

## Research article

# A review of research into tourism work and employment: Launching the annals of tourism research curated collection on tourism work and employment



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## ABSTRACT

Work and employment are a significant constituent part of tourism and are gaining ground as an area of research. This review paper offers a critical reflection on the field of tourism work and employment. Drawing from two historical review papers and new empirical analysis, themes within the literature are identified, providing an overview of the current focus and scope of research. This is followed by an exploration of traditions of work published within *Annals of Tourism Research*, from 1973 to 2020. Driven by the imperative to better understand the tourism workforce, the review offers observations on the current body of work and a consideration of future research foci. Conclusions focus on assessing evidence for the maturity of the field of tourism work and employment research.

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## Introduction

The scale, value and social significance of employment opportunities created and livelihoods sustained through the myriad of tourism-induced economic activities globally, arguably has never been fully appreciated. That is, perhaps, until these activities were brought to near cessation at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. There has always been an acknowledgement that opportunities for work and employment follow tourism development, however the pandemic has highlighted the extent of individual and community income, globally, that depends on tourism. There is a suggestion that as many as 1.6 billion individuals worldwide have been affected by a loss of partial or full working hours as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2020). Given the acute vulnerability of employees to the impacts of any sudden decline in consumer demand for the products and services that tourism offers, many erstwhile tourism employees have found alternative employment opportunities. As pent-up demand for travel, tourism and hospitality explodes post-pandemic, the industry's historic labour shortages have been

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exacerbated by significantly increased job stressors. This led the U.S. Bureau of Statistics to report that, in 2021, the accommodation and food service sector had experienced the largest number of employees leaving their jobs voluntarily (Kwok, 2022). Labour shortages are being experienced more acutely, with employers' habitual stopgap of recruiting migrant workers for low paying seasonal jobs undesired by locals yet to be resumed (Kwok, 2022). Despite the significant part that people play due to the reliance on labour in delivering the tourism and hospitality experience, tourism work and employment remains a neglected area of enquiry for tourism researchers relative to its importance within the industry. Notwithstanding, despite the relatively modest body of work in the area, this field of academic study, drawing on theory from across the social science spectrum, has endured and arguably is now showing signs of maturation and responsiveness to new ideas.

In this paper, we use maturation in an aspirational sense of a developing field rather than empirical indicators of evolving research disciplines used elsewhere (see, for example, a discussion of the maturation of research in the disciplines of corporate governance (Durisin & Puzone, 2009) and tourism (Xiao & Smith, 2006)). While maturation is the common language, for our review, arguably rejuvenation is also appropriate in that we discuss areas that might give new vigour and energy to the subject and research direction, along with the uncertainties and challenges to overcome to enable the subject to develop further.

Maturation lies at the heart of this review in which we attempt to explore what has been achieved through extant studies and where future directions for employment research in tourism might be leading. Broader societal concerns around migration, mobilities, sustainability, decent work, precarity, opportunities for minority, female and youth workers as well as ethical and legal concerns interface to underpin studies of work and employment. Furthermore, changes and evolution in working practices, how work is organised, where it is located, shifting work priorities and technological interventions to name but a few represent some of the current issues in labour and organisational studies more broadly. As tourism activity resumes and income opportunities resurface, we are afforded the opportunity for a timely reflection on 'what we know and what we ought to know' about tourism work and employment and the scope of scholarly inquiry. The intention here is not to undertake a systematic review of the complete corpus of research-based studies in this area, but rather to reflect on the cumulative collection of knowledge, its achievements and shortcomings.

We acknowledge similarities between tourism and broader service work research areas – noting that the service research field relied on the tourism context in developing key theoretical areas (e.g., Berry & Parasuraman, 1993; Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). While overlaps exist, there are nuances that render the two fields distinct, at least in terms of areas of focus. For example, tourism employment researchers have diverging priority areas such as sustainability, precarity, gender, and mobility (Basnyat, Carr, & Lovelock, 2021; Costa et al., 2017; Eger, Munar, & Hsu, 2022; Mooney, Robinson, Solnet, & Baum, 2022; Robinson, Baum, Golubovskaya, Solnet, & Callan, 2019; Winchenbach, Hanna, & Miller, 2019), notably more so than is the case in the broader service research domain (Ostrom et al., 2021). However, it is worth noting that the maturing process is dynamic, and emerging ideas may bridge the gap between the two fields. For example, Schneider, Subramanian, Suquet, and Ughetto's (2022) pragmatist perspective on analysing service work, which we will return to later in the paper.

Our review is structured as follows. To start, we provide an overview of research in the area of tourism work and employment, reflecting back on a period of approximately 50 years to the emergence of early studies relating to this field. In this section, we draw upon two review papers published by the authors in *Annals of Tourism Research*; Ladkin (2011) "Exploring Tourism Labor" and Baum, Kralj, Robinson, and Solnet (2016) "Tourism workforce research: A review, taxonomy and agenda". The second paper, addressing tourism workforce research for the period 2005–2014, is brought up-to-date with a separate review covering 2015–2020. These contributions collectively provide a window into the current state of play of research in tourism work and employment.

We then turn our attention to mapping the body of research on this topic specifically from papers published in *Annals of Tourism Research*. Our rationale for doing so is driven by the claim in our previous review papers that research is dominated by management perspectives, whereby many studies attempted to examine management problems and propose potential solutions. With its social science remit, *Annals of Tourism Research* has the scope to demonstrate an alternative history, drawing critically and more widely from across social science disciplines, including multidisciplinary research.

The remainder of our paper is driven by our guiding question To better understand the workforce how does our field need to mature? To do this, we critically reflect on three broad observations of the current body of work. This is followed by a consideration of key areas that will drive future research foci, including research questions to guide dialogue. Conclusions are offered that reflect on the maturity of tourism work and employment research.

## The reprisal

### *Exploring tourism labour (Ladkin, 2011)*

Ladkin's (2011) exploration of tourism labour was one of the first to highlight the dearth of critical academic engagement with this theme, a concern subsequently highlighted by a number of authors with an increasing sense of incredulity (cf. Baum et al., 2016). Ladkin, following Veijola (2009), rightly highlights the need to draw on multidisciplinary sources in order to understand the challenges faced in explaining tourism labour issues, something that earlier sociological interpretations by Wood (1994) and others may have failed to appreciate. Ladkin is also one of the first scholars to recognise that discourse on tourism labour can be located at different levels, in her case macro and micro, a theme further expanded into their three-level model of macro, meso and micro by Baum et al. (2016). This multi-level complexity, in itself, may have contributed to the myth that tourism labour, as a body of knowledge, lacks coherence and defies definition. Ladkin's key contribution in the area of tourism labour

is the identification of five thematic areas where research in this field is located – management, human capital accumulation, economic value, labour mobility and gender. These themes have been debated and refined in the light of current scholarship, for example by the inclusion of narratives on intersectionality and precariousness (both of which themes reoccur throughout our paper). Ladkin's building blocks have been influential to subsequent critical scholars of emergent themes in tourism work and employment (cf. Bianchi & de Man, 2020; Costa et al., 2017) and have been widely cited in key disciplinary journals including *Annals of Tourism Research*. Here we define critical scholars, and critical studies, as those that invoke the tenets of critical theory. Critical theory challenges normative assumptions of the way social orders are organised, and so probes the structural roots of inequality and power imbalances. Critical scholars are defined by their advocacy and attunement to social sensibilities. In adopting a critical lens since Ladkin, tourism work and employment studies is a relative latecomer, following in the footsteps of similar developments across the social sciences (cf. Ozga, 2021).

#### *Tourism workforce research: a review, taxonomy and agenda (Baum et al., 2016)*

This systematic review and critical account of tourism workforce research by Baum et al. (2016) revealed the coverage, scope of influence and shortcomings of the field, culminating in the development of a tourism workforce taxonomy. The taxonomy was designed to encourage researchers to locate their work, conceptually and theoretically, within the broad and multi-layered spectrum of workforce studies. This provided a pathway for advancing a holistic approach to the development of workforce knowledge development. In agreement with Ladkin (2011), the authors attest to the neglect of the tourism workforce as a research domain, arguing that this could partially be explained by the complexity and heterogeneity of the tourism industry, and also by a certain fatigue with the absence of evident solutions to the many challenging dimensions of employment in the sector.

Following a systematic review across a 10-year period (2005–2014), five pervasive themes in workforce research were identified. Critical of the piecemeal approach dominating the tourism and hospitality workforce literature, an alternative macro-meso-micro conceptualisation to discern the layered and hierarchically structured body of work was offered, a main contribution of the research. Linking themes with levels, at the MACRO level, the theme of 'tourism work and the wider society' is identified, encompassing topics such as economics (workforce impacts, labour markets, tourism supply) and policy formulation at local, national and inter-governmental levels. At the MESO level, the themes of 'organisational practices and functions' (HR/HRM strategies, systems, practices and functions), specific human resource functions (recruitment, selection, training and development, organisational performance) are uncovered, and 'the job, the workplace and the environment' (turnover, services management, workplace/work environments) are two identified foci of research. Finally, at the MICRO level, the themes of 'worker attitudes and behaviours' (employee/manager values, attitudes and perceptions, job satisfaction and emotional labour) and 'Workforce composition and worker characteristics' (work-family, work-life balance, personal characteristics/attributes/traits) are revealed.

The paper identified a number of concerns regarding workforce research, including the desire to solve a perceived problem from an organisational and managerial perspective, the neglect of tourism as the focus for research; instead favouring hospitality, an absence of theoretical and conceptual underpinning, and a lack of cross-cutting research themes. Baum et al. (2016) have been influential advocates for a holistic, interdisciplinary approach by researchers to enable workforce theory, policy and practice to advance. Indications are that some researchers are taking up the mantle. For example, in their study of worker perspectives of sleep loss and fatigue in the coral reef tourism industry, Reynolds, Pabek, Ferguson, and Naweed (2021) apply their findings to the taxonomy of tourism research to highlight where the causes of sleep loss and fatigue originate.

Before we turn our attention to updating the Baum et al., 2016 paper, it is important to acknowledge there are other extant review papers that have considered distinct aspects of work and employment. These are largely located within the hospitality journals and with a human resources management focus and capture similar concerns to those raised by Baum et al. (2016). See, for example, Davidson, McPhail, and Barry (2011), Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, and Buyruk (2010), Lee and Madera (2019), and Madera, Dawson, Guchait, and Belarmino (2017). These and others provide valuable insights into specific areas of study.

#### **The update: 2015–2020**

In this section we provide a description of workforce research up to 2020, six years from the cut-off point in the Baum et al. (2016) paper which has attracted a significant amount of critical acknowledgement and been cited methodologically by other review articles (Hadinejad, Moyle, Scott, Kralj, & Nunkoo, 2019). While we advise caution in attributing trends to this short timeframe, for currency we saw a value in bringing it up to date. For consistency, and because the purpose of this paper is not an exhaustive systematic literature review, we replicated the data collection and data analysis approach adopted in the original, using the same top four tourism and top four hospitality journals (as measured by Impact Factor, 2016). For tourism, these are *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Tourism Management* and the *Journal of Travel Research*. For hospitality, these are the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* and the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*. (We note some changes in the ranking of journals in the field by 2020, notably the elevation of the *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management* into the place formerly occupied by *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*). The theme analysis of workforce topics in the reviewed articles is also consistent with the Micro-Meso-Macro framework proposed in the original work.

Also consistent with the original work, the lists of search terms used in this review include employ/employee/employment, humanresource/HR/HRM, work/worker/workforce, work/worker/workforce, labo(u)r, frontline, staff, and job. All articles that had any one of these search terms as keywords and published between 2014 and 2020 were selected and downloaded for review,

**Table 1**

Summary of articles in journal sample (2005–2014, 2015–2020).

		Review period: 2005–2014				Review period: 2015–2020			
		Workforce articles by journal		Total articles published in journal		Workforce articles by journal		Total articles published in journal	
		No.	% <sup>a</sup>	No.	% <sup>b</sup>	No.	% <sup>a</sup>	No.	% <sup>b</sup>
Tourism	Tourism Management	48	10.5	1700	2.8	65	11.4	1437	4.5
	Journal of Travel Research	10	2.2	501	2	3	0.5	454	0.7
	Annals of Tourism Research	20	4.4	1170	1.7	17	3.0	880	1.9
	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	4	0.9	633	0.6	23	4.0	698	3.3
	<i>Tourism total</i>	82	17.9	4004	2	108	18.9	3469	3.1
Hospitality	International Journal of Hospitality Management	172	37.6	1062	16.2	244	42.7	1141	21.4
	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	121	26.4	592	20.4	196	34.3	1022	19.2
	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	58	12.7	510	11.4	20	3.5	195	10.3
	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research	25	5.5	281	8.9	3	0.5	269	1.1
	<i>Hospitality total</i>	376	82.1	2445	15.4	463	81.1	2627	17.6
<b>Total</b>		458	100.0	6449	7.1	571	100.0	6096	9.4

<sup>a</sup> Percentage of all workforce articles.<sup>b</sup> Percentage of total articles published in the journal.

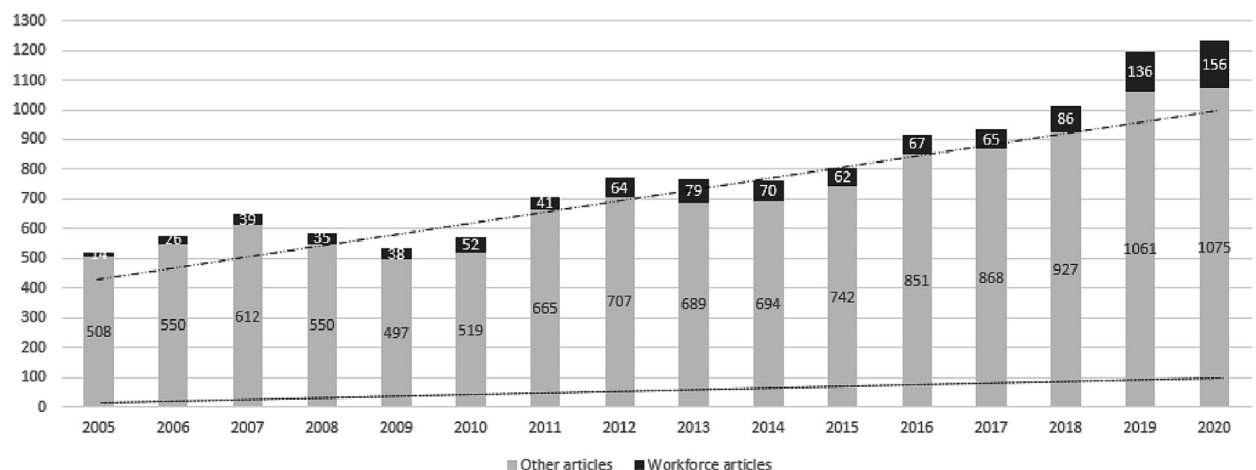
resulting in an initial sample of 580 articles. After removing nine articles which were short research notes, the final sample of articles for review is 571 articles (see Table 1 for a summary of the workforce articles, as well as their ratio to total articles published in the journal).

As shown in Table 1, for the revisited period (2015–2020), the eight-foremost tourism and hospitality journals collectively published a total of 6096 articles, with *Tourism Management* being the most prolific with 1437 in six years or 24 % of the total articles. With reference to hospitality journals, the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (IJHM) published the most articles ( $N = 1141$ ), followed by the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (IJCHM) ( $N = 1022$ ). Together, they accounted for 35 % of the total articles published in this period.

### Growth trends

Fig. 1 depicts the total articles published in all eight journals by year, broken down by workforce-related articles and other articles. This shows the trends by year in terms of frequency. Assessing the total number of publications since 2015, there was a moderate decrease through 2017, followed by a gradual increase from 2017 to 2020.

When assessing the number of workforce-related articles as a percentage of the total published, there were a number of notable changes. Overall, the total percentage of workforce publications in the initial review period (i.e., 2005–2014) was 7.1 %, whereas this jumped to 9.4 % in the second review period (i.e., 2015–2020). Notable variances include *Tourism Management* (increasing from 2.8 % of all articles to 4.5 %) and the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* from a nearly non-existent 0.6 % up to 3.3 %. For the hospitality journals, the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* saw workforce papers jump from 16.2 % of total papers to 21.4 %.

**Fig. 1.** Workforce articles (percentage) published by year, 2005–2020.

The changes across the period may be attributable to a number of possible explanations. We offer two broad analyses, the first thematic and the second a structural artefact of academic publishing. Thematically, sustainability has emerged as a significant driver of research interest; from industry, research funders, the community and the academy. The social (or people) domain of sustainability is neglected relative to its sister economic and environmental domains, a neglect observed and responded to (cf. Baum & Hai, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019; Winchenbach et al., 2019). Sustainability has inspired an interest in green human resources management as evidenced by a suite of papers from Luu (2018, 2019, 2020). These three papers by the same author across a very narrow window point to a raft of structural academic publishing practices that may help to explain an overall increase in tourism and hospitality workforce publications.

The increase in publications (See Fig. 1) is likely because of publisher practices in shifting to online publishing that has mitigated limitations of printing hardcopy journals, meaning that many journals now are able to publish papers without the limitations created by printing costs. Mapped against this phenomenon are the publishing practices of scholars, whereby multiple outputs collectively occur in a short timeframe. Luu's multiple outputs evidence this trend. Similarly, two articles on prosocial rule-breaking by Ghosh and Shum (2019) and Shum, Ghosh, and Gatling (2019) and two articles on customer incivility (Kim & Qu, 2019, 2020) bear this out. It is possible that multiple outputs emanate from the same study, an increased likelihood when this is the research of PhD scholars. As noted by Larivière (2012), one third of all research publications are produced by doctoral scholars.

### Analysis of themes

For each article included in the review, consistent with the approach taken in the original paper, the research team first identified primary workforce topics. Analysis of semantic similarities across these topics narrowed the total topics to 76. Aligned with the macro-meso-micro framework proposed in the first paper, these topics were further grouped into five overarching themes: (1) the external environment (Macro), (2) organisational practices and functions (Meso), (3) the job, the workplace and the work environment (Meso), (4) attitudes and behaviours (Micro), and (5) different individuals (Micro). See Appendix A for an example of the coding structure. These five overarching themes were consistent with the first review period. Fig. 2 illustrates the frequency of papers landing in macro-meso-micro themes across the two periods. Overall, the two comparative pie charts show no significant differences regarding the theme patterns. Consistent with the pattern in the 2005–2014 period, the micro theme dominates the research, while macro themes received relatively less attention.

Our analysis of the 2015–2020 period highlighted that, within each of the overarching themes in the macro, meso and micro levels, a number of sub-workforce themes persisted from the earlier sampling timeframe (see Table 2). At the macro level, papers continue to model the external (i.e. economic and policy) impacts on the tourism workforce (e.g. Repetti & Roe, 2018) but we prognosticate that this will amplify over the coming decade as the COVID-19 effects are scrutinised. Various human resources management streams related to strategy, systems and practices dominate the meso level with a notable growing scholarly interest in green human resources management (e.g. Pham, Hoang, & Phan, 2019) and sustainable human resource practices (Kim, Kim, Choi, & Phetvaroon, 2019) for the 2015–2020 period. Otherwise, there is the persistence of classic employment themes like turnover (e.g. Haldorai, Kim, Pillai, Park, & Balasubramanian, 2019; Li, Kim, & Zhao, 2017; Stamolampros, Korfiatis, Chalvatzis, & Buhalis, 2019) and organisational climate and culture (e.g. Li & Huang, 2017; Susskind, Kacmar, & Borchgrevink, 2018; Zientara & Zamojska, 2018). Concomitantly, at the micro level other staples of employment research continue to feature, investigating engagement (e.g. Dai, Zhuang, & Huan, 2019; Sarwar, Ishaq, Amin, & Ahmed, 2020; Zhang, Guo, & Newman, 2017), job satisfaction (e.g. Guchait, Simons, & Pasamehmetoglu, 2016; Pan, 2015; Stamolampros et al., 2019), job performance (e.g. Elbaz & Haddoud, 2017; Ling, Lin, & Wu, 2016; Yeh & Huan, 2017) and emotional labour (e.g. Lee, Ok, Lee, & Lee, 2018; Luo, Guchait, Lee, & Madera, 2019; Shapoval, 2019).

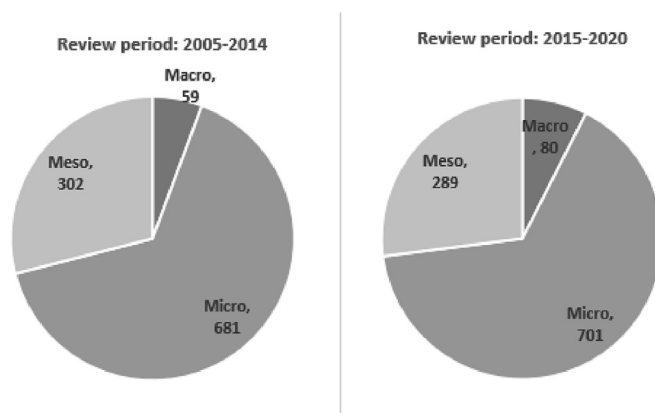


Fig. 2. Frequency of papers in macro-meso-micro themes: 2004–2014, left; 2015–2020, right.



**Table 2**  
Persistent themes and new themes.

	Overarching themes	Themes persisted from 2004–2014 period to 2015–2020 period	New Themes
Macro-level	<i>The external environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic and policy impacts on the tourism workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology</li> <li>Critical social issues (e.g. tourism workforce structures and tourism workforce mobilities)</li> </ul>
Meso-level	<i>Organisational practices and functions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human resources management streams related to strategy, systems and practices</li> <li>Green human resources management</li> <li>Sustainable human resource practices</li> </ul>	
	<i>The job, the workplace and the work environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turnover</li> <li>Organisational culture and climate</li> </ul>	
Micro-level	<i>Attitudes and behaviours</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement</li> <li>Job satisfaction</li> <li>Job performance</li> <li>Emotional labour</li> </ul>	
	<i>Different individuals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work-family and work-life balance</li> </ul>	

There may be several background factors for the continuance of these dominant themes, which the evidence suggests have pervaded tourism and hospitality workforce research and, arguably, the focus of the narrative over the past two decades. A strong case could be made as to why some items never 'leave the menu'. Applied managerial concerns that underpin constructs such as turnover, commitment, engagement, and job satisfaction remain staples of the parent organisational behavior, human resource and management literatures that, understandably, tourism workforce researchers voraciously devour and replicate and even adapt to changing environmental conditions (e.g., COVID-19). This focus of discourse raises interesting debates. On the one hand, adopting positivistic mantras, mobilising these concepts and tried and tested measures put the academy on firm grounding. Importantly it also bridges the divide between academia and practice. On the other hand, the tourism and hospitality academy's dependence on these traditional 'tools of the trade' might be an indicator of staleness, or even worse, complacency. Is the academy locked into disciplinary paradigms of thinking that inhibit game-changing research? Some emerging themes perhaps suggest otherwise.

#### New themes

Turning to new themes, two clear and pervasive themes emerged across our analysis, 'technology' and 'critical social issues'. These were characterised by their transcendence of the macro-meso-micro level categories - that is their identification emerged across the three levels in our coding. This occurred in two ways - papers themselves straddling two or more levels but also located within the themes and collectively working across the levels. This was somewhat of a departure from the earlier 2005–2014 analysis (Baum et al., 2016), which was characterised by rather more discrete themes within each level.

#### The rise in technology impacting work

Technology was the first theme identified and, given the acceleration of all things digital in the past decade, this is not surprising. There were 12 papers on this topic from 2015 to 2020. Robotisation was a common topic. For instance, Xu, Stienmetz, and Ashton's (2020) Delphi study of HR managers that examines leadership perspectives on the affordances and deficits of service robot technologies. While predominantly located in the *meso* level, the study does summarily treat inferences for future workplaces and leadership more broadly. Sun, Lee, Law, and Hyun's (2020) study on technology readiness and acceptance, similarly operates principally at the micro level in its survey of hotel workers, but scales up implications to the hotel industry.

At the macro level, Tuomi, Tussyadiah, Ling, Miller, and Lee (2020) investigated the potentially paradoxical anxieties inherent in embracing both automation and decent work. This work is notable for several reasons. First, these two phenomena, technology and decent work, may be deemed seemingly irreconcilable. Rydzik and Kissoon (2022) argue that artificial intelligence risks further empowering employers in labour relations, via potential surveillance, a loss of jobs and dehumanising workplace experiences, thus amplifying existing precarity and inequalities. However, the reverse may also be true in that technology has the ability to remove routine, arguably less decent work, for example some cleaning tasks. Second, they speak to implications "to companies, employees, and wider society" (Tuomi et al., 2020, p.1) thus straddling the micro, *meso* and macro levels and third, in addressing issues like decent work, empowerment, working conditions and rewards, they create a bridge to the second pervasive theme.

#### Critical social issues

The second theme, critical social issues, was somewhat surprising, given that across the reviewed period many tourism and hospitality academics worked within business and management schools. These are traditionally associated with economic orientations, rather than ethical concerns (Bratton & Gold, 2015). Manuel-Navarrete's (2016) exposition on the literal ghettoisation of tourism workers into residential enclaves within tourism destinations, and the complex dynamics between tourists, the tourist

operator 'bourgeois', and migrant and indigenous worker groups has implications at many levels. His study highlights post-colonial legacies on tourism workforce structures. Previous conceptual work has highlighted other macro aspects of tourism workforce mobilities (cf. Duncan, Scott, & Baum, 2013). For example, unlike earlier work that documents rural to urban migration (Solnet, Ford, Robinson, Ritchie, and Olsen, 2014), Sun, Ling, and Huang's (2020) study observes a trend for migrant workers to move to rural regions, bringing forth the significant integration and acceptance challenges they face in their new communities, and the individual impacts. The work of Winchenbach et al. (2019) and Winchenbach, Hanna, and Miller (2022) holistically abstracts the many issues characteristic of this emergent social sensibilities theme that has emerged since 2015. Winchenbach et al. (2019) locate these issues within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs') decent work agenda by invoking worker dignity. This theme is returned to in relation to housekeepers' struggles for dignity (Alcalde-González, Mozo, & Bustos, 2021) and the work socialisation of young student workers (Rydzik & Kissoon, 2022).

Discernible across this period, at the *meso* and micro levels are also less overt indicators of a shift towards a broader worker-as opposed to organisational - orientation. While some topics remain firmly entrenched in the service profit chain paradigm, for example, Teng's (2019) job crafting study, others demonstrate worker empathy (e.g. Robinson & Brenner, 2021). At the *meso* level, studies on corporate social responsibility (e.g. Wang, Hu, & Zhang, 2020), discrimination (e.g. Russen, Dawson, & Madera, 2021), harassment and workplace incivility (e.g. Li, Qian, Han, & Jin, 2016) and cruise ship employee mis-behavior (e.g. Harris & Pressey, 2021) bring forth a focus on worker conditions. Even the exclusive language of talent management is being questioned, particularly as applied to potentially vulnerable youth (Golubovskaya, Solnet, & Robinson, 2019), in an effort to democratise opportunities in tourism employment. At the micro level, a proliferation of studies on wellbeing are emerging (e.g. Su & Swanson, 2019), and will no doubt be fuelled by the tourism and hospitality workforce impacts of COVID-19 (Tuzovic, Kabadayi, & Paluch, 2021). Other topics that signal a humanistic perspective are studies on job security (e.g. McGinley & Mattila, 2020) and a focus on the intrinsic motivator of creativity and its link to innovation (Hon & Lui, 2016), though the research seems more focused on managerial and organisational affordances than for ameliorating workers. More recently, cross-disciplinary research discussing identity in the transition from fishing to tourism is explored by Winchenbach et al. (2022). This micro level investigation investigates the lived experiences of fishermen in Cornwall diversifying into tourism through the lens of psychosocial identity, taking us beyond the dominant economic narrative of social change and diversification. The study is also interesting in that it uses a theoretical framing that goes beyond the 'tourism context central idea' range of articles we highlight later. The study contributes to important debates on livelihoods in transition, demonstrating possibilities for constructing healthier identities and increased self-respect from transitions into service work, challenging the negative dominant discourse.

To summarise, there are tentative signs that tourism workforce research has gained ground as a more mature research area, set in the context of an increase in the overall numbers of scholarly articles. Many of the themes identified in our early reviews have endured, with new themes emerging; sustainability and technology and critical social issues. Why these seemingly bifurcated emergent themes of technology and critical social issues arose is not clear. Are these two meta-themes suggestive of a focus on pervasive contemporary issues identified by researchers impacting tourism workforces, or other drivers like the priorities of funders? Or do they signal some departure from the predominance of micro studies (re)modelling variables in complex but often less than meaningful ways that may contribute methodologically, but add little conceptually? Do these meta-themes suggest a maturity in tourism workforce studies? We can only speculate and allow the passage of time to inform future reflection.

## Work and employment research in annals of tourism research

Employing several search methods, using the same keywords deployed for the reprisal of the Baum et al. (2016) paper, we sought to identify, quantify and qualify tourism employment focused literature published in *Annals of Tourism Research*, since its inception in 1973. *Annals of Tourism Research* as a pioneering journal, although not the first in tourism, has cultivated a clear social science brand across its history (cf. Tribe, 2010). For much of its life, *Annals of Tourism Research* has distinguished itself from the managerialist foci of many of its tourism and hospitality cousins. While many of its earliest workforce related papers were descriptive in nature, this changed as the journal matured. Our analysis homed in on whether employment related literature in the journal reflected these social science traditions, and drew upon the authors' collective expertise to augment the systematic processes described below.

Initially, the journal itself, via the Elsevier platform was searched. Following this, the same exercise was repeated via Scopus and Web of Science, and finally, results were corroborated via a methodical issue-by-issue manual cross-check in the journal. The following criteria were applied to the selection of papers; tourism and hospitality employment was the prime focus, the unit of study analysis was work, workers or workplace, and if empirical the sample should contain employees and/or the workforce. Only full papers were included. Our final selection comprised 76 papers, published between 1976 and 2020, representing 2.5 % of all published *Annals of Tourism Research* full papers. Nearly a third ( $N = 22$ ) of these papers were published in the past five years (2016–2020), consistent with the upswing in tourism employment related papers noted in our previous analysis of tourism and hospitalities leading eight titles. Only one employment related paper was published in the 1970s. This is illustrated in Fig. 3 below.

These 76 papers were then subject to analysis. In an iterative process, we identified ten themes (e.g., mobility, productivity, education/training – see Fig. 4) in the sample and thus coded the papers. Initially, we developed a descriptive codebook regarding the broader elements within each of the papers (e.g., specific sector/occupation, crisis, global south etc.) and the method/s applied (e.g., quantitative - econometric, conceptual, mixed-method etc.). Once the codebook had been agreed, four researchers were randomly allocated 19 papers each, to fully code the papers. This first pass at the coding was followed by member checking by means

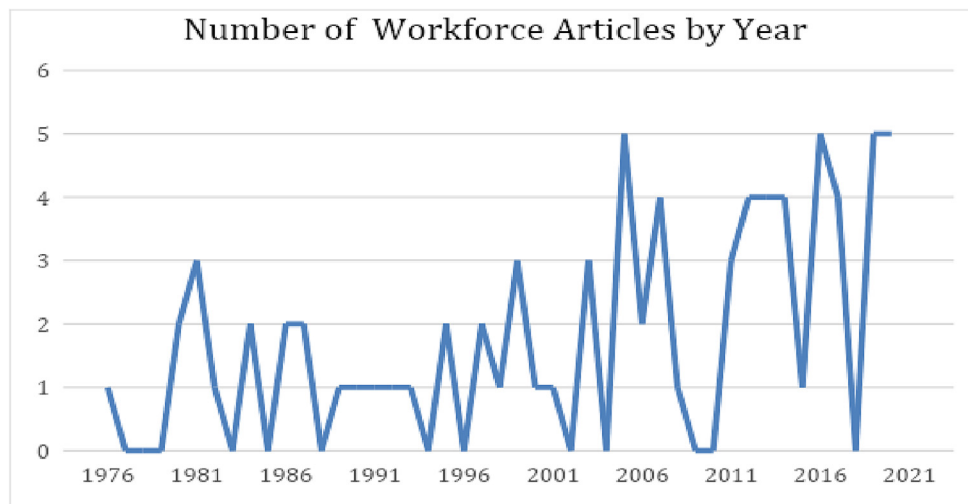


Fig. 3. Number of workforce related papers published articles by year.

of a further reallocation of the papers, and finally the four coding authors reviewed discrepancies across a group meeting. Given the small number of articles, we acknowledge the limitations of our subsequent discussion, however a number of observations can be made. The resultant themes are illustrated in Fig. 4 below.

The most common single unifying theme that emerged from the analysis was a critical studies orientation. This finding accords with *Annals of Tourism Research's* social science orientation. Critical studies tend to explore dimensions of societal power systems and are sensitive to context. They frequently traverse different disciplines, an approach lacking in the tourism academy (Okumus, Van Niekerk, Koseoglu, & Bilgihan, 2018). Many, independent of their underlying theory, are marked by an emancipatory or social good objective as in Ateljevic, Morgan, and Pritchard's (2007) original definition of 'hopeful' critical tourism studies. The 'critical turn' came somewhat later to hospitality research, encompassing the study of relationships between employers and employees, including a consideration of the migratory labour force that undertakes hospitality work in the neoliberal global economy (Lynch, Molz, McIntosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011).

Outside tourism, a preeminent journal *Work, Employment and Society* seeks contributions that analyse "all forms of work and their relation to wider social processes and structures, and to quality of life." It is this broader perspective that distinguishes critical studies. Germane to this discussion is a consideration of what Schneider et al. (2022) suggest in service work are limitations with the somewhat blinkered/competing research perspectives or attitudes of the two camps of mainstream management versus critical management scholars. This stems in part from what they believe is the primacy of Anglophile perspectives. They observe that "mainstream management scholars celebrate the contribution that contact employees make in delivering high service standards, while critical management studies seek to uncover the power relations involved in service work" (p. 44). In their view, what is lacking is attention to the performance of such work. In response, they propose a pragmatic approach that recognises the multifaceted nature of the service interaction, the importance of context, and frontline worker's agency in determining the outcome of service encounters. In section five we discuss the complexities involved in taking a contextual approach which departs from the pragmatic research agenda proposed by Schneider et al. (2022). Essentially, critical hospitality and tourism approaches do not claim to be value free, and employee wellbeing is at the heart of their endeavours.

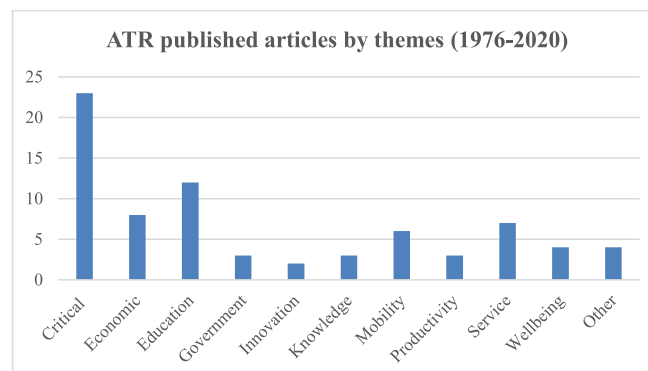


Fig. 4. ATR published articles by themes – 1976–2020.



Prevalent in this critical studies theme were articles relating to gender. A total of 37 articles were summoned when 'women' or 'gender' were entered in a Scopus search of the 76 sample articles, and a total of 13 articles included keywords of gender, women or women's status. Examples include 'humanising' migrant women's work (Rydzik, Pritchard, Morgan, & Sedgley, 2017), gendered work practices in Thailand (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017), gender and the ideal tourism 'worker' (Costa et al., 2017), gender ideology in tourism in the Dominican Republic (Duffy, Kline, Mowatt, & Chancellor, 2015), gender and class relations (Carvalho, Costa, Lykke, & Torres, 2019; Ireland, 1993), gendering tourism management and Herold, Garcia, and DeMoya's (2001) study of Caribbean 'beach boy' sex workers.

Education was a theme that was reasonably prolific in the 1980s, in particular, coinciding with the mushrooming of higher education programs in tourism and hospitality (Edelheim, 2014). For instance Airey and Nightingale's (1981) study profiling tourism occupational career pathways. Another initial trend involved numerous studies that demonstrated the specific economic contributions of tourism to employment, especially in the global south, for example, Farver's (1984) Gambian study. The latter two themes, education and economic studies, have shown a decrease over time in *Annals of Tourism Research* (although education remains a prolific topic in wider hospitality and tourism publications). In comparison, critical studies have increased slightly by volume - as with papers themed around service-related topics, for example, studies examining the physical attractiveness of service employees (Fang, Zhang, & Li, 2020), process of grievance handling (Elbaz, Haddoud, Onjewu, & Abdelhamied, 2019) and studies of work engagement and job satisfaction (Yeh, 2013), all of which ( $N = 7$ ) were published in the past decade. Consequently perhaps, there has been a shift in focus from macro perspectives (e.g., economic or sociological) to individual and group level studies, typically within or across organisations. Some have focused on specific occupations, for example, hotel managers (Garrigós-Simón, Palacios-Marqués, & Narangajavana, 2008) and tour guides (Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020). These papers are characterised by a sense of managerialism in tone that historically was not represented in the *Annals of Tourism Research* brand.

Themes that have endured over time include mobility and economic migrant workers, beginning in the early 1990s with work by Scott (1995) exploring the dangers for 'outsider' women from Romania and Russia working as croupiers, work considered unsuitable for local women (see also, migrant women's work by Rydzik et al., 2017), migration in times of transition (Szivas & Riley, 1999; Szivas, Riley, & Airey, 2003; Vagueois & Rollins, 2007), and the mobilities of hospitality work (Duncan et al., 2013). More recently, research has explored less traditional migration flows, as evidenced by Sun, Ling, and Huang's (2020) study described earlier. Historical reflections on labour movements also feature in research by García-Barrero and Erbina (2021). They adopted a micro-comparative approach to their study of historical labour recruitment practices in three hotel chains in the Balearic Islands during the Spanish tourism boom. The geographical location of the business and economic conditions were found to influence labour recruitment through chain migration and kinship links, and recruitment at origin. In another paper, drawing from insights from validation studies, narrative accounts from Kenyan migrants are used to explore how disparate forms of value were created through their employment experiences (Lugosi & Ndiuni, 2022). This work challenges the perceptions of employment as low-skilled, offering limited prospects.

Methodologically, the papers show an even distribution across various methods, although conceptual papers are in decline, whereas quantitative and mixed method studies have increased over time. It should be noted that many of the earlier papers, particularly on education, were quite descriptive in nature and classifying them as conceptual, would be generous according to contemporary understandings.

In summary, returning to our rationale for singling out *Annals of Tourism Research* specifically for discussion, our observations suggested that the journal's historic social science orientation is evident through the number of critical studies, beyond which there is no discernible difference in the articles published in the journal compared with the other leading tourism and hospitality journals. We are also able to illustrate a 50-year timespan of work- and employment-related research from the academy's pioneering journal. As it might be expected, the changes in topics reflect developments in tourism more broadly, and in tourism education at particular times. As in recent years, shifting societal concerns have an influence on scholarly investigation. While we were not able to discern a clear alternative history of research themes in *Annals of Tourism Research*, we stand by our position that *Annals of Tourism Research* is well placed to be the primary advocate for multidisciplinary and critical research into tourism work and employment drawing from the spectrum of social science disciplines.

## Discussion

Our analysis has shown that over time, work and employment related research has resulted in a discernible corpus of knowledge. In this discussion section we critically reflect on three broad observations on the current body of work under separate (although inter-related) headings. The first considers the continued dominance of human resources management research that aspires to 'solve' problems, considering both its achievements and limitations. The second addresses the extent to which tourism work and employment research transcends its traditional journal outlets. This is related to the third observation around context as a hindrance to theoretical development, thus potentially limiting tourism workforce researchers to followers rather than leaders. Each of these are considered important points for discussion as they potentially constrain the development of the field and its maturation.

### *Human resource management and beyond*

The volume of research considering the practices and systems of human resources management and applied managerial concerns has resulted in a substantial understanding of the work environment, the jobs undertaken and the perennial problems of

the sector (for example, low pay, high turnover, seasonality, shift work, 'dirty' work, labour shortages). This focus has also given insights into organisational practices and concerns, addressing issues such as recruitment and retention, pay and rewards, labour productivity, performance and effectiveness, talent management, skills and competencies, and training and development. The plight of the tourism and hospitality employee is also illuminated in studies that examine, for example, issues around job satisfaction, burnout, exhaustion, commitment, harassment, discrimination, emotional and aesthetic labour, customer misbehaviours, leadership and empowerment. Those who comprise the workforce, migrants, volunteers, working holidaymakers, youths, women, and different worker demographics have also been put under the spotlight. Applied research relevant to industry practitioners has a clear value, and it is expected that the relationships between industry and academia, steered by impact driven research agendas, will continue to thrive.

It is observed that when considering the body of work relating to human resources management and tourism work, a somewhat bleak landscape unfolds. However, there is some cause for optimism. Examples include studies of hospitality work as a place to develop social capital and new skills (Janta, Lugosi, Brown, & Ladkin, 2012), positive experiences in employment and lifestyle migration (Carson & Carson, 2018; Matarrita-Cascante & Suess, 2020; Nelson, Black, & Bamberly, 2021), the value of the hospitality sector for foreign-born individuals in Sweden (Backman & Kleesson, 2021) and value created for Kenyan migrants through employment experiences (Lugosi & Ndiuini, 2022). There is also evidence of success for migrant entrepreneurs in tourism. Bosworth and Farrell (2011) explore the role of in-migrant owners of small tourism firms in Northumberland and conclude not only are the businesses succeeding for themselves, but their activity stimulates other local businesses in the region. Studies based in the Global South context speak to the emancipatory value of tourism work, for instance for women (McMillan, O'Gorman, & MacLaren, 2011).

It may be that aspects of the cheerless discourse around tourism and hospitality jobs, workplaces and environments are partly due to the desire to find solutions to problems. It has been said elsewhere by the authors (Baum et al., 2016; Ladkin, 2011) that this problem-solving approach is limiting, with the absence of evident solutions to the many challenging dimensions of employment in the sector (its 'wicked' problems) creating a certain fatigue within the research community. Perhaps reinvigoration could be found for researchers in the embrace of paradox as both a practical lens and a conceptual mindset. This is because the manifestation of paradox appears to be an inherently ingrained characteristic of tourism employment, and are the consequences of deep persistent structural issues such as the grey or informal economy and susceptibility to disruption and inequalities. For example, the effects of stochastic visitor demand on employment which makes precarity inevitable for those working in seasonal destinations. Furthermore, where there is a choice of actions that could be taken, action does not necessarily follow. For example, the tourism industry frequently claims to value their employees as prime assets while remunerating them at levels significantly lower than most other sectors of the economy. Taking aboard the implications of paradox theory (Lewis & Smith, 2014) means accepting that paradox is inherent and unavoidable and that researchers need to accept and explain its presence rather than seeking to identify 'solutions'. Embracing rather than challenging paradox is, according to Baum, Solnet, Robinson, and Mooney (2019), the way forward in addressing issues that have beset our understanding of tourism employment for the past 75 or so years.

### *Journal outlets and invisible boundaries*

In our exploration of tourism work and employment research we endeavoured to search beyond journals devoted to our context, notwithstanding estimates of up to 370 such publications within the tourism academy (Kozak, 2017). This was driven by an imperative to further explore the issue of context and its broader appeal and relevance to other disciplines. Our consideration of this extensive literature was not intended to be comprehensive but was based on a search of journals located within the stables of the main academic journal publishers. It is a testament to the academy that we can discern a trajectory of increased contributions in the area of tourism-related employment into mainstream disciplinary journals.

Tourism's multidisciplinary context is clearly illustrated by the wide diversity of outlets, located beyond the field's identifiable journals, that have covered contributions relating to tourism employment, some on multiple occasions. These journals range across disciplines and include a number that are widely referenced and highly rated. Unsurprisingly, the most common outlets were within human resources management and allied journals, notably the *Human Resource Management Journal*, the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Employee Relations*, *British Journal of Industrial Relations* and *Work, Employment and Society*. Linked fields focusing on gender (*Gender, Work and Organisation*; *Gender and Society*), organisational psychology (*Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*) and vocational education (*Journal of Vocational Education and Training*) were also well represented in our search. In other disciplinary fields, geography, environmental and regional studies also provided outlets for studies in tourism work and employment, including through *Environment and Planning A*, *Papers in Regional Science*, *Ecology and Society*, the *Journal of Development Studies*, *Local Economy*, *Latin American Perspectives* and *South East Asia Research*. In the sociological and wider social science domain, coverage has been more limited but included *Sociological Quarterly*, *Sociological Perspectives*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Human Relations*, *Theory and Society*, *Capital and Class* and the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. One paper was identified in each of a number of key journals, including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *The Academy of Management Journal* and *Applied Economics Letters* and two in *Organisation Studies*. In line with findings relating to submissions in *Annals of Tourism Research*, there is a clear trajectory of increased contributions in the area of tourism-related employment over the time-span of this discussion.

However, what is striking is the limited author crossover between the 'mainstream' journals located in other disciplinary areas and tourism journals, including *Annals of Tourism Research*. A number of influential authors who have contributed to the tourism

employment narrative in significant ways appear not to have submitted their work within the tourism literature but have opted for a range of alternative outlets instead. For example, [Adib and Guerrier's \(2003\)](#) highly cited paper that examined the intersections of race and gender using a novel narrative inquiry methodology was published in *Gender, Work and Organisation*. In the same journal, [Dyer, McDowell, and Batnitzky \(2010\)](#) explored the impact of migration on the gendering of service work. From a sociological perspective, [Adler and Adler's \(1999a, 1999b\)](#) studies of resort workers were published in *The Sociological Quarterly* and *Sociological Perspectives* respectively. [Lu and Fine's \(1995\)](#) work on ethnic authenticity in relation to Chinese food as a social accomplishment was also published in *The Sociological Quarterly*. Fast food outlets were the setting for [McDowell's \(2009\)](#) writing on the experiences of young working class men employed in the sector in her book *Working bodies: Interactive service employment and workplace identities*. [Fine's \(1995, 1996\)](#) work on meaning and occupational rhetoric in restaurant work was published in *Theory and Society* (1995) and *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1996). Critical management scholars [Lewis and Simpson's \(2009\)](#) work exploring dirty work such as sex work and emotions in service work is located in the *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*. Human resources management researcher [Hoque \(1999\)](#), also published work on human resources management in hospitality in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* as well as other non-tourism outlets, and [Knox \(2010, 2014\)](#), has published on temporary work agencies in hotels in *Work, Employment and Society*, low paid workers in Australian hotels in *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work*, and *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*. [Sosteric \(1996\)](#) on subjectivity in the labour process in the restaurant industry, and [Alberti, Holgate, and Tapia \(2013\)](#), [Alberti \(2014, 2016\)](#), and [Tapia and Alberti \(2019\)](#) carried out a series of studies on how union organisations were changing tactics to regain relevance and increased member numbers in London and American hotels; studies that were published in industrial relations journals and sociology of work journals. Several authors have published work in the *Human Resource Management Journal*, for example [Price \(1994\)](#) on poor personnel practice in the hotel and catering industry, [Lindsay \(2005\)](#) on job seekers attitudes to low paid service work, and attitudes and [Knox and Walsh \(2005\)](#) study on organisational flexibility and HRM in the hotel industry. The articles all demonstrate original applications of contemporary theories that did not rely on their tourism context for their *raison d'être*; context was the site of exploration, rather than the focus of the paper. Thus, the conclusions have applicability beyond the tourism sector.

However, some tourism workforce researchers do straddle both camps, publishing across a variety of tourism journals and also in sociological outlets. For example, [Rydzik and Anitha's \(2019\)](#) work on agency and women migrant workers was published in *Work, Employment and Society*, and again relating to migration, [Lugosi, Allis, Ferreira, Palacio Leite, and Forman \(2023\)](#) writing on migrant visibility, agency and identity work in hospitality was published in *Migration and Society*. [Robinson and Baum's \(2019\)](#) empirical paper about the identity badges and totems of chefs was published in *Human Relations*, and while [Mooney's \(2016\)](#) article on how to resolve methodological issues in gender studies appeared in *Work, Employment and Society*, the application of the concepts to tourism research appeared in *Annals of Tourism Research* ([Mooney, 2018](#)). The cross-over and cross-pollination between the mainstream and tourism while evident to some extent, remains a challenge, and relates to our next area of discussion regarding context.

### Context, theory, contribution - a conundrum

Our exploration into 'tourism' work and employment considers a specific context. While there is clear value in context, in fact, it is the complexity and heterogeneity of tourism's context that gives us our unique lens; context is not all that the field has to contribute. However, if tourism researchers view the tourism industry context as their primary research rationale and focus without acknowledgement of a wider social ecosystem and its attendant theoretical underpinnings, then the specific tourism setting becomes the focus for the researcher, rather than providing a test bed for new concepts or the development of new theories.

To a certain extent, the focus on the tourism context and tourism-led theories is not surprising, given that such theory grew from the ideas that it borrowed from other disciplines in the first place. Yet, claims for the 'uniqueness' of tourism as a context appear to remain embedded in the mindsets and practices of tourism researchers with the consequence that there is tendency for them to operate within a closed loop in the work they do, the sources they cite and the audiences they aspire to inform. Our analysis suggests that much discourse on tourism work and employment is shackled by context.

Without a doubt, theory development is a challenging endeavour, no matter the field or discipline. Despite the expectations of most journals for authors to demonstrate theoretical contributions in their work, by and large, most submissions to journals generally do not deliver in this regard ([Fried, 2020](#); [Stergiou & Airey, 2018](#)). Some argue that this is because there is a poor shared understanding within the academy as to what theory actually constitutes. Indeed, many subscribe to the view that it is just explanatory, although theory can also be processual or provocative in form ([Sandberg & Alvesson, 2021](#)). Others argue that a fixation on just one type of theory is stifling to research ([Dennis, 2019](#)). Tourism has an additional 'theoretical' hurdle to navigate. As others have observed, tourism is not a discipline - in fact the field is characterised by its multidisciplinary ([Tribe, 1997](#)). However, in the post-Covid era, [Weaver \(2022\)](#) proposes that tourism should abandon its "atomised multidisciplinary approach" and reposition itself as a "pandiscipline", with the consequent advantage that it "opportunisticly and innovatively incorporates relevant concepts and frameworks from other disciplines". Tourism is, at least for the time being, an important context for the application of theory. Given theories are the rules and toolkits of disciplines within which tourism should or can develop theory, this is logically problematic. Indeed, [Okumus et al. \(2018\)](#) analysing interdisciplinary projects in tourism concluded that "there is a lack of knowledge and limited understanding among tourism scholars of the concept of interdisciplinary research" (p. 546), although they observed that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches are increasingly sought in other disciplines to respond to the complexity of multifaceted societal issues.

Certainly, without exposure to new theoretical approaches or ways of viewing the world, coupled with the limitations imposed by a predominantly Global North, indeed Anglo-American-centric outlook on research, studies in tourism, in many cases, become a game of replica studies (Chambers, 2018). Given the almost limitless range of geographical, cultural and organisational contexts of tourism and the diversity of its workforce, researchers may find the relatively new (to tourism) and evolving intersectional approach especially valuable for teasing out connections between layers in multi-level studies (Mooney, 2018). 'Intersectionality' refers to the combined and simultaneous interactions of different categories of demographic identity, such as gender, race, age, and social change, which alter employment quality and employment outcomes for individual/groups of workers, for example, Black women of low socio-economic class (Holovino, 2011). Crenshaw, the "mother of intersectionality" (see Davis, 2020) developed the concept as a critical legal intervention to challenge the discriminatory hiring practices that prevented Black women gaining office work in U.S. companies, whereas Black men were (only) employed as janitors and White women (only) recruited as clerical assistants. Crenshaw (1989) arguments forced the U.S. legal system to recognise that the intersecting identities of 'race and gender' in this case formed a new, legally distinct, and substantial new category of discrimination. Since then, as Lutz (2014) observes, the original concept has evolved into a theoretical framework adopted by researchers across disciplines, beyond the confines of its original critical race and gender context. However, intersectional approaches are still characterised by their critical approach and emancipatory aims (Crenshaw, 2017). Davis' (2020) advocacy of the value of intersectionality particularly resonates with us as tourism employment scholars: "As a travelling theory par excellence, intersectionality demands that we all think transnationally and find ways to have heated and critical debates in which we are respectful of our differences and find ways to learn from them" (p.124).

Perhaps we should not judge tourism researchers too harshly on their sluggish adoption of new or emerging theories, as there exists a perennial tension in defining contribution within other emerging fields of knowledge. An example can be found in the case of service research. This developed over a long period of time and its evolution was metaphorically framed as through the stage of "crawling out", "scurrying about" and "walking erect" (Fisk, Brown, & Bitner, 1993). During the early phases of crawling about, service publications were rare, often conference papers and dissertations and rarely found in top journals. But over time, not only did the field grow and mature, but there is now rich and highly cited theoretical development (Lusch, Vargo, & O'Brien, 2007; Vargo & Akaka, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Tourism has shown similar characteristics of growth and continues to evolve and strive for intellectual progress.

In summary, although not exhaustive these broad observations indicate both achievements and challenges evident within the existing scope of tourism work and employment research, and aspects that may hinder its maturation. In our final section, we look to the future to try and determine where the focus of the body of work in this field might be heading.

## Future research foci

In this section we propose key areas that are broadly underdeveloped and/or predicted to become more relevant, and which, as a consequence, represent ripe opportunities for further research. These have been derived from horizon scanning for changes at the macro and *meso* level that may significantly influence tourism work and the workforce, alongside notable absences from the current body of work. Research questions are also indicated. We consider each area under a separate heading, but recognise the overlap and interconnectedness of the discourse.

### *Work and employment in a volatile world*

Like no crisis before it, COVID-19 exemplified the vulnerability of employment in tourism and hospitality to external shock, bringing to life Ritchie's (2009, p. 35) prophetic remarks that "the potential of future biological threats to animals as well as humans is a very real threat to the tourism industry that has largely been ignored". In a curated issue of *Annals of Tourism Research*, Ritchie and Jiang (2019) further remark that, "a much better understanding of human resource management strategies in times of crisis are needed" including "impacts on community" (2019, p.10). Beyond the pandemic of the early 2020s little substantiation is needed to proclaim that our worlds are becoming increasingly volatile. Solnet, Baum, Robinson, and Lockstone-Binney (2016) opined that numerous environmental domains in which tourism operates were becoming increasingly volatile - with tensions, conflicts and threats.

We continue to witness the impacts of climate change, and extreme weather events. These conditions compromise travel as well as work. Work futurists propose that labour relations will become more fragile and technology-enabled and human labour will co-exist (Wirtz et al., 2018). We propose that researchers should postulate what seemingly apocalyptic tourism futures mean for tourism employment? Should travel become constrained, or even impossible, what might virtually attuned workforces look like. What might be the requisite competencies and skills? How would industrial relations cope with these new forms of work? What would entice workers to work and stay in such volatile environments? What meaning will tourism work have if employees are potentially deprived of 'real world' service interactions?

### *The politicisation of tourism work*

A legacy of the first industrial revolution from the 19th century was the politicisation of work, motivated by emergent morality initially concerning child labour, as well as practical considerations relating to workforce welfare as a business benefit. The driver of these concerns, as the name suggests, was for work undertaken in industrial, mining and agricultural sectors. This



generated significant political and economic advocacy, debate and opposition. Frontline service work, including in the tourism sector, has not stimulated similar political interest, notwithstanding the numerical growth in such work from the latter part of the 20th century.

Researchers can engage more critically with the growing politicisation of tourism work which, particularly as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, provides opportunity to consider, hitherto, uncharted territory and to play a key role in shaping an emergent agenda in this area. At a policy level, this might include the changes to role of migrant labour in the low-skills workforce while at an operational level, this might address the growing interest by legislatures in the equitable distribution of tips or service charges in hospitality outlets (Falvey, 2022).

### *Work ecosystems*

Work and employment in tourism, like other sectors, are undergoing transformation, challenging existing assumptions about many facets of work and employment (Boudreau, Jesuthasan, & Creelman, 2015; Veen, Kaine, Goods, & Barratt, 2020). Much work transformation can be attributed to technology infusion and other external factors (globalisation, gig economy), while others are due to shifting norms and patterns of younger workers (Lumbreras & Campbell, 2020), exemplified through notions of boundary-less (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and 'protean' careers (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy Demuth, 2006). This has implications for most of what we know about how to 'manage' human resources.

These evolutions are leading to a new paradigm of work through 'work ecosystems', defined as an "emergent sets of dynamic formal and informal work arrangements involving human and non-human actors, interacting as complex interconnected systems" (Subramony et al., 2018, p. 157). While the future of work and employment is clearly moving to ecosystems, there is very limited research on this transformation and its impact on work and employment in tourism. We note some existing research on elements of work ecosystems, such as contingent or gig employment (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2018) and also in a tourism context (Baum et al., 2019; Forgacs & Dolnicar, 2017; Rydzik & Kissoon, 2021). Researchers can ask important questions such as: how can firms differentiate themselves as employers through platform based work ecosystems; how are individuals impacted when work and compensation/benefits are predominately decided by algorithm-based work allocations; and how will this impact industrial relations and labour laws in terms of addressing workplace abuse or disputes?

### *Humanistic management*

Few industries have traditionally been so reliant on the enthusiasm, passion and engagement of employees as tourism and hospitality. However, a pervasive growth mindset creates an "economistic" (Pirson, 2017), neoliberal paradigm (Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolkowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019), where market systems, competition and growth predominate, placing great pressure to drive efficiencies that often conflict with the wellbeing of workers. The emerging field of humanistic management (Pirson, 2017) places the managerial imperative on people as the most important consideration in leading organisations. Humanistic management serves as an umbrella concept under which a number of important areas of research link (e.g., dignity and dignified work, well-being, flow and flourishing) and is a critical leverage point for the fields of positive psychology (Luthans, 2002) and positive organisational scholarship (Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, & Calarco, 2011).

Researchers can seek greater clarity about how humanistic approaches to management can be balanced against the demands and often low profit margins in the sector; what specific human resource practices can best exemplify a humanistic approach; which humanistic anchors may be more impactful or important to different groups of tourism workers and how humanistic variables can be seen as outcomes rather than independent variables, supporting humanistic approaches not as a means to financial goals but as a means in itself for the betterment of society.

### *Creating an inclusive employee-centred workplace*

The curated collection bears testament to employees experiencing burnout and stress along with work intensification (for example, Ong, Ryan, & McIntosh, 2014). The evidence suggests that younger employees (Robinson et al., 2019), ethnic minorities (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999), women and/or migrant workers (Duffy et al., 2015; Rydzik et al., 2017) are vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation by managers, and to incivility or harassment from customers (for example, Fang et al., 2020; Woo & Chan, 2020). Yet, reviews of diversity management in tourism and hospitality management (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017) and the hospitality industry (Manoharan & Singal, 2017) highlight significant diversity research gaps, such as few LGBTQIA+ studies, and a lack of contemporary methodological approaches and innovative theories being used. Gender studies featured in *Annals of Tourism Research* have tended to run contrary to that historical trend (for example, Carvalho et al., 2019; Kensbock, Jennings, Bailey, & Patiar, 2016; Trupp & Sunanta, 2017), possibly due to its sociological rather than managerial lens. For example, a study of gender in entrepreneurial leadership in tourism by Kimbu et al. (2021) reveals the importance of context in Ghana and Nigeria. As most gender studies focus on women, researchers can examine non-heteronormative employment dimensions, and the experiences of gender diverse employees. As a discipline, it is essential that we teach our employment researchers that bland notions of 'diversity management' are of little practical benefit if studies do not focus on specific categories of difference, and design for the wide variety of contextual influences that regulate employment or organisational outcomes. Furthermore, intersectionality has the potential to create multiple disadvantage in the labour market, for example in the case of migrant workers.



Future research could measure what targeted initiatives are required to provide a healthy, rewarding workplace for tourism's diverse employees, and suggest new opportunities for those who are physically excluded, for example, employees with disabilities. Likewise, studies are required that investigate employment barriers for the socially excluded, such as refugees, asylum seekers, or ex-offenders, and the implications of intersectionality. We suggest including the voices of the marginalised when creating more accessible workplaces, as [Gillovic, McIntosh, Cockburn-Wooten, and Darcy \(2017\)](#) advocate in inclusive tourism studies. In sum, a quantum leap in the number of studies using critical paradigms and multi-method approaches to explore access to decent and dignified work in tourism, for diverse employees with specific needs according to context, will generate more inclusive employment systems.

### *Artificial intelligence, technology and work*

Artificial intelligence and technology developments continue to make a profound impact on work, disrupting the structures, practices and experiences of working routines and environments. Technology has allowed labour to shift beyond traditional spatial and temporal boundaries, and intelligent machines are replacing some of the more mundane and repetitive tasks previously undertaken by humans. A recent investigation by [Sedik and Yoo \(2021\)](#) identifies that COVID-19 pandemic events have increased robot adaptation where there is a health impact and where robots may be able to raise productivity. Furthermore, the way the data is collected to drive algorithms has implications for how workers are managed, monitored and rewarded, for example as in the case of Airbnb hosts or food service delivery. The impacts and consequences of artificial intelligence and technology and its adoption in the workplace are well documented by tourism scholars, exploring contemporary issues in the tourism context as discussed earlier (see for example, [Kong et al., 2021](#); [Sun, Lee, et al., 2020](#); [Tuomi et al., 2020](#); [Xu et al., 2020](#)). We are likely to see a continuation of research around work and technology in the tourism and hospitality workplaces.

As work practices embrace and adapt to technological change, while also heading towards a more automated future, tourism researchers could be at the heart of understanding the impacts of this, an area that potentially can bridge the gap between academia and practice. Important new lines of enquiry for research could ask if technology is a friend or foe of the tourism and hospitality worker? Or in the context of marginalised and disadvantaged groups are they further excluded or advantaged by technology and automation in tourism work?

### *Tourism worker mobilities - informal, forced and voluntary*

The 'new informal', as [Baum and Giddy \(2021\)](#) suggest, is the normalisation of gig and platform work in tourism. In many Global North countries, those working in the informal (and gig) economies include undocumented migrant workers whose vulnerability is palpable but not wholly understood and under-conceptualised in theories of mobilities and migration. This displacement of low-skilled workers resonates with tourism and hospitality employment and researchers can give greater focus to tourism employment in the informal sector worldwide. Scholars could focus on research that straddles the micro, *meso* and macro levels, thereby considering consequences for the workers, organisations and wider society.

One theme that has emerged and then, to some extent, retreated in the tourism literature, is sex tourism, and wider consideration of modern slavery as well ([Robinson, 2013](#)). The discourse around sex tourism has generally been consumer-focused. However, there are clear workforce issues that predominantly impact women, as evidenced by [Oppermann \(1999\)](#), [Taylor \(2006\)](#) and, more recently, [Stenerson, Ovrebo, Adams, and Hayes \(2020\)](#), all of which recognise sex workers within the context of the grey tourism economy. Exploitative dimensions of tourism, of which sex work is a prime example, require further conceptualisation through a variety of theoretical lenses.

We recognise these underdeveloped yet potentially increasingly important areas proposed are by no means exhaustive, there are likely omissions and others may wish to reflect differently. However, in offering these, we hope to encourage researchers to take bold steps in their future enquiry.

## **Conclusion**

Our review paper has endeavoured to critically evaluate the current state of tourism work and employment research. In doing so, evidence emerges of a body of work that cumulatively has much to offer in terms of knowledge and insights into the tourism workforce, but it also has some way to go. It would be fair to say that those seeking to study, work or make a living from tourism could do so with their eyes wide open after consulting, amongst other things, the research of tourism work and employment scholars. The complexity and heterogeneity of the sector, which previously has been blamed for producing fragmented and piecemeal research - provides avenues for a diverse range of exploration and knowledge accumulation, as evidenced from this review. Returning to our guiding question of "to better understand the workforce - how does our field need to mature?", we offer the following concluding remarks.

First, it is possible that the professed contributions to knowledge from the research explorations are incremental at best, and more likely, duplicative. While this is not necessarily detrimental to the accumulated knowledge, it could be perceived as limiting. As we have outlined earlier, much of the work undertaken in the tourism and hospitality employment domain is context driven, duplicating what is already known to those with the requisite knowledge of the mother discipline area. This makes tourism researchers followers rather than leaders. The opportunity and challenge, therefore, is for tourism researchers to push theoretical

boundaries through context. Using context to guide theory is entirely possible for tourism workforce researchers and would be a clear sign of maturity and credibility of our field.

Second, it may be worth a reflection on a fundamental issue regarding how we define work and employment, or rather whose perspective is taken. As indicated in the earlier review paper (Baum et al., 2016) the perspectives vary across the macro, meso and micro, each influencing the focus of research and the potential for meaningful outputs with impact. Evidence suggests that different journals seem to adopt a focus on one more than the other. For example, tourism journals often take a macro view, the broad external issues impacting the sector, a region, or a workforce segment. The *International Journal of Hospitality Management* often focuses on the micro-meso interface, for example, how work practices impact employee perceptions. Perspective, whether this be scale (macro, meso, micro), geographical (global North and South), or gendered, or others, has underpinned the discussion throughout the review. Recognition of perception as an important prerequisite may contribute towards locating the work for meaningful impact and, thereby adding to the credibility of our research.

Third, an indication of maturity might be our willingness and ability as scholars to undertake collaborative research with others both within and external to the tourism research community. This may include adopting 'non tourism eyes' to generate new insights by extending and enriching their academic networks beyond their own 'tribe' and silos (Pernecky, 2016; Tribe, 2010) to include mathematicians, physicists, biologists, geographers, climatologists, sociologists, philosophers and epidemiologists. We have discussed earlier the benefits of adopting multi-and interdisciplinary approaches and crossing boundaries but will add here the mundane but powerful benefits of multidisciplinary collaboration in relation to research funding opportunities. Such collaboration must locate tourism employment beyond context and proffer the conceptual and methodological tools that feature in extant work as a contribution to the fusion of tourism employment with other disciplinary traditions. If tourism researchers are able to capitalise on funding opportunities, the structures of the broader research environment should be considered. This argument follows through with regard to opportunities to influence policy, which is more likely to be achieved if external partners are part of collaborative research. Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and post-disciplinary teams can represent all genders and worldviews from the Global South, Global North and indigenous communities to decide the most urgent research priorities.

Fourth, a maturity indicator will be the extent to which researchers and those responsible for the management of key research decisions in this field demonstrate capacity to accommodate methodological diversity, particularly with respect to non-western interpretations of knowledge. The methodological basis for much published tourism employment research is limited by adherence to western ideological, ontological and epistemological orthodoxy, even where the research context demands recognition of social and cultural mores from the Global South. This bias starts with the training through which many Global South scholars have progressed, especially at advanced levels of Masters and doctoral studies in Western universities or those institutions emanating from the colonial era and replicating practice from Australasia, Europe and North America. Debate about the suitability of 'Western Science' to Global South and indigenous community research is not new (Akbar, 1984; Nobles, 1978; Ray, 2012; Robles Lomeli & Rappaport, 2018) but does not appear to have impacted on practice in tourism and, specifically, tourism employment research. Given the importance of both formal and informal tourism-sector employment at a community level within indigenous societies across the Global South, this represents a major methodological shortcoming in the canon of extant research. Culpability lies in major part within the 'mainstream' tourism research community, those who train future generations of researchers as well as editors and reviewers associated with major journals in the field. Some journals, such as *Hospitality & Society*, have adopted a more inclusive approach by publishing articles with an indigenous worldview that expose such biases, for example, K.I.N Authors collective (2021) through the Māori concept of Manaakitanga, documented the "ways in which Indigenous worldviews and perspectives are commonly met with hostility in academia" (p.9).

Fifth, an indication of maturity could be tourism researchers as leaders, and the future of work offers an opportunity to do so. Interest in work futures is long-standing (cf. Malone, 2004 for one of many narratives that address both the history and future of work) and ongoing in response to ever-changing social, cultural, economic, political and technological environments (Codagnone, Abadie, & Biagi, 2016), not least the potential consequences for work following the COVID-19 pandemic (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021). In a tourism context, portraying possible futures of the sector or specific dimensions of it has become a major field for creative discourse, adopting a range of predictive and visioning methodologies (Gössling, Hall, Peeters, & Scott, 2010; Haywood, 2020; Yeoman, 2020). Combining these two futures agendas (work and tourism), remains a critical but as yet under-conceptualised area for researchers and is clearly an area where further research could be encouraged, leading the way for other fields to follow.

As a concluding comment, we return to the issue raised in our introduction regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism workforce. Without a doubt, work practices and worker experiences have set a different course since this event. Our shared experience of COVID-19, either as workers in global tourism or as researchers trying to understand the effects on work and employment in the industry, has been, potentially, a game changer that will challenge many of the assumptions that have underpinned previous research published in the area. Only time will tell what the tourism "iworkscape" will look like in five or 10 years' time and researchers need to be positioned to address whatever changes may transpire from multiple perspectives. We are optimistic that as researchers we can learn from our collective experiences.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Appendix A

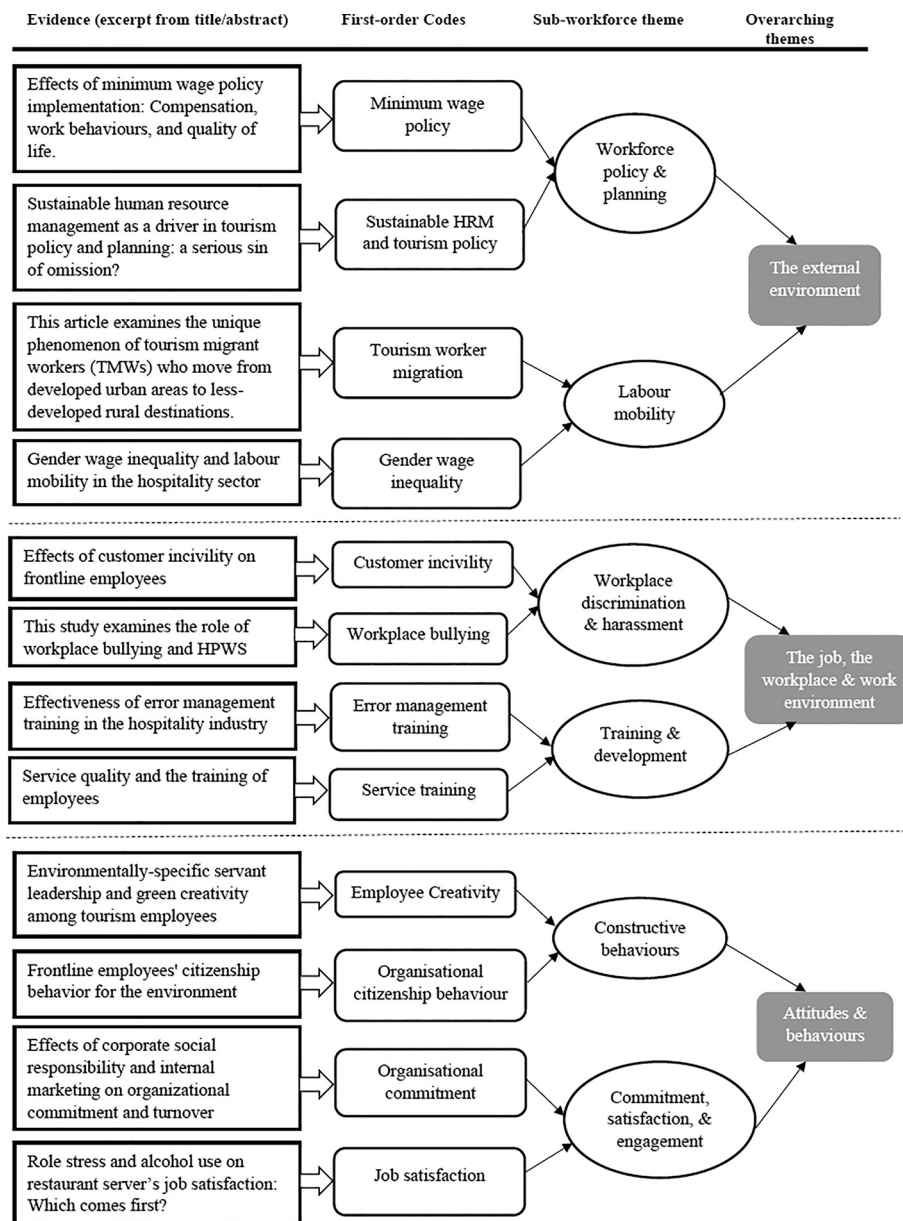


Fig. A. Example of coding structure.

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