson and Tolich (2003) note that a rationale for using focus groups is to allow the facilitator to gain an insight into the opinions, beliefs, and values of respondents through discussion of ideas in the relative freedom of a group situation. Interaction within the group can build on each other experiences and possibly challenge other viewpoints. Sekaran (2003) notes that focus groups allow 'unstructured and spontaneous responses .... reflect(ing) genuine opinions, ideas and feelings of the (respondents) about the topic' (p. 220). The facilitators encouraged participants to talk together and just used the questions when one line of discussion was finished thus encouraging spontaneity.

2.10.5 Focus group analysis

The researcher transcribed the recordings using a coding system to cluster various themes. There were a few instances when several participants spoke at the same time, particularly in the second focus group. These sections of the tapes were very hard to transcribe and some of the comments were missed. In most cases, however, facilitators were able to control the dialogue well enough that the majority of the discussion was successfully captured. As the participants were not named, the researcher was not privy to the comments and relationship between individual students, although some students' voices could be identified. No respondents were identified in the written transcription. Qualitative data from both focus groups are combined in the Analysis Chapter 5.

2.11 Limitations of the study

Surveys and focus groups were used to achieve a multi-method approach 'based upon recognition that quantitative methods alone would not allow the research to fully address questions of understanding and meaning' (Riley & Love cited in Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 211). The focus groups allowed participants to exchange views on issues outside the semi-structured questions and develop a rich source of research data. This would not have been achieved if only quantitative surveys were used. However, a limitation of this research is that only students present in the class when the survey forms were distributed participated in the data collection. Data from the second survey may have changed the results if responses from all students had been collected. A further possible limitation is the number of focus groups that were held. Time and funding dictated the extent of the data collection methods, resulting in the use of only two surveys and two focus groups.

Mooney (2007) notes that a possible limitation of qualitative research may be:

> the personal involvement and interpretation of the researcher (that) can mean a degree of error and bias ... (as) it is the researcher who ultimately makes the decisions around what data, quotations, and interpretations get included and what get put aside (p. 26).

To ensure minimal bias, the data were frequently reviewed by the researcher to ensure validity of results. Creswell (2007) suggests dependability of the data is established through thorough auditing of the research process, which ensures the results are dependable and accurate. This was achieved by spot checking of raw data against data input to ensure accuracy.

2.12 Ethical approval

Before commencing the research, ethics approval was required from AUT's Ethics Committee. The ethics application (EA1) was submitted to the Ethics Committee, together with copies of consent forms for both the focus groups and participants of the surveys, with information sheets about the research. A memorandum of counselling support was also obtained from the AUT Health, Counselling and Wellbeing department should any participants require this service.

All standard procedures required by the AUT Ethics Committee were followed. These included:

- An assurance that all participants had the right to participate or decline the invitation to participate by using information sheets and signing consent forms.

- An assurance that all participants would be completely anonymous.

- An assurance that strict guidelines regarding the use of the research material and the purposes for which it could be used would be enforced.

By using the services of colleagues for the surveys and NZTRI facilitators for the focus groups, there was an assurance that the interviews were undertaken in a professional manner. The information sheet and consent form for this study are presented in Appendix 4.

2.13 Summary

The use of survey forms before commencement of the group assignment and then again at the conclusion allowed evidence of any changes of opinions to be collected and also provided a method to evaluate changes in awareness of disability issues.

The focus groups provided qualitative data beyond the survey responses. The use of first and second year Diploma students gave a longitudinal indication of whether or not the knowledge gained during the assignment raised awareness of disability issues personally and in the workplace, and whether this information was likely to diminish over a period of time. 'A longitudinal study involves investigating a phenomenon or different groups over time, to see if there are any relevant changes' (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001, p. 25).

Results from the research findings are discussed in Chapter four.

3   Results

This chapter presents the analysis of the two survey reports and comments from the two focus groups. Comparisons are drawn between the two surveys to identify changes to attitudes and beliefs towards people with disabilities, after completion of a disability-related project. Comparisons are also made between data from the respondents who had just completed the assignment and those who completed the same assignment in the previous year. Davidson and Tolich (2003) suggest a longitudinal study allowing analysis of changes in attitudes over a prolonged period gives depth to the research.

3.1 Profile of survey respondents – demographics/characteristics

The first survey was completed by students prior to commencing the assignment on disability issues. There were 54 respondents to the first survey (out of 68 students who were enrolled in the paper, and who were invited to complete the survey at the end of a lecture). The number of respondents reflects the number of students in class for the lecture in which the data were collected. The second survey was conducted during class after the students had completed the assignment on disability issues. The number of respondents this time was only 24, which also reflects the number of students in the lecture. To abide by the conditions of ethics approval regarding anonymity of respondents the survey forms were not matched to enable pre and post tests. Instead, the data were analysed independently by comparing the overall mean scores for the attitudinal statements between the two surveys.

3.1.1 Age

A summary of the profile of survey respondents is presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents (over 70%) were aged between 18-20 years which is typical of the intake age for this qualification. Students in this age group have usually left school the previous year and have progressed on to university to gain qualifications to enable them to pursue their chosen careers in the hospitality and tourism industry. A stair-casing option (i.e. direct progression from high school to university) often means the students have not had full time work other than during school holidays, so have limited experience of the hospitality and tourism industry. Older students

have usually taken some time off between their education periods (or are seeking a career change) and will probably have had some form of full time employment by the time they enrol.

3.1.2 Gender

Female students tend to be better represented than male students (34/20 in the first survey and 17/7 in the second survey), reflecting the gender balance of the Diploma cohort. This statistic is also reflective of a report undertaken by Whiteford and Nolan (2007) which stated 'there are more females employed in (Auckland) hospitality than males. The proportion of females employed increased slightly from 61% in 2001 to 62% in 2006' (p. 26).

Table 1: Respondent profile analysis

Profile analysis		Pre assignment N=54	Post-assignment N=24
Age	over 25	1.90%	4.20%
	21-25	14.80%	12.50%
	18-20	70.40%	79.20%
	under 18	13.00%	4.20%
Gender	female	63.00%	70.80%
	male	37.00%	29.20%
Hospitality employment history	currently working	51.90%	62.50%
	not currently but have done	25.90%	20.80%
	never worked	22.20%	16.70%
Length of employment	not applicable	18.50%	20.80%
	more than a year	35.20%	33.30%
	6-12 months	14.80%	29.20%
	less than 6 months	31.50%	16.70%
Most recent position	Back of House	13.00%	16.70%
	Front of House	50.00%	50.00%
	Other and not applicable	37.00%	33.40%
Size of property (for employment)	not applicable	81.50%	66.70%
	151 rooms or more	9.30%	16.70%
	150 rooms or less	9.30%	16.70%
Q1: I have never interacted with anyone who has a physical disability	no opinion/not applicable	16.70%	0.00%
	Disagree (have interacted)	66.70%	83.30%
	Agree (have not interacted)	16.70%	16.70%

3.1.3 Industry experience

The third question was aimed at determining how many of the respondents had worked in the hospitality industry. The question did not seek information about any employment outside the hospitality industry, but aimed to identify what percentage of students had been exposed to situations in a hospitality setting.

In the first survey, responses showed that 77.8% of students had been employed, at some stage, in hospitality. This response was expected as students are required to complete 300 hours of industry work for completion of the Diploma. Students who have not yet been employed will be required to undertake work within the industry before being able to graduate. The second survey (three months later) showed a reduction of 5.5% in the number of students that had never worked, indicating that more students were still seeking industry experience.

3.1.4 Length of service

The fourth demographic question sought to determine how long respondents had worked in the hospitality industry. The length of service also indicates how much time they had to allow observation of guest encounters. In the first survey, the percentage of respondents (46.3%) with less than 12 months employment reflects the younger age of students and the Diploma's work requirements. Respondents who had worked for more than one year (35.2%) may relate to the number of students (9) over 21 years. In the second survey, it was interesting to note that little change was shown in the length of employment. That is, about 45.9% of respondents indicated employment of less than 12 months while 33.3% indicated employment exceeding one year.

3.1.5 Most recent position

'Most recent employment' seeks to find out what role the respondents did recently to indicate if they actually interacted with guests or not. Back-of-house employees tend to work behind the scenes and do not deal directly with guests. Back-of-house roles include housekeeping, kitchens and human resources. Front-of-house roles include waitressing, bartending, reception and functions.

An overwhelming percentage of 35.2% of respondents cited 'waiting staff' as their most recent position in the first survey, whilst 45.8% indicated this was their most recent position in the second survey. Many students stated that they had had a variety of roles during their employment. Waiting was often combined with function work or bar work. A position as wait staff is often the entry point for students. This is particularly evident during busy periods such as weekends or Christmas when the students are on break from studies and the industry requires extra staff. Some more diverse employment included check-out operators (2) in supermarkets, sales assistance (retail) (1), housekeeping (3) and restaurant manager (1) – this student was in the 21-25 age group.

3.1.6 Size of property

The question regarding size of property sought to establish how many students were working in the accommodation sector as opposed to restaurants or cafés. This question assumed that only respondents employed in the accommodation industry would have rooms attached to the establishment. The first survey showed that only 18.6% of respondents were working in accommodation, whereas the second survey indicated that 33.3% were now working in the accommodation sector.

3.1.7 Prior contact

The final profile question regarding previous contact with a disabled person was to establish whether or not respondents had any personal experience with disabled people. Given the nature of the study it would be expected that responses to this question would see a large change between the surveys.

An indication of interaction with physical disabilities showed a small change of 16% between the two surveys, as respondents showed contact with some type of mobility restricted issue. Interestingly, in the second survey the change in responses resulted by a change from 'no opinion/not applicable' to 'disagree' that no interaction has occurred, so now 83.3% of respondents have interacted with someone who is physically disabled. The percentage of 16.7 stating that they agree they had not had interaction with physical disabilities was unchanged between surveys. This insignificant change is evident on Table 2 (t = 1.084 p=0.282).

Table 2: Comparison of Means: Independent t-Test

Theme of responses			Mean Pre	Mean Post	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation Pre	Std. Deviation Post	t - test	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Personal Ability / belief	Q1	Never interacted with disabled person	1.528	1.792	-0.263	1.049	0.833	-1.084	75	0.282
	Q2	Aware of needs	2.926	2.917	0.009	1.025	1.018	0.037	76	0.971
	Q3	Able to help in the past	2.574	2.417	0.157	1.175	0.776	0.600	76	0.551
	Q4	Not anxious serving a blind person	2.611	2.917	-0.306	1.123	0.717	-1.224	76	0.225
	Q5	Confident to help restricted mobility	2.722	3.000	-0.278	1.220	0.590	-1.355	75.36	0.180
	Q6	Happy to work with disabled	2.759	3.042	-0.282	1.228	0.751	-1.246	68.30	0.217
	Q7	Hope someone else serves them	1.685	1.792	-0.106	0.797	0.588	-0.587	76	0.559
	Q10	Nervous around guide dog	1.685	1.583	0.102	0.797	0.654	0.549	76	0.585
	Q12	Need to learn more	2.981	3.167	-0.185	0.901	0.702	-0.893	76	0.375
	Q14	Have adequate knowledge	1.963	2.667	-0.704	1.132	0.637	-3.491	71.63	0.001 *
	Q16	Believe disabled are not employed	2.278	2.583	-0.306	1.379	1.018	-1.091	58.84	0.280
	Q19	Would employ disabled people	2.130	3.125	-0.995	1.388	0.338	-3.457	76	0.001 *
Belief of Ability	Q8	They are not able to work	1.907	1.833	0.074	1.051	0.816	0.306	76	0.760
	Q9	They should have support person	2.407	2.125	0.282	1.174	0.797	1.238	63.20	0.220
	Q11	They prefer to look after themselves	1.889	2.125	-0.236	1.176	1.296	-0.793	76	0.430
Response to current hospitality operations	Q13	Hotels do not provide service	2.037	2.917	-0.880	1.359	1.018	-3.162	58.07	0.002 *
	Q15	Hotels need guidelines for staff	3.037	3.333	-0.296	1.027	0.482	-1.345	76	0.183
	Q17	Not adequate facilities in hotels	1.778	3.042	-1.264	1.423	0.859	-4.029	76	0.000 *
	Q18	Better facilities for guests and staff	2.259	3.125	-0.866	1.376	0.850	-3.391	67.83	0.001 *
	Q20	Work for disabled improves image	2.370	2.750	-0.380	1.293	1.189	-1.226	76	0.224

Significant results on the table have been indicated with an asterisk.

3.2 Quantitative results

The survey contained 20 statements relating to disability and disabled persons. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to each statement by responding to a 5-point scale where 1 = 'strongly agree' and 5 = 'no opinion/not applicable'. A summary of the mean responses to each question, under the three themes explained subsequently, is provided in Table 2.

Responses are clustered by themes to illustrate how students had responded. The 'personal ability' theme included questions such as 'I am aware of the needs of people with physical disabilities' and 'I would be nervous working around a disabled person who has a dog'. This section called on personal impressions of respondents regarding their own capabilities to deal with disabled people. Differences between the pre and post surveys can be analysed to indicate if any changes to respondents' impressions of their own ability to assist physically disabled people occurred following the assignment research. These results would demonstrate whether or not learning is effective in changing attitudes.

The second theme focused on how respondents viewed the competence of disabled people to look after themselves and the level of independence respondents thought disabled people would have. Sample questions included statements such as 'If a physically disabled guest comes to my workplace I believe they should have a support person with them'. Questions in this section were aimed to determine whether respondents had a better understanding of how physically disabled persons were able to look after themselves if appropriate modifications to the physical environment were made.

The third theme required an evaluation of how well they believe hospitality operations respond to the needs of disabled people. Questions such as 'I think hotels do not have enough services for guests with physical disabilities' were included in this section. A copy of the survey questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1. This section was aimed to identify any observations respondents had made during the research process and whether they had altered their understanding of how an inclusive environment could be provided.

3.3 Discussion

As noted in both surveys there were a constant numbers of respondents across all questions (i.e. 54 in the pre-test and 24 in the post-test). As such, these data have not

been included in the table. As a condition of ethics approval students were assured of their anonymity so results (in the pre and post surveys) were not matched with each other. An independent-sample t test was conducted to test the hypothesis that attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities could be modified with targeted education. The use of the pre and post T-test showed whether the difference between means for the two sets of scores was the same or different.

From the original sample of 54 participants, the post survey had a reduced sample size of 24. This means that the data in the post survey has a 95% confidence level, with a confidence interval of $\pm$ 15.0. Veal (2006) notes 'for some statistics, for the smaller samples sizes, the confidence intervals are not calculable because the total margin of error is larger than the original statistics' (p. 290). Given the small sample sizes further qualitative research approaches were therefore incorporated to overcome the limitations of the quantitative data.

In the first theme (Personal ability/belief) two questions showed significant results: Q14 (I believe I have enough knowledge to deal with physically disabled people) and Q19 (If I worked in a management role I would employ staff with physical disabilities). In Q14 the test indicated t = -3.491, (p=0.001) students now believed that after the assignment they had enough knowledge to deal with a physically disabled guest. This response, however, contradicted results in Q12 (I think I need to learn more about how to assist people with physical disabilities. In Q19 the test indicated t =-3.457 (p=0.001); all respondents indicated if they were in a management role they would employ disabled staff. After the assignment students were significantly more able to consider disabled employees as a viable workforce in hospitality.

The second theme that questioned respondents' understanding of the ability of disabled people to care for themselves and be independent showed no significant change between the first and second survey.

In the theme regarding respondents' opinions of current hospitality operations three questions showed significance changes between the surveys. In Q13 (I think hotels do not have enough services for guests with physical disabilities) the test indicated t =-3.162 (p=0.002). During the assignment respondents visited three accommodation providers and so had the opportunity to evaluate what (if any) services were available. Results indicated that by the second survey many respondents more aware of the lack of services for disabled guests currently being provided in hotels. Q17 (I think there are not enough facilities for people with physical disabilities in the hospitality

industry) had similar results t = -4.029 (p=0.000). This result indicated an improved awareness of a lack of services in hotels for disabled guests. The test for Q18 (If properties improved their facilities for guests with physical disabilities then management would be better able to provide for employees with physical disabilities) showed t = -3.391 (p=0.001) suggesting respondents' improved understanding of how the removable of barriers would help disabled staff. The overall result for questions in this theme indicates the research undertaken by respondents regarding disability issues had significantly increased their awareness of changes that can be made for disabled guests and how these could make a workplace more user-friendly for disabled employees.

Other responses do not show significant changes between the surveys. One area of interest is the lack of change in Q2 (I am aware of the needs of people with physical disabilities). Test results T = 1.084 (p=0.282) were surprising as given the nature of the assignment, a significant change in response was expected. Another area of surprise was in responses to Q8 (I do not believe people with physical disabilities are able to work in the hospitality industry): t = 0.306 (p=0.760). This tends to suggest that many respondents still showed a negative attitude to the employment of disabled people. Responses to this question contradict responses to Q19 (I would employ). A possible explanation could be that the respondents did not fully participate in the assignment. Students were peer-assessed to indicate how the marks were allocated within the group. Possibly some students just made the Power Point presentation and did not attend the visits to the Society or the hotels and so have not extended their knowledge of disabled issues. Another possible reason could be the small sample size of post respondents. These results are contrary to the expectation of this research.

3.4 Qualitative data focus groups

The first focus group comprised nine students who had completed the research on disability issues during the previous year. These students were invited to allow assessment of whether information and understanding gained from the study was still used in their daily lives or whether the data were forgotten as previous opinions and prejudices regarding disabled people influenced their daily interaction with people. One of the respondents was a wheelchair user. The second focus group comprised of 15 respondents who had just completed the assignment, so the material researched was still current.

Members of the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI) led the discussion and the responses were recorded for later transcription.

Q.1: What was your first experience with a person who had a physical disability?

This question sought to gauge how respondents felt about physically disabled people when they first encountered them.

Focus group one

> *At college we had special units for disabled people.*

Another response – (from the wheelchair user)

> *I don't recall that I had much to do with people (who did not have a disability) before primary school, because I was in one of those units that you spoke about at Mt Roskill Primary for much of my school life.*

This separation from the main-stream students gives disabled people a 'special' title, making them perceived to be different.

> *At college we had cerebral palsy people but they just couldn't play sport so they were really very different to us – I didn't think of them as different, just physically challenged in some way.*

Without the inclusiveness in the sporting area, this sector of students would be disadvantaged.

> *I can remember that at intermediate where we had a visit to a disabled school and it was quite scary just to see some of the things that go on. One of them had a fit and to actually see it was quite scary.*

It is interesting to know that at intermediate level the students had a field trip to a school for the disabled. Witnessing a child having a seizure would create a lasting impression on many people and perhaps make them wary of future encounters.

Focus group 2

> *I have a friend who is blind – I have known her all my life.*

Q: Did you treat her any differently?

> *No*

Personal interaction with a sight impaired friend over a long period meant the respondent had first-hand knowledge of both physical and societal barriers experienced by the blind person. This response suggests that increased interaction reduces emphasis on the impairment.

<u>Q. 2: So (what were) the thoughts and feelings of impressions that this encounter left you with?</u>

This question was designed to explore the feelings and possible prejudices that were developed from the experience interaction with a disabled person.

<u>Focus group 1</u>

> *I suppose when you do start to deal with people it takes a bit to get used to at first – it is a bit scary and nerve racking but as soon as you deal with people like that you become used to them – I am not saying that they are much different – just takes a bit of getting used to.*

And another response:

> *It is a bit like taking time to get used to - this might sound a bit prejudiced but once you get over the initial shock of 'oh they are different from me' then you have to come up with this thought quickly 'do I have to treat them any different'? Or do I treat them exactly the same? Or just be more respectful or what?*

It would appear that once respondents realised they had to interact with physically disabled people, and had more contact with them, an understanding would develop that reduced anxiety and the need to treat disabled guests differently.

<u>Focus group 2:</u>

> *Back in our school we had a kid who came to talk to us – he was blind and he talked about his experiences – we all made posters for him. It was things that he could feel to make it so he could experience it.*

The students compensated for the blindness by making posters with varying textures so the blind child could feel, rather than see, the experience. By changing the method of communicating, the blind child was able to fully participate in the encounter.

<u>Q. 3: So how do you think facilities in hotels could be more user friendly for physically disabled people?</u>

<u>Focus group 1</u>

The majority of these students are working (or have worked) in the hospitality industry and so have been able to assess exactly how useful workplace facilities are for physically disabled guests.

If someone knows what was needed, then (they should) put that into an actual hotel situation, to really put those facilities in whether that just be toilets or something like that or specific ramps.

You really need to do some research on it or at least have someone who knows that stuff behind it to really make sure it is user friendly – not just going with the councils 'you need this, you need that' but actually someone who knows what they are talking about – you need to talk to physically impaired people to know what they need and they want.

I hear a lot of complaints from people but this is when the place is well and truly built and it is very expensive to then make alterations for disabled people. But if disabled people or those interested could make their comments and complaints etc., whilst the place is being built - at that level it would be much less expensive for the building industry.

Yes, I used to work for the xxxxxx hotel and they have just recently undergone refurbishments and people who are now staying in the apartments area above and are mobility restricted can access the pool spa etc., but if these people are staying in the hotel they can't actually access it. There are stairs leading to it (the pool) so it is not user friendly for people in wheelchairs. The alternative is to go outside and around the front and use the apartment entrance. So hopefully the hotel will not get its 5 star rating again and the 5 will drop to a 4 star? I don't know.

Respondents in this group are more clearly aware of the inaccessibility of hospitality operations in the Auckland area. Examples of recent renovations that are not inclusive for the disability sector would indicate that the NZ Building Code was not being followed. It was interesting that the respondent thought this omission should impact on the hotel's rating. The suggestion that people in the disability sector are consulted in the design stage was also made:

Why can't we get involved at grass roots level and then say look there is no lift here or only stairs or you can't get a wheelchair in there – the door is too narrow.

Focus group 2:

I guess the entrance could be more accessible (because) that's where they come to - the whole area has to be accessible – everyone should be able to use the gym.

There needs to be facilities for guide dogs.

Places like the gym and pool should be altered to cater for people in wheelchairs.

There needs to be access to the spa pool.

Respondents showed awareness that all facilities need to be available for all guests and support dogs also needed to be catered for.

Q.4: What I am hearing from you is a strong call that people who would use the facilities (should be) consulted so there is a lot on the planning and consultation processes.

Focus group 1:

Yeh, but I would think that would be common sense really but the way I think of it apparently not.

There are a lot of places that have disabled facilities but obviously they are not user friendly.

I mean if you just involve some people who know what they are talking about, obviously it would save a lot more money and a lot more time.

We would probably be shocked if we sat down and realised that those people that plan these facilities are not the people that in some way have a physical disability – wouldn't we?

There appears to be a consensus that more consultation is required with groups that have a vested interest in the workable facilities for guests with disabilities, such as CCS and RNZFB. Examples of unusable facilities for disabled people or non-compliance of regulations relating to the adaption of facilities are shown in the following statements:

I saw a disabled toilet down a flight of stairs which obviously does not cater for wheelchair users but they had complied with the law.

I also think that another problem is that they follow the letter of the law but sadly not the spirit of the law like they had disability labelled car parks which is fine but they let anyone use it.

These comments seem to indicate a general apathy towards the provision of facilities for disabled guests and it appears compliance with various NZ laws that cover disability issues is generally weak.

Q 5: Do you think people need to learn more about how to assist people with physical disabilities?

Focus group 1:

I think people whether they want to or not will be aware of it whether they are taught or not and then people who want to help will take that on regardless of whether they are educated about it as they will educate themselves.

I don't know if education needs to happen as people who don't want to know will not want to know regardless - so by your very nature you are that sort of person.

I think that for tourism and that sort of business they should have some sort of stuff - or education on it – they should know something because a client or anyone could have a disability.

Some respondents seemed to have mixed feelings as to whether or not formal education concerning disability issues would be beneficial, as they tended to believe that if a person wants to be able to assist a guest they would find out themselves what to do. However, another respondent thought education or instructions on how to interact with disabled guests would be beneficial.

Focus group 2:

> *Like people like porters, reception etc. they should understand about people with disabilities and how to help them around the hotel and not patronise them.*
>
> *They need to ask if they would like help as sometimes they want to do it by themselves.*
>
> *It should be part of the training.*

The importance of providing suitable training for front line staff such as porters was made, although the suggestion was also made that some guests may prefer to manage by themselves and so guests needed to indicate when assistance is required.

Q. 6: Do you think this (issue) is very important for tourism type business?

Focus group 1:

> *Yes any sort of business really.*
>
> *Yes for tourism and hospitality they are really people orientated business so you need to be wise about who is going to be using the facilities and services.*
>
> *Even for things like retail jobs - that is another one that is people orientated so you need to be thinking about who is going to use these services and facilities and what will they need because not everyone is able-bodied.*
>
> *I think the other thing with the tourism industry that you really have to be a host to all people not just normal people – you have every type of person from all over the world so to be socially aware you have to be open to everyone.*

All respondents were aware of the need for tourism industry operators to be legally and socially aware of disability issues.

Focus group 2:

> *I think all businesses need to provide suitable facilities for all people regardless of their ability.*

Q 7: How would you feel about working with a staff member who is physically impaired?

Focus group 1:

> *I don't see a problem in that.*

I wouldn't have a problem so long as they can do the job and the impairment doesn't restrict them from doing the job at all cos obviously its not the type of person but whether they can do the job.

So long as it doesn't hamper the performance within the job range but then that is with everyone whether they are disabled or not.

If they are employed to do the job then it shouldn't be a problem but I think it is important to keep an eye on the other staff to make sure that they are not asked to do more to compensate.

There was general agreement that a potential employee with a disability should be considered for a position. Their ability to do the job without impacting negatively on other staff should be the only ability-related employment criterion.

Focus group 2:

So long as they can do the job – so long as you can communicate with them (I would be happy).

This response would indicate that a prospective employee would need to be evaluated on his or her ability to do the job rather than on the particular disability. The ability to communicate is the main criterion for hotel employees and is not usually a problem with physically disabled people (communication issues are more of an issue when employing new immigrants who do not have English as a first language).

Q 8: Should guidelines on helping people with physical disabilities be part of training for hotels?

Focus group 1:

There are basic guidelines you could put into place such as being courteous but then if you are going to put like a proper procedure then there would have to be different branches where they branch off and it could get complicated and complex.

It could be hard because sometimes you don't know what disability they have – you might look at them but the disability might be different as some disabilities are not obvious. People just might need some help with writing etc – so a description of less obvious disabilities might be useful.

You can't help someone unless you know what is wrong with them so I guess it plays two parts – they have to tell you too.

These responses indicate that some basic instructions should be put in place, for example,

Always talk to the person not over them because even if they can't talk back they have some way of communicating with you.

Perhaps there is some requirement for guests with a disability to indicate to staff how they would like to be assisted during their stay.

Focus group 2:

> *Only for front of house. I think it should be – you don't have to spend ages on it.*
>
> *I think there should be guidelines – general information.*
>
> *Everyone has different amounts of knowledge on disabilities so you can't assume that someone will know what to do.*
>
> *Your knowledge would come from having experience in it – I know it's good to read about it but more practical experience is required.*

There appeared to be a general consensus that some training and guidelines are required, particularly for front of house staff, and that practical experience would be beneficial. Involvement of CCS and RNZFB during in-house training sessions would provide the practical component.

Q 9: Do you think management would support the changes?

Focus group 1:

> *They should but they won't. It is a costly experience to do it for such a small percentage of the guests so I don't think they would be prepared to do it.*
>
> *If you go to the new shopping malls such as clothes shops, people with some disabilities wouldn't be able to move around the stores so obviously they haven't thought about it.*
>
> *Would they support changes – sure attitudinal changes as that doesn't cost them anything, but structural changes to the building is a big call.*
>
> *If you have masses of disabled people you are obviously going to have to do something about the facilities.*

So numbers are a factor?

> *Definitely. I know that mothers with pushchairs need these facilities – now there is a big group of people!*

In the opinion of respondents, business operators should make changes to accommodate people with disabilities but in most cases they would be reluctant to do so, citing the cost as opposed to the number of disabled customers as not being a revenue returning expenditure. The comment that changes to such facilities would also benefit other sectors of the market such as mothers with pushchairs would be a possible lever to bring about necessary changes in the future.

Focus group 2:

> *From the interviews that my group had I don't really think they really understand the changes – they don't really know what to do – they just go along with what you say.*

> *They don't really know what to do so I think that would be the first step. Then research and find out what to do. They are reasonably inexpensive changes and there is no reason not to do them. Some could even be done for free.*

> *I think it is firstly understanding what needs to be done.*

> *They need to look at their client base and sometimes there is not the need for ramps and rails etc. But it is a legal requirement – they do cover the legal need.*

These responses indicate that during hotel visits the staff interviewed show little understanding of changes that could be made to better accommodate guests with a physical impairment. Instances of legal compliance such as access to the building were cited but then other areas, such as the restaurants, were not accessible.

Q 10: What role do you think a person with a physical disability would be able to do in the hotel?

Focus group 1:

> *Depends on what type of disability it is – if it is diabetes then they could do anything.*

> *I think it depends on the support they get – if they get enough support they can do almost anything.*

> *Perhaps would be more suited to reception or office work - nowadays there is of course the issue of anti-discriminate laws and if someone rolls up for an interview with a disability and the manager thinks I know this job and I really don't think you can do it – they can't say that – they have to give them a trial.*

> *In some respects this could be a problem for the hotel. For example, if someone was epileptic and had a fit in the kitchen and fell onto a hot surface and burnt themself. You cannot say look I don't think because of your disability you can't do this job. So it does complicate things.*

From responses it appeared that the general opinion was that people with a disability could do any job where facilities can be adapted for their disability. Legally, potential employees cannot be unreasonably discriminated against, and disabled people need to be supported when seeking employment.

Focus group 2:

> *Reception, information – maybe they couldn't be a waiter if they were in a wheelchair. If they have the ability they should be allowed to do the job.*

This response reinforced the notion that the ability to do a particular job was the main criterion for employment selection.

Q11: What are the recurring issues for people with physical impairments?

Focus group 1:

> *Not fitting in. People don't take into account what facilities people need. A feeling of not being catered for (and) segregation into a different section.*
>
> *A friend of mine had to sit in a special area at the theatre – was told it was for safety reasons, but it makes you feel marginalised.*
>
> *A lot of it is social changes – if people can stop seeing them as people who constantly need help or different then the world would be a better place. Particularly in the tourism sector which is so based on personal interaction, people just need to be a lot more open. And take into account that people just need a little bit more help.*

Lack of awareness and social responsibility would appear to be the concerns highlighted in this section. There is an apparent need for tourism operators who are in a 'people' business to be more inclusive in their business.

Focus group 2:

> *Discrimination for jobs – lack of self esteem – they might feel they can't do things as well as other people.*

Prejudgment of an applicant's ability based on their disability was recognised as a barrier for employment opportunities. The suggestion of low self-esteem was a presumption as no-one in this focus group was physically impaired. People who are not disabled themselves cannot truly understand how a disabled person feels

Q 12: How can you respect the privacy and individuality of people with disabilities?

Focus group 2:

> *Be careful what sort of questions you ask them about the disability.*
>
> *Just think how you would want to be treated and what you would want to be done for you if you were in that situation and just base it on that – a bit of role reversal.*

These responses illustrated the need for empathy with people who have an impairment and suggest that to 'stand in the shoes' of another person helps understand their needs.

Q 13: Do you think the general public's perception of a company is influenced by the employment of physically disabled staff?

Focus group 1:

Yes especially in hotels.

There could be some form of a negative side affecting the ambience but then there would be people around the world who are amazing at their (ability to do the) job with great people skills and they can do that job.

Even though there are the laws in place, hotels still don't really hire to those laws. If a person doesn't look a certain way or is a certain sect they won't hire them. This is not particularly disabled people, it is general.

I think people being what they are have a perception of what the person should look like. It depends very much on the company and the function of the person.

I would use it as a positive marketing campaign. AUT employ disabled staff – yes they are very much committed to that.

I was involved with the SPCA where we had a volunteer in a wheelchair and people commented on how friendly she was and helpful when showing them around – it was good for the image of the society.

Especially if disabled people were involved with children in a kids club or something like that - that would really have a good impact.

Respondents all felt that employment of physically challenged people would not only enhance the public perception of an operation and that such employees could also be used in marketing.

Focus group 2:

It could be positive – they could be seen as a really diverse workplace.

It could attract people. If someone who is disabled sees other disabled people working there then they might feel a bit more welcome.

It might have a negative affect because some people may have prejudices and if they see a disabled person working there they might question the quality of the company. But it could be good PR. (Public relations)

I think people who do not have any disability think that disabled people cannot do the job so well.

Maybe there should be more research into how disabled people want to be treated. They need to focus on other disabilities too.

When we went to a hotel accommodation provider and we were considering blind people, the hotel didn't know what they needed. They are only providing for physically disabled people. They don't realise that a person who is blind or deaf has different needs as well.

It was surprising that hotels you expected would have good facilities didn't. For example the xxxx hotel – they only have access to the room – not the gym or other areas. But the xxxx hotel was really good – one of the owners there is himself in a wheelchair so I suppose he had a lot of input into the design etc.

In most cases respondents thought employment of people with disabilities would enhance the image of the business and could even be more welcoming for guests with disabilities. The possibility that some guests could show a bias to being served by a

staff member who has an impairment, but if the employee was able to show that they did the job satisfactorily, suggestions were made that any prejudices would soon disappear. Respondents noted that mobility impairment is not the only disability that hotels need to cater for – blind and deaf guests also required consideration.

Q14: Has this study helped open your eyes (to disability issues)?

Focus group 1:

> *It has just opened your eyes and made you take into account a lot of things and as soon as you start to research and study it helps you to understand.*

> *If you don't directly know a disabled person – you see them on the street and you think of that is disabled but you don't think about them because it is not to do with you.*

> *There is also the culture – some countries still think that the disabled person is because you had a mean spirit – so the whole culture taboo thing. This is an interesting point. This would be hard to convince them that it is not just because you had a mean spirit or the gods didn't smile on you – it is just because you have a disability. This is a real culture rethink.*

Focus group 2:

> *It made you understand that disabled people are part of our society and they are able to do a lot more than I thought they could do.*

> *It helped me to realise that sometimes just a small change – such as the placement of tables in a restaurant – can make such a difference for a person in a wheelchair.*

From their responses, it seems that research into disability issues aids an understanding of associated issues that perhaps, without this assignment, would never concern the participants.

3.5 Conclusion

Some responses in the surveys were surprising considering the nature of the assignment. However, comments from the focus showed that respondents who had completed the study a year earlier still considered issues for disabled people as they related to their workplace. An inclusion of disability issues is justified within an educational programme if learning is gained that can be applied to a work environment and an improved acknowledgement of an individual's social responsibility is learned.

4   Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the Results (Chapter 4) and links these back to the Literature Review (Chapter 2).

4.1 Profile of survey respondents

An analysis of the respondents' profile is required to understand their current level of industry involvement because their work experience (or lack thereof) is likely to affect their ability to evaluate attitudes and barriers for guests and employees with disabilities.

4.1.1 Age and gender

The data in Table 1 shows that the majority of survey respondents (79.2%) was in the 18-20 age group. This is the usual age of first year students on the Diploma of Hospitality Management (DHM) at AUT and is consistent with the profile of New Zealand hotel workers. Whiteford and Nolan (2007) reported that the New Zealand hospitality industry has an 'extremely young age profile and almost 40% of employees (in 2006 were) younger than 25 and the 15-19 year age category (was) the largest' (p.5).

Gender statistics showed a higher proportion of females to male respondents (34/20 in the first survey and 17/7 in the second). This gender imbalance is typical of the hospitality industry generally. For example, Pizam (2006) reported a 69:31 female:male ratio in hospitality classes at the University of Massachusetts in 2006. He noted 'on checking with other hospitality management program(mes) in the USA and other European countries ... the situation (is) more or less the same' (p. 533). A report prepared for the New Zealand Hospitality Standards Institute revealed statistics of 62% female/38% male employees nationwide in the hospitality industry in 2006 (Whiteford & Nolan, 2007), further confirming the female majority. The female:male ratio of respondents in the surveys seems typical of the current hospitality industry ratio.

4.1.2 Hospitality work experience and length of employment

The apparently high percentage of respondents (83%) indicates that they are currently working (or have worked) in the industry was as expected, as 300 hours of paid or unpaid work is a requirement for graduation with the DHM. It could be assumed the remainder of respondents will seek employment during the main Christmas break. In

the second survey, 62% stated that they were currently working and had at least six months experience in the industry. As many students need to supplement their student allowances, they would need to work at nights, weekends and during breaks, to meet their expenses. In 2006, the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA, 2008) reported 'only around 25% of all students under 25 (years) receive an allowance while studying' (para.1). To fund their studies, most students need some form of earning and many seek work in the hospitality industry, which offers flexible hours and part-time employment. Poulston (2008) noted 'a large proportion of under 20 year olds in casual staff positions suggests that Auckland's hospitality industry is largely a young person's environment' (p. 5).

4.1.3 Most recent position and size of property

Questions about the type of work allowed identification of front line staff: that is, employees who deal directly with customers. Roles in this area include those of waiters, bartenders, functions staff and receptionists. Back-of-house staff (kitchen workers and sales staff) are not usually in a position to witness interaction with customers, and so are often unable to comment on physical or attitudinal barriers for disabled guests. Responses revealed that, 50% of respondents were in front line positions, indicating they worked closely with guests. This proportion was as expected, as students are often employed in a waiting or bartending role that allows scheduling of work hours to fit around their studies. As only 33% of respondents indicated they worked in accommodation it was believed that most respondents were employed in cafés, bars or restaurants.

4.1.4 Previous interaction

This question appears on Table one and also Table two so these responses are analysed fully in later in this chapter.

4.2 Discussion of responses

A comparison of responses, taken at the beginning and at the end of an assignment that considered disability issues, allowed an evaluation of possible attitudinal changes. If any attitude modification had been evident in the second survey, it could be assumed that exposure to physical and emotional barriers encountered during the disability assignment had heightened respondents' awareness of issues for people with disabilities. Responses from the focus groups were used to evaluate whether or not the time lapse following completion of the student assignment indicated the study of

disability issues had a lasting influence on biases and attitudes towards disabled people. This analysis will be used to consider the research question for this thesis: 'Can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?'

The results have been clustered into the following areas:

- Respondents' thoughts regarding their own personal interaction and ability when working with and serving disabled people.

- Respondents' views regarding disabled peoples' ability to look after themselves.

- Respondents' evaluation of facilities provided by the hospitality industry for disabled people.

- Whether or not the assignment research heightened awareness of disability issues.

4.2.1 Personal interaction with disabled people

Responses were evaluated for any indication of changes between the two surveys that could be attributed to exposure to disability issues. Comments from both focus groups regarding personal attitudes and biases were also considered.

4.2.1.1 Results

Responses from the second survey showed that an increase of interaction with disabled people led to improved awareness of issues for the disabled community, although some respondents indicated that they still had no opinion regarding the needs of people with physical disabilities. This would seem to show that, even after intensive research, exposure to issues related to disability and disabled people through the assessment task had not influenced attitudes of these respondents towards disabled people. Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) suggest that to effect a permanent attitude change 'constant reinforcement and refreshers are required' (p. 555). Interestingly, the most significant attitude change between the surveys occurred for Q14 (I believe I have enough knowledge to deal with physically disabled people) and Q19 (If I worked in a management role I would employ staff with physical disabilities). These results suggested a change in the attitude had occurred regarding employability of disabled people and also in the respondents' opinion of their own capability when dealing with disabled people. This indicated that some learning had occurred regarding the needs of disabled people. After the class assignment, and in this study, all respondents said they would employ disabled people – an increase of nearly 100% from the first survey.

This indicates improved knowledge regarding the physical and attitudinal barriers that can be removed to accommodate disabled workers. After the assignment respondents seemed more able to focus on the person rather than the disability and not pre-judge the abilities of disabled people.

Members of the focus group two recalled that initial thoughts about disabled people included 'how do I deal with them?' and 'do I treat them differently?' This suggests an anticipated need to change their style of interaction when dealing with a person with a physical impairment. Respondents also noted that helping someone who has a disability should be part of the industry's training, but cautioned that sometimes disabled people do not want assistance, as they may prefer to manage by themselves. These findings indicate that employees need to check to see if help is required rather than assume it is.

Focus group one participants stated that during their school/college life disabled students were separated from other students creating a 'special' category. One respondent talked about a time at intermediate school when the class visited a school for students with disabilities. Unfortunately during this visit one of the disabled students had a seizure; the impression this would have made on the visiting students is likely to have highlighted the disability and perhaps created serious barriers in the minds of the visitors. The purpose of this visit would have been interesting to explore but unfortunately this was not included in the discussion.

Another respondent shared an experience of visit to his school by a blind child. The students compensated for the blindness by making posters with varying textures so the blind child could feel, rather than see, an experience. By changing the method of communicating, the blind child was able to fully participate in the encounter. This experience shows that by understanding the needs of different abilities, different methods of interaction can be used to provide an inclusive environment for all.

Marginalisation of disabled students creates an impression for others that the disability makes them different. The removal of physical barriers to allow disabled students to participate in mainstream education could also help to remove attitudinal barriers of other students. Disabled people 'socially need to be at work...they require community intregration' (John McKeown, personal communication, 29 May, 2008). McKeown is the principal at Sunnydene School for children with intellectual disabilities. This school takes students on field trips to local supermarkets, libraries and so forth. Employees in these establishments become accustomed to dealing with his students

and this frequent interaction helps dispel prejudices. Because the employees act 'normally' with the students, other members of the public do not see the students as people to be afraid of or treated differently (McKeown). In this situation, the person is focused on, rather than the disability.

A respondent in the second focus group talked about a friend who is blind, and explained that the friend was treated exactly the same way as other friends. Their disability did not require any special treatment or consideration. This suggests that, during on-going interaction with disabled people, the actual disability tends to diminish in the mind of other people and the person with the disability is regarded as any other person, in the same way as a person of another minority group goes unnoticed. As the 'disabled' identity fades, the person is identified more by other characteristics, such as personality. Another example of how on-going contact with a disabled person can change the focus from the disability to the personality was given by Poulston (personal communication, 8 May, 2008) regarding a friend who is blind. As the friendship has endured for many years, she said she often forgets that he is blind and does not think of him as having a disability. Familiarity with a disabled person lessens the consideration of the impairment and any extra help that is required is automatically given rather than carefully planned. This automatic consideration can be likened to a student who offers their seat on public transport to an elderly woman. As the student has always been taught that this is what is done in society as a mark of respect for older people, the action is so commonplace it is done without deliberation. It can therefore be assumed that frequent contact with a disabled person will help to remove attitudinal barriers and normalise the disability in the mind of other party.

The second survey indicated little change in responses to Q10 (I would be nervous working around a disabled person who has a dog). Assistance dogs are usually large and if a person has never interacted with dogs, they could be cautious approaching the animal and it would be reasonable for them to experience some anxiety if they had to serve someone with a guide dog. Another factor that may add to such cautiousness is recent media articles regarding dog attacks that have also increased the general public's awareness of a possible danger when engaging with these animals (van de Stoep, 2008). The ability to interact with animals is brought about by ongoing contact with dogs, and helps to dispel nervousness.

4.2.1.2 Comments

Results from the second survey and the subsequent focus groups indicate that exposure to disability issues help to break down prejudices and biases towards people with impairments. As many respondents indicated in the first survey that they had never interacted with a disabled person, the assignment research was the first time they had had to consider disability issues. Respondents stated that the knowledge learnt had helped them to understand that physically disabled people are just another sector of the hospitality market with varying needs and requirements. Research about issues for disabled people provided respondents the opportunity to increase their knowledge, and this information helped to reduce biases and change attitudes towards people with impairments.

4.2.2 Belief in the ability of disabled people

Questions in this theme tested respondents' perceptions regarding the disabled person's ability to look after themself. It is expected that many respondents will become employers in the future, and will be in a situation to decide whether to offer employment to the disabled workforce. In addition to the social issue of being inclusive, employers also need to consider their legal obligation regarding possible discrimination of minority groups as set out in the Equal Opportunities Act (2003) and the Employment Equity Act (1990).

4.2.2.1 Results

Respondents in both focus groups indicated that they would be happy working with staff who have a disability providing they can work to the same standard as everyone else and no one had to help them out. One person noted that everyone should be able to do the job for which they are employed – physically disabled or not. From these comments it is fair to assume that a person's physical disability should not be a barrier to being considered for employment in an appropriate role.

There was little change of respondents in the second survey who considered that these guests should have their own support person (Q9). It was expected that during the assignment, exposure to problems encountered by disabled people would heightened respondents' awareness. Results in the second surveys did not show any significant change regarding respondents thoughts about the independence of disabled people. Daniels, Rodgers and Wiggins (2004) found that all 23 leisure travellers in their research had at least one companion and several were in groups, indicating that most

leisure travel is done with friends or family, irrespective of whether travellers are disabled or not. Data on business travellers with disabilities could not be found. Respondents from the focus group noted that to ensure staff can adequately handle a situation involving disabled guests, employers have a responsibility to ensure all staff receive the necessary training.

4.2.2.2 Comments

Groschl (2005) suggests prospective employees should be assessed for their abilities rather than be pre-judged because of their disabilities. Nickson *et al*. (2003) suggest 'employers determine who is aesthetically acceptable during recruitment and selection process' (p. 186), and so potential employees with impairments are automatically excluded as they do not 'fit' the traditional industry image. Respondents who have interacted with physically disabled people understand that there are positions in hospitality that could be taken by an impaired employee if physical and attitudinal barriers are removed.

> Hotel organisations need to provide accommodating and supporting human resource policies and program(me)s to attract and integrate employees with disabilities (Groschl, 2006, p. 259).

A further consideration regarding employment of people with impairments is the various New Zealand laws covering disability issues such as the Human Rights Act (1993) and the Equal Opportunities Act (2003). Discrimination in employment selection could have legal consequences and publicity around such law actions would have a detrimental effect on the image of a company.

4.2.3 Evaluation of hospitality facilities for disabled impaired people

These questions in this theme sought to assess whether respondents were able to apply their learning from the assignment into workplace situations. The questions tested respondents' knowledge of the available facilities and services for people with disabilities and asked whether more facilities for guests would also aid disabled employees.

4.2.3.1 Results

The majority of respondents had visited a number of hospitality providers to collect background information for the assignment, during which they were able to evaluate the accessibility of facilities for people with impairments. By the time of the second

survey, more students had found employment and so had the ability to consider the accessibility into and within their workplace. Included in this section was Q20 (I think companies that employ physically disabled people improve their image in society). This question was to test whether respondents considered inclusive business practices important to the general public and if a attitudinal change could be detected between the surveys.

Hospitality management might consider that their operation is user friendly for physically disabled people but barriers can exist for wheelchair users. Rhodda (2007) noted '86% of…..tourism operators rated their businesses as wheelchair accessible (but in actual fact) only 38% were truly accessible' (p. 29). This disparity between operators' perceptions of what they believe is accessible and what is actually accessible indicates a lack of knowledge that could be addressed by consultation with members of appropriate societies during the planning stages of public buildings. Daniels *et al*. (2004) suggest a gap exists between the quality of services provided for disabled and non-disabled guests and they go on to suggest that many hospitality operators are not really aware of the real needs of people who are physically disabled. Survey respondents considered a general lack of services and facilities in hospitality operations for disabled people in Q. 13, Q. 17 and Q. 18.

Focus group respondents felt if management did hire someone physically disabled, this would enhance the reputation and image of the company. The example of the volunteer in a wheelchair working at the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) was cited as a success for the image of the Society, as it illustrated inclusive employment practices. Suggestion was made that an involvement with a kids' club (in an hotel environment) by a person with an impairment would have a good impact on the general public, as an example of inclusive employment practices by the hotel. It would show that the business was diverse and could be attractive to disabled guests or workers with physical disabilities. A question could be asked as to how the disabled community would feel about being 'used' in this way.

Another respondent suggested that employment of a disabled worker could have a negative effect on the image of the quality of the company as people have prejudices about being served by someone with a disability. This comment would indicate a supposition that some members of the wider community still have many prejudices and pre-conditioned responses to the image and abilities of disabled people. However, the employment of staff with impairments, who are viewed by customers and other

staff as a valuable asset to the company, will enhance public perception about the inclusiveness and values of the business. This change of public perception is a main objective of the National Statler Centre for Careers in Hospitality Service based in Buffalo, New York. Michael Hill, the centre's communication specialist, believes customers of the industry feel good about companies which employ people with disabilities (Hawthorne, 2006). Hill also points out that customers like to know they are doing business with companies that do good things in the community; disabled people are also customers. Hawthorne (2006) poses the question 'How better to learn about effectively serving customers with disabilities than to hire people with disabilities?' (p. 5).

Another respondent noted that hotels they had visited seemed to only adapt facilities for wheelchair users; other disabilities such as blindness or deafness were not catered for. One hotel that was visited, however, had really good facilities but, on further research, it was found that the owner is in a wheelchair and so was probably consulted during the design process. This point illustrates again the need for input from disabled people when planning the design of public buildings. Real economic benefits can be made by ensuring buildings are user friendly for customers and employees alike (Rule, 2006).

> Organisations that do not comply with legal issues regarding access may not only be penalised with monetary restitution but could also receive bad publicity, lose goodwill and could lose future business (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005, p. 15).

In the second survey, some respondents believed companies that employ disabled people to improve their public image. This indicates that knowledge of disability issues will result in more people considering companies that employ physically disabled people to be socially responsible. A policy of 'recognising the value of employing older and disabled people in their stores…. has achieved brand enhancement linked to good neighbour policy and practice' (Employers' Forum para. 8). Hernandez and McDonald (2007) reported a respondent's view (regarding a business that employs disabled people) 'I get wonderful feedback from our associates who...will say, 'it's so nice that we work for a company that looks at everybody' (p. 7).

Respondents also indicated that the public's perception of the social responsibility of the business would be improved if they illustrated an inclusive attitude by employing staff with impairments. Once it was realised that the disabled employee was able to

perform the task as competently as any other employee, then any concerns about selection of this employee would disappear. Also, the employment of a disabled staff member would indicate to guests with impairments that the business had awareness of, and empathy with, disability issues. These features could be a strong selling point for the property and could attract more business. Again, would this be viewed as an acceptable practice by the disabled community or would it be seen as over-exposure of the disabled employee?

Respondents were aware that for properties to be user friendly, more than just the entrance needed to be adapted for wheelchairs. Other facilities such as recreational areas (spa, pool and sauna) also need wheelchair access. Respondents stated that consultation with the disabled community should be mandatory for new buildings and buildings undergoing modifications, rather than just following guidelines from councils. Recognition of the cost involved if modification was needed after completion of the building was noted but respondents added that such changes would not be needed if the disabled community was consulted in the initial planning stage.

Respondents were asked whether hotels should provide guidelines to help staff understand how to best assist physically disabled guests. After completion of their study, all respondents thought guidelines should be essential information for all employees. Employers have a responsibility to ensure staff have enough training to be able to provide an acceptable level of service for all guests. Training needs to include practical as well as attitudinal applications of the service encounter. Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) suggested that 'service providers need to internalize a more holistic embrace of attitudinal modification to accommodate the tourism experience' (p.9). In a similar vein, Rhodda (2007) states:

> physical barriers such as heavy doors in accommodation, narrow aisles in shops or restaurants, or tables unsuitable for wheelchairs could all be fixed with little expenditure, while knowledge, communication and attitudinal barriers illustrated by operators and staff should be easily fixed through customer service training (p. 44).

Input from CCS Disability Action and RNZFB could assist with accessible design and also contribute to the content of training modules for both in-house and hospitality educational programmes.

4.2.3.2 Comments

After completing the assignment task respondents indicated a heightened awareness of physical barriers presented by hospitality providers that affect people with impairments. They were in agreement that non-provision of facilities for disabled people is an important oversight for any business – particularly people orientated businesses such as retail and hospitality. Comments from the focus group included:

> *The tourism industry ....has to be a host to all people ... you have every type of people from all over the world so to be socially aware you have to be open to everyone.*
>
> *You need to think about who is going to use these services and facilities and what they need because not everyone is able bodied.*

Such comments indicate that industry not only has a legal responsibility to provide suitable facilities for people with differing levels of ability, but also a social responsibility. Rhodda (2007) cites statistics of more than a billion people in the world who have disabilities and 10% of whom earn the average weekly wage in their country. She also notes that, on average, people with disabilities spend eight nights away from home annually, which is longer than other travellers, and they travel with three to four people.

These statistics suggest an economic benefit can be realised by modifying facilities and attitudes to better cater for disabled travellers. According to Westcott (2004):

> Research shows that disabled people are loyal customers, often returning to places that provide good accessibility. Other people may also benefit from improved accessibility – for example, parents with pushchairs, people with injuries and tourists with heavy luggage (p. 7).

Respondents' exposure to disability issues has made them realise the importance of training for staff, and the response change between surveys indicates not only a personal attitudinal change but also an appreciation of the importance of the disabled market. This realisation of disability issues reinforces the need for focused education that will address such issues. A suggestion that more experience of disability issues is required indicates that involvement of the hospitality industry with interested parties, such as CCS Disability Action (who could provide the practical experience required for hotel workers) would be desirable. Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) suggest 'Organisations may do this through a variety of ways, including mandatory modules on disability awareness in both orientation and performance appraisal programmes' (p. 15).

There appeared to be a perception between both focus groups that changes should be made, but industry would be reluctant to make changes that involved large expenditure. Even low cost changes will not be made until companies appreciate the spending power of disabled people. When the economic benefits are realised by industry, then it would be logical to engage with the disabled community (future users of the facilities) to ensure changes made do actually work. A suggestion was made that some such changes could be done without any cost – examples of these would be lowering of shelves in guest rooms so items can be reached from a wheelchair; check-in procedures done at a desk rather than a high reception counter and tables in restaurants spaced to allow manoeuvrability of wheelchairs.

4.2.4 Has this study improved your awareness of disability issues?

This section answers the main area of the study – Can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?

4.2.4.1 Results

Focus group respondents agreed that researching disability topics made them more aware of barriers experienced by disabled people whereas, previously, disabled people were not a concern for them. Their study aided understanding of issues that either help or hinder disabled people within a hospitality situation. In the surveys evidence of more awareness of the lack of hotel facilities and services for disabled people was shown in responses to Q.13, Q17 and Q.18.

One focus group respondent talked about a culture within some countries that considers a disabled person as someone who has been punished somehow by a god for past harmful actions in a previous life, and so is rejected by society. This 'karma' has a wide following in Hinduism, and elsewhere. For people who accept this belief it may be difficult to alter their perception regarding disabilities, as complete culture change would need to be undertaken. However, in most Western countries non-consideration of the needs of disabled people tends to be more through non-awareness of, and lack of exposure to, issues concerning this group.

4.2.4.2 Comments

Findings suggest that all educational programmes should have a component that considers disability issues, particularly those that are training students to work in the

hospitality and tourism industry. The nature of the hospitality industry requires employees to personally interact with guests and other staff members continuously. The intangibility (service cannot be touched, it is an experience) and the inseparability (service is delivered simultaneously with the product) elements of service means operators must ensure all staff have positive personal attitudes towards all sectors of the travelling public. The success of the service encounter directly relates to the profitability of the business.

4.3   Summary

Exposure to disability issues helped alter respondents' attitudes towards people with disabilities, although not as much as one would expect, given that the student assignment covered a whole semester. What was encouraging was that the focus group participants who completed the assignment in the previous year still recalled information from the assignment and were able to evaluate how industry has (or has not) responded to the disabled community. There is no evidence that in-house training within the hospitality industry includes disabled issues at all, and input from societies such as RNZFB and CCS Disability Action is minimal. Most respondents agreed that an employee with a disability would be able to work within the industry if they had the necessary qualifications and modifications were made for them but there are very few instances of such employees at this time. Sullivan (1994) and Ross (2004) suggest that peoples' abilities are often judged on their outer appearance and physically disabled people are often rejected as unsuitable workers during the recruitment process.

Although many respondents did not believe management would spend a lot of money changing the layout of hotels to better cater for disabled guests and employees, they agreed that any updating of facilities should include appropriate modifications. It is interesting to ponder how recent layout changes in a property could be sanctioned by the local council when some facilities cannot be reached inside the property by wheelchair users. It was interesting to note that respondents were now considering property access issues for disabled people. This heightened awareness could be attributed to an attitudinal change following the assignment task.

Another encouraging aspect of this research is that so many respondents indicated their willingness to be more inclusive and demonstrated heightened awareness of disability issues. These respondents are tomorrow's employers and managers and so one can expect a more inclusive environment for both disabled guests and employees in the future as the economic benefits, social responsibilities and legal obligations are

understood and complied with. The disabled community can provide workers for the expanding hospitality industry if the environment can accommodate their needs. All individuals need to be recognised for their 'diversity, intrinsic worth and human ability in all forms' (Yee, n.d.). Understanding of issues for the disabled society is the first step. I hope the respondents in this research have taken that step.

4.4   Conclusions

Several conclusions have been drawn from the literature review and this analysis of the findings. These are:

- Hospitality operations need to adapt facilities to better cater for disabled customers.
- Better facilities for disabled guests will mean better facilities for disabled employees
- Provision of such facilities will also appeal to other types of guests (families, senior citizens).
- Staff need to be aware of legal issues regarding the provision of accessible facilities (to avoid possible law suits).
- Staff need training on how to deal with disabled guests (disabled guests are loyal to properties that look after them).
- Employment of disabled staff will enhance the property's image as an inclusive operation.
- Exposure to disability issues will dispel any fears people may have of the 'unknown' and so reduce attitudinal barriers and increase confidence when dealing with disabled people (providers of tourism training need to include material on disabilities issues in mainstream subjects).

5   Summary

This research sought to answer the question 'can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?' Responses taken from the focus groups show that education that includes disability issues is instrumental in changing attitudes towards this sector of our society although a attitudinal changes were not so obvious in the survey responses. The research suggests that such changes are lasting and the learning can be applied to current work place situations. Personal interaction with people who have a disability helps understanding that disabled people are not different from everyone else – they just have different abilities. During field trips undertaken by Sunnydene School, familiarity with a disabled person eventually meant the person was focused on foremost, not the disability.

5.1 Implications of the research

The image of a business that incorporates inclusive business practices often gains support from the general public, although it was acknowledged that people who have never interacted with a disabled person may have prejudices about being served by a disabled employee. A commendable way of removing such prejudices has been used by the Foxes Academy which operates a training hotel in Minehead, Somerset in the United Kingdom. This unique hotel is staffed by young people with special needs. Foxes Hotel is open to fee-paying guests and during a year about 900 people stay in the property. Students are taught main-stream hospitality subjects and graduate with City and Guilds Hospitality and Catering Level 1. The academy has been the recipient of many awards including the Educational Award for a Small Organisation at the Springboard Annual Awards (2007) and the Beacon Status recognising excellent practice (2008). The success of this operation suggests that rather than considering employees with a disability as a negative factor, they can contribute to the overall positive impression and are a major selling feature (Foxes Academy, 2008). They also

> dispel the myths that people with learning disabilities cannot undertake meaningful and productive jobs in the real world and that they cannot be employed in kitchens because of health and safety fears (Brooks, 2007, para. 9).

This is a similar situation to the Blind Cow Restaurant in Zurich that features the disability of employees as a major selling feature. These examples show that the image of the businesses is heightened in the minds of the general public when inclusive

employment practices are in place. As suggested during the focus groups, the image of an inclusive business demonstrates the company's diverse approach to employment issues and enhances public perception of the values of the business.

Laws that advocate access and inclusiveness will mean any businesses that are non-compliant face the possibility of law suits – the publicity of which will result adversely on the general public's perception of the operation. This study has cited several examples of bad and good practice in the New Zealand tourism industry. The recent amendment to the Land Transport Act that now enforces a $150 penalty on the misuse of mobility parking is a start to improve public awareness. Results of this research acknowledge the need for more involvement of the disability societies at the planning stage of new and renovated public buildings. Guidelines from city councils do not always address the needs of people with disabilities, such as the recent instance of the refurbishment of an Auckland hotel that now requires wheelchair guests to exit the main entrance and use another access to the pool area.

If hospitality operators can understand the economic benefit of complying, then an assumption could be made that employers who have altered their attitudes towards disabled people would then endeavour to bring about necessary changes to remove physical barriers. This action will also have a direct economic benefit as these changes would also benefit other markets such as mothers with babies and the aged population, making the property accessible for all. Employees' awareness of disability issues can be improved by the inclusion of in-house training modules such as Customer Service and Customer Selling that include information regarding access requirements. This research shows that tertiary educators can better prepare students for the hospitality industry by including disability material within mainstream papers such as Legal Issues for the Hospitality Industry, Hospitality Sales and Marketing and Introduction to the Hospitality Industry. As the tourism industry has to be hospitable to all people, employees need to be socially accepting of different cultures and abilities. With anticipated growth in the hospitality industry, more visitors with varying abilities will need to be inclusively accommodated. Facilities provided in accommodation operations must be able to adequately cater for all guests, and employees must be equipped with the knowledge and ability to provide an accessible environment.

5.2 Limitations of the study

Respondents did not have to validate why they had given a particular reply in the surveys. This, of course, is a weakness of quantitative research but the surveys did

show trends between the two data collection dates indicating changes in attitudes that can be attributed to the disability assignment research.

A further limitation was the number of possible survey respondents. As the surveys were undertaken in lectures only students attending the lectures were invited to participate. The limited number of responses was particularly evident in the second survey (24) and this could have influenced the results considerably.

In regard to the focus groups, students who accepted the invitation to participate would have done so as they had strong personal views on the subject matter and wanted to contribute to the research. It would have been interesting to test the thoughts of other invitees who perhaps held quite different views and elected not to participate.

Another limitation was the number of focus groups (two) that were convened. Time and the cost of this research did not allow for collection of further data that may have altered results.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

The findings indicate the possibility of more research that could include a case study of a hospitality business that begins to incorporate inclusive practices. The modifications undertaken and the success of attracting guests with disabilities would be interesting research that would justify any expenditure incurred by the changes made. This research could be based on the model of environmentally friendly hotels that are actively advertising to eco-tourists.

Research into a comparison of international attitudes towards the disabled community would provide background explanation for beliefs held by hospitality workers that frequently immigrate (or are temporarily seconded) to positions in this country. It would be interesting to test how these employees relate to inclusive practices in place within New Zealand operations. For those employees who return to their home country, further research could be done to assess whether or not they continued to use an inclusive approach once back in their original environment.

5.4 Summary

An awareness of issues for people with disabilities has to be learnt – it is not something instinctive. No-one would completely understand issues for people with disabilities unless they themselves are disabled or have a close association with such a

person. Learning, however, can help appreciation of every-day barriers that are normal for disabled people.

Whilst it would be illogical to expect radical modifications to occur in the immediate future by exposing students to disability issues, it could be anticipated that in time future developments would offer a more inclusive environment for travellers with impairments. As these students progress into management roles it could be anticipated that more inclusive practises will be adopted. This research has shown that the disability market is a growth sector and has the time and resources to travel. Hospitality providers who understand and respond to the needs of this particular market will be well equipped to welcome these travellers. Removal of barriers for guests with impairments will enhance facilities for employees with disabilities. Attitudes towards disabled people will change as interaction occurs and abilities are focused on, rather than disabilities.

Oliver (1990) concludes that 'the wind is blowing... making change inevitable'(p. 5). Educators, tourism operators and hotel management all have an opportunity to react favourably to these changes and (as suggested by Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005) 'help in the creation of a more civil society' (p. 565).

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Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire

Completion of this questionnaire will be taken as consent to participate.

Please tick the response that you believe best apply to each statement

Section One

1. I have never interacted with anyone who has a physical disability

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

2. I am aware of the needs of people with physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

3. In the past I have been confidently able to help people with physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

4. I would not be anxious about serving a blind person

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

5. I feel confident enough to help a person with restricted mobility

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

6. I would be happy working with someone who has a physical disability

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

7. If a physically disabled guest came into my workplace I hope someone else serves them

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

8. I do not believe people with physical disabilities are able to work in the hospitality industry

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

9. If a physical disabled guest comes to my workplace I believe they should have a support person with them

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

10. I would be nervous working around a disabled person who has a dog

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

11. I think people with physical disabilities prefer to look after themselves

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

12. I think I need to learn more about how to assist people with physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

13. I think hotels have a problem providing service for people with physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

14. I believe I have adequate knowledge to deal with physical disabled people

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

15. I believe all hospitality operations should have guidelines for staff on how to deal with guests who have physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

16. Physical disabled people are not widely employed in the hospitality industry

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

17. I think there are not enough adequate facilities for people with physical disabilities in the hospitality industry

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

18. If properties improved their facilities for guests with physical disabilities then management would be better able to provide for employees with physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

19. If I worked in a management role I would employ staff with physical disabilities

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

20. I think companies that employ physically disabled people improve their image in society

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion / not applicable

Section Two

Please circle the statement that applies to you on the following questions

1. Gender: Male

                                Female

2. Age: Under 18 yrs

                                18-20 yrs

                                21-25 yrs

                                Over 25 yrs

3. Hospitality employment: never worked in the hospitality industry

                                Not currently employed but have done in the past

                                Currently working

4. Length of employment: Not applicable

                                Less than 6 months

                                6 – 12 months

                                More than 1 year

5. Most recent position: Not applicable

                                Waiting staff

                                Kitchen staff

                                Front office staff

                                Bar staff

                                Function staff

                                Sales staff

                                Other (please state)

6. Size of property: Not applicable

                                Less than 50 rooms

                                50 – 100 rooms

                                101 – 150 rooms

                                151 – 200 rooms

                                201 – 250 rooms

                                More than 250 rooms

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix 2: Survey Participants Information Sheet

Participant Information Survey Participant

Date Information Sheet Produced:

23 April 2007

Project Title

Can attitudinal barriers relating to disabilities be modified with targeted education?

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in research on the attitudes of students both before and after a group assignment that exposes students to issues concerning the facilities available in the hospitality industry for guests with disabilities. This group assignment is an assessment on Accommodation Operations (214406) that you are studying this semester. Your input on this research will be invaluable as you will be reflecting on your own experience (as a student). The questionnaire both before and after completion of the assignment will be completed anonymously so your privacy will be protected at all times. Your participation is, however, completely voluntary and should you wish, at any stage, you are able to withdraw from the research project. Your participation (or withdrawal) will not impact on your marks for Accommodation Operations (214406) in any way.

Completion of the attached questionnaire will be taken as consent to participate.

What is the purpose of the Research?

The aim of this research is to identify if attitudinal barriers towards physically disabled persons do exist commonly in students and if these attitudes change after exposure to disability related issues. It also tests the theory that a change in attitude will alter a perception concerning the employability of physically disabled people.

The research is being undertaken to complete a thesis for my Master's in International Hospitality Management. It may also be used in articles published in hospitality magazines and conference presentations.

How were you chosen for this invitation?

All students enrolled on Accommodation Operations (214406) this semester are invited to participate in this research.

What happens in the study?

You will be invited to complete the attached questionnaire anonymously before the group assignment is started and again at the end of the assignment. This will take about 10 - 15 minutes of your time. You will also be invited to join a focus group to

discuss in-depth how your attitudes may have altered during the course of the assignment and how this may influence relationships in your career. The focus group will take about an hour of your time.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There should be no discomforts or risks attached to this research. The questionnaires are anonymous so your identity is protected. In the unlikely situation that you do feel some discomfort with the questions you can refuse to answer any questions. Should you require any counselling you can seek assistance from the AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing.

How is my privacy protected?

All information will be kept in a locked cabinet at AUT School of Hospitality and Tourism.

What are the costs of participating?

There are no costs involved except for your time that should take about 10 - 15 minutes for the questionnaires and approximately an hour for the focus group.

What can I do if I have any concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor – Dr Jill Poulston (see contact details below).

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz   or 9219999 ext 8044.

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School of Hospitality and Tourism

Faculty of Applied Humanities

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Appendix 3: Focus Group Questionnaire

Focus Group Questionnaire

What was your first experience with a person who was physically impaired?

How do you think facilities in hotels could be more user friendly for physically impaired people?

Do you think people need to learn more about how to assist people with physical disabilities?

How would you feel about working with a staff member who is physically impaired?

Should guidelines on helping people with physical impairments be part of the basic training in hotels?

Do you think management would support suggested changes?

What roles do you think a person with a physical disability would be able to do in hotels?

What are recurring issues for people with physical impairments?

How can the privacy and individuality of people with disabilities be respected?

Do you think the general public's perception of a company is influenced by the employment of physically disabled staff?

Appendix 4: Focus Group Participants Information Sheet

Participant Information Focus Group

AUT
UNIVERSITY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Date Information Sheet Produced:

23 April 2007

Project Title

Can attitudinal barriers relating to disabilities be modified with targeted education?

Invitation to participate

You are invited to participate in research on the attitudes of students after the group assignment that exposed students to issues concerning the facilities available in the hospitality industry for guests with disabilities. The group assignment was an assessment on Accommodation Operations (214406) that you are studied this semester. Your input on this research will be invaluable as you will be reflecting on your own experience (as a student). The focus group participants' responses will be recorded and written up without naming the participant so your privacy will be protected at all times. Your participation is, however, completely voluntary and should you wish, at any stage, you are able to withdraw from the research project. Your participation (or withdrawal) will not impact on your marks for Accommodation Operations (214406) in any way.

Completion of the attached focus group invitation will be taken as consent to participate.

What is the purpose of the research?

The aim of this research is to explore trends in attitudinal barriers towards physically disabled persons that have been identified in surveys taken both before and after completion of an assignment researching facilities for disabled guests in accommodation providers. It also tests the theory that a change in attitude will alter a perception concerning the employability of physically disabled people.

The research is being undertaken to complete a thesis for my Master's in International Hospitality Management. It may also be used in articles published in hospitality magazines and conference presentations.

How were you chosen for this invitation?

Your completion of the Consent to join the Focus Group was taken as your consent to participate.

What happens in the study?

You will be invited to discuss trends that have been identified in the two surveys forms circulated to all students before commencement of and at the completion of the

assignment on facilities for disabled guests in accommodation providers and how this may influence relationships in your career. This focus group is expected to take about an hour of your time.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There should be no discomforts or risks attached to this research. The responses from the focus groups will be transcribed anonymously so your identity will be protected.. In the unlikely situation that you do feel some discomfort with the questions you can refuse to answer any questions. Should you require any counselling you can seek assistance from the AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing.

How is my privacy protected?

All information will be kept in a locked cabinet at AUT School of Hospitality and Tourism. Discussions during the group session are private to the group and should not be discussed outside the group in order to respect other participants' privacy.

What are the costs of participating?

There are no costs involved except for your time that should take about an hour for the focus group.

What can I do if I have any concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor – Dr Jill Poulston (see contact details below).

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz or 9219999 ext 8044.

Research Contact Details:

Denise Schitko

denise.schitko@aut.ac.nz

Ph. 921 9999 ext 8305

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Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Jill Poulston

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Faculty of Applied Humanities

Auckland University of Technology

Private 92006

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15 August 2007. AUTEC Reference number 07/62

Appendix 5: Consent Forms

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: **Can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?**

Project Supervisor: **Jill Poulston PhD**

Researcher: **Denise Schitko**

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23 April 2007.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: ....……

Participant's name: ....……………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15 August 2007
AUTEC Reference number 07/62

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Consent Form

For use when focus groups are involved.

Project title: ***Can attitudinal barriers relating to physical disabilities be modified with targeted education?***

Project Supervisor: **Jill Poulston PhD**

Researcher: **Denise Schitko**

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23 April 2007.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research

(please tick one): Yes○   No○

Participant's signature: ....

Participant's name: ....……

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15 August 2007 AUTEC Reference number 07/62

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 6: Focus Group Transcripts

Transcription of Second Focus Group

<u>What was your first experience with a person who had a physically disability?</u>

My cousin had a heart problem that didn't grow and then she died – this was my first impression

At college we had special units for disabled people

At college we had cerebral palsy people but they just couldn't play sport so they were really very different to us – I didn't think of them as different just physically challenged in some way.

I can remember that at intermediate where we had a visit to a disabled school and it was quite scary just to see some of the things that go on. One of them had a fit and to actually see it was quite scary. But then again I have dealt with people in the hotels that need that extra help with wheel chairs and things like that and actually they are not different from anyone else and apart from that I just give them more of a hand but apart from that – you know

<u>So</u>

Probably at school – I don't recall that I had much to do with people before primary school because I was in one of those units that you spoke about at Mr Roskill primary for much of my school life –

And so the thoughts and feelings of impressions that this left you with

I suppose when you do start to deal with people it takes a bit to get use to at first – it is a bit scary and nerve racking but as soon as you deal with people like that – I am not saying that they are much different – just takes a bit of getting use to

It is a bit like taking time to get use to - this might sound a bit prejudice but once you get over the initial shock of 'oh they are different from me' then you have to come up with this thought quickly 'do I have to treat them any different'? or do I treat them exactly the same? Or just be more respectable or what?

I want to help them but then I don't want to help them cos I don't know how to because some of them are really anti that as they want to be capable so I just try and treat them the same. Although I think I always want to help them.

<u>So how do you think facilities in hotels could be more user friendly for physically disabled people?</u>

It takes one to know one – if someone know what someone needed then put that into an actual hotel situation to really put those facilities in whether that just be toilets or something like that or specific ramps – you really need to do some research on it or at least have someone knows that stuff behind it to really make sure it is user friendly – not just going with the councils ' you need this you need that' but

actually someone who knows what they are talking about – you need to talk to physically impaired people to know what they needs and they want

Also I think it is important to remember that people in the disability sector such as CCS etc – a friend of mine said 'you complain about the facilities but where were you when the place was going up' – why can't we get involved at grass roots level and then say look there is no lift here or only stairs or you can't get a wheelchair in there – the door is too narrow

I hear a lot of complaints from people but this is when the place is well and truly built and it is very expensive then to make alterations whereas if there was any facilities were disabled people or those interested could make their comments and complaints etc whilst the place is being built at that level it would be much less expensive for the building industry

Yes, I use to work for the Stamford Plaza and we have just recently undergone refurbishments and people who are now staying in the apartment above and are mobility restricted can access the pool spa etc but if these people are staying in the hotel they can't actually access it. There are stairs leading to it so it is not user friendly for people in wheelchairs. The alternative is to go outside and around the front and use the apartment entrance. So hopefully the hotel will not get its 5 star rating again and the 5 will drop to a 4 star? I don't know.

<u>So would it be fair to say then that your thinking is now that rather than thinking about how you think the facilities at hotels could be more user friendly what i am hearing from you is a strong call that people who would use the facilities are consulted so there is a lot on the planning processes and the consultation processes involving those groups of people that would use those facilities rather than saying I think we need this and this – I am hearing a very strong call to incorporate those people in the planning</u>

Yeah, but I would think that would be common sense really but the way I think of it apparently not

Well not really – there are a lot of places that have disabled facilities but obviously they are not user friendly – I mean if you just involve some people who know what they are talking about obviously it would save a lot more money and a lot more time

We would probably be shocked if we sat down and realised that those people that plan these facilities are not the people that in some ways have a physical disability – wouldn't we?

A lot of facilities that I have seen – not necessarily in accommodation – are the ideas of an able person as to what a disabled person needs. For example I saw a disabled toilet down a flight of stairs which obviously does not cater for wheelchair users but they had complied with the law. I also think that another problem is that they follow the letter of the law but sadly not the spirit of the law like they had disability labelled car parks which is fine but they let anyone use it – I have actually been told to get off a park as the cleaner needs it. I check with Human Rights but they said he has the disabled park who he lets use it is up to him – he has followed the letter of the law.

<u>Do you think people need to learn more about how to assist people with disabilities?</u>

I think people whether they want to or not will be aware of it whether they are taught or not and then people who want to help will take that in regardless of whether they are educated about it as they will educate themselves so I don't know if education needs to happen as people who don't want to know will not want to know regardless

So by your very nature you are that sort of person

But I think that for tourism and that sort of business they should have some sort of stuff or education on it – they should know something because a clients or anyone could have a disability.

<u>Do you think this is very important for tourism type business?</u>

Yes any sort of business really – yes for tourism and hospitality they are really people orientated business so you need to be wise about who is going to be using the facilities and services and even for things like retail jobs that is another one that is people orientated so you need to be thinking about who is going to use these services and facilities and what will they need because not everyone is able bodied just reinforcing that again. I think the other thing with the tourism industry that you really have to be a host to all people not just normal people – you have every types of people from all over the world so to be socially aware you have to be open to everyone.

<u>So it is a bit of hospitality and care – it is like the teaching staff and all staff here at the university we have a strong thing that is called pastoral care it means that we don't just look after academic work we look after you as well – it is the same thing that when you go into any industry there is that element of care so you think that that is an important thing to have?</u>

So there is a role also for people with disabilities that can say should I ask for help or not and it is always nice on the part of people to say I appreciate your offer of assistance I am fine but thanks I appreciate you asking. I know people can feel a bit unsure – should I offer to help or not.

<u>So there is a little bit of a role to play as well not only as those – the question was about teaching how to help people with disabilities but you are saying that people with disabilities can help with the interaction – it is a two way thing?</u>

Also it is important that disability means a wide range of things and people need varying things – no one size fits all – you can always ask

<u>How would you feel about working with a staff member who is physically impaired?</u>

I don't see a problem in that – I wouldn't have a problem so long as they can do the job and the impairment doesn't restrict them from doing the job at all cos obviously it's not the type of person but whether they can do the job – so they see

the job description if you can't fulfil the job then - yeah so long as it doesn't hamper the performance within the job range but then that is with everyone whether they are disabled or not

If they are employed to do the job then it shouldn't be a problem but I think it is important to keep an eye on the other staff to make sure that they are not asked to do more to compensate

Should guidelines of helping people with physical impairments be part of training in hotels?

Yes and no – because there are so many types of physical impairments you can't just - there are basic guidelines you could put into place such as being courteous but then if you are going to put like a proper procedure then there would have to be different branches where they branch off and it could get complicated and complex

Certain things cover all situations – I know one thing I really hate is when people talk part me and talk to my husband who is able body – so he says to them why don't you ask her as she is the one you are talking to? So that applies in all situations but I think you are right it would be great to have guidelines but it would be very hard to know what they are. Always talk to the person not over them because even if they can't talk back they have some way of communicating with you.

It could be hard because something you don't know what disability they have – you might look at them but the disability might be different as some disabilities are not obvious people just might need to some with writing etc – so a description of less obvious disabilities might be useful. You can't help someone unless you know what is wrong with them so I guess it plays two parts – they have to tell you too.

Do you think management would support suggested changes?

They should but they won't. It is a costly experience to do it for such a small percentage of the guests so I don't think they would be prepared to do it. Even if you go to the new shopping malls such as clothes shop people with some disabilities wouldn't be able to move around the stores so obviously they haven't thought about it. If they were asked about it they would say will we would have to take clothes out of the store and that would affect the profit so I am not sure that they would be keen on the idea. I think they are more concerned with profit margins. Structural changes are such a big thin – it is one thing to ask someone to take clothes out of their store but in a hotel if you have doorways or toilet that are too narrow it is a huge thing for a pax with a disability it certainly is. But it is huge for the hotel manager to have to change 10-12 motel units to change the doors. So would they support changes – sure attitudinal changes as that doesn't cost them anything but structural changes to the building is a big call.

But if it is a new unit it is something they should take into consideration the changes but if it is before the code there perhaps they should not have to spend the money.

I don't think they will support the changes but sometimes it is up to the shareholders and owners as to whether they would support the changes. This would cut into the profits for them. Whether it is variable or not and whether it

would bring in more business. Are there groups needing these facilities? If you have masses of disabled people you are obviously going to have to do something about the facilities. So numbers are a factor? Definitely. I know that mothers with pushchairs need these facilities – now there is a big group of people

What role do you think people with a physical disability would be able to do in the hotel?

Depends on what type of disability it is – if it is diabetes then they could do anything. I think it depends on the support they get – if they get enough support they can do almost anything.

What do you think a person might be more suited to or less suited to?

Maybe not a hands on such as bartender, waiter chef – without being too negative but perhaps would be more suited to reception or office work - nowadays there is of course the issue of anti-discriminate laws and if someone rolls up for an interview with a disability and the manager thinks I know this job and I really don't think you can do it – they can't say that – they have to give them a trial which in some respects is really good but in some respects this could be a problem for the hotel. For example if someone was epileptic and have a fit in the kitchen and fell onto a hot surface and burnt themselves. You cannot say look I don't think because of your disability you can't do this job. So it does complicate things.

 What are reoccurring issues for people with physical disabilities?

Not fitting in. people don't take into account what facilities people need. A feeling of not being catered for. Segregation into a different section. Like a friend of mine had to sit in a special area at the theatre – was told it was for safety reasons but it makes you feel marginalised. It also depends in which country you go to for example in Africa there are few facilities and procedures in place for disabled but in Europe it is well developed. I know that in America if a person in a wheelchair wants to go on a bus there is a platform to lift the chair onto the bus. Where as in Africa there would not be this facility – so they would have less choices of places they could travel to. And in Asia they will tell you the best places to go rather than discovering them for yourself – so less choice.

A lot of it is social changes – if people are not seeing them as people who constantly need help or different then the world would be a better place. Particularly in the tourism sector which is so based on peoples interact people just need to be a lot more open. And take into account that people just need a little bit more help.

How can you respect the privacy and individuality of people with disabilities?

I guess you just have to ask them if they want help or whether they wish to be left alone. To talk, ask questions and find out how they feel and talk about it or research. Maybe people in the industry need to train in a wheelchair for a day and experience how it feels so then you could really see how it feels. It would give you an appreciation of how it feels. Walk in my shoes!

Do you think the general public's perception of a business is influenced by the employment of disabled staff

Yes. Yes especially in hotels. As I said before, not being degrading or anything like that but there is a certain level and if you can't work up to that level then it is not worth hiring that person. It is a balance of not breaking the law but maintaining a certain level of workmanship in the hotel. There could be some form of a negative side affecting the ambiance but then there would be people around the world who are amazing at their job with great people skills and they can do that job but it is just a matter of. Even though there are the laws in place hotels still don't really hire to those laws. If a person doesn't look a certain way or is a certain sect they won't hire them. This is not particularly disabled people it is general. The person has to fit into the image of what they want. Straight off if you see that person you know if you want to hire them or not. I think people being what they are have a perception of what the person should look like. If depends very much on the company and the function of the person.

Can they be positively affected?

Yes. I would use it as a positive marketing campaign. AUT employ disabled staff – yes they are very much committed to that. I was involved with the SPCA where we had a volunteer in a wheelchair and people committed on how friendly she was and helpfully showed them around it – it was good for the image of the society. Especially if the disabled people where involved with children in a kids club or something like that - that would really have a good impact.

Has this study helped open your eyes at all?

It has just opened your eyes and made you take into account a lot of things and as soon as you start to research and study it helps you to understand. If you don't directly know a disabled people – you see them on the street and you think of that is disabled but you don't think about them because it is not to do with you. Of course there is also the culture – some countries still think that the disabled person is because you had a mean spirit – so the whole culture taboo thing. This is an interesting point. This would be hard to convince them that it is not just because you had a mean spirit or the gods didn't smile on you – it is just because you have a disability. This is a real culture rethink.

Transcription of Second Focus Group

<u>What was your first experience with a person who had a physically impairment?</u>

Is that blind people? Yes, blind people. I have a friend who is blind – I have known her all my life.

<u>Did you treat her any differently?</u>

No

Back in our school we had a boy who had cerebral palsy - back in our school we had a kid who came to talk to us – he was blind and he talked about his experiences – we all made posters for him. It was things that he could feel to make it so he could experience it.

<u>How do you think facilities in hotels could be more user friendly for physically impaired people?</u>

Like the gym and pool? Yeah. I guess the entrance could be more accessible cos that's where they come the whole area has to be accessible – everyone should be able to use the gym. Places like the gym and pool should be altered to cater for people in wheelchairs and stuff. There needs to be facilities for guide dogs. There needs to be access to the spa pool. Make them feel more welcome. Before they arrive think about what they might require.

<u>Do you think people need to learn more about how to assist people with physical disabilities?</u>

Like people like porters, reception etc. they should understand about people with disabilities and how to help them around the hotel and not patronise them. They need to ask if they would like help cos sometimes they want to do it by themselves. I think it is that barrier people like should I or what – they don't know whether to help or not.

So they should ask if they can help. It should be part of the training.

<u>How would you feel about working with a staff member who is physically disabled?</u>

So long as they can do the job – so long as you can communicate with them.

<u>Should guidelines on helping people with physical disabilities be part of training for hotels?</u>

Only for front of house. I think it should be – you don't have to spend ages on it. I think you should know how to. I think there should be guidelines – general information. Everyone has different amounts of knowledge on disabilities so you can't assume that someone will know what to do. Your knowledge would come from

having experience in it – I know it's good to read about it but more practical experience is required.

<u>Do you think management would support the changes?</u>

From the interviews that my group had I don't really think they really understand the changes – they don't really know what to do – they just go along with what you say. They don't really understand what changes they could make. They don't really know what to do so I think that would be the first step. Then research and find out what to do. They are reasonably inexpensive changes and there is no reason not to do them. Some could even be done for free. I think it is firstly understanding what needs to be done.

They need to look at their client base and sometimes there is not the need for ramps hand rails etc. But it is a legal requirement – they do cover the legal need.

<u>What role do you think a person with a physical disability would be able to do in the hotel?</u>

Reception, information – maybe they couldn't be a waiter if they were in a wheelchair. If they have the ability they should be allowed to do the job.

<u>What are the reoccurring issues for people with physical impairments?</u>

Discrimination for jobs – lack of self esteem – they might feel they can't do things as well as other people

<u>How can you respect the privacy and individuality of people with disabilities?</u>

Be careful what sort of questions you ask them about the disability. Just think how you would want to be treated and what you would want to be done for you if you were in that situation and just based it on that – a bit of role reversal. So if you see someone with a disability do you just assume things about them rather than seeing them as an individual – yeah.

<u>Do you think the general public's perception of a company is influenced by the employment of physically disabled staff?</u>

It could be positive – they could be seen as a really diverse workplace. It could attract people. Like if someone who is disabled sees other disabled people working there then they might feel a bit more welcome. It might have a negative affect because some people may have prejudices and if they see a disabled person working there they might question the quality of the company. But it could be good PR.

I think people who do not have any disability think that disabled people cannot do the job so well. Maybe there should be more research into how disabled people want to be treated. They need to focus on other disabilities too. When we went to an accommodation provider and we were considering blind people the hotel didn't know what they needed. They are only providing for physically disabled people.

They don't realise that person who are blind or deaf have different needs as well. It was surprising that hotels you expected would have good facilities didn't. For example the Hilton – they only have access to the room – not the gym or other areas. But the Heritage was really good – one of the owners there is himself in a wheelchairs so I suppose he had a lot of input into the design etc.