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# EXPLORING TOURISM LABOR

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to explore tourism labor research using a thematic approach. Set against a background of increasing interest in and diversity of labor issues, dominant and emerging themes in tourism labor research are discussed to demonstrate the broad range and evolution of studies undertaken to date. Following an exploration of the themes, the paper considers three different perspectives on tourism labor in order to articulate the complexities of labor issues. These perspectives are from the tourism worker, the tourism employer, and the tourism researcher. Each is considered through the use of a scenario. The paper concludes that the intricacies of tourism labor afford an opportunity for multi-disciplinary boundaryless research that promotes dialogue between different perspectives. **Keywords:** tourism labor, research themes, perspectives. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that tourism is an important generator of jobs. The global tourism industry directly provides around three percent of global employment, or 192 million jobs, the equivalent to one in every 12 formal sector jobs. The International Labor Organization predicts this is likely to rise to 251.6 million jobs by 2012, one in every 11 formal sector jobs (Ferguson, 2007). Employment generation is widely considered to be the most direct and beneficial impact of tourism to the host population (Liu & Wall, 2005, p. 691). However, tourism labor remains a relatively minor player in academic research despite an obvious need to be able to manage and plan for tourism labor requirements. In a review of tourism research undertaken by Xiao and Smith (2006), tourism labor and employment is absent from the major subject area listings. This is all the more surprising as in the wider social science arena there is no shortage of explorations into labor and employment, specifically in the areas of economics and employment issues in relation to society, culture and identity. As identified by Adkins and Jokinen (2008), the relationship between work and life, ways of

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working and the theorization of work are undergoing significant and radical revision. Tourism labor with its connection to social and cultural theory, combined with its place in the new economy and mobilized workforces, clearly has a contribution to make to current wider societal debates. These are the drivers behind this exploration into tourism labor research.

An investigation into why tourism labor is still a relatively scarce area of research reveals no obvious clues, although a lack of reliable employment data, problems of definition and the cost of empirical data collection all have some bearing. Furthermore, as explored by [Veijola \(2009\)](#), widening the approach of labor research proves challenging and requires a broadening and diversification of discourses, topics and the imagined audience, as in the case of approaching tourism through the study of work. Moving outside a single disciplinary home base may not be entirely comfortable for many researchers. Certainly labor research is complex and has developed within different disciplines and along varying lines of inquiry. Given the importance of tourism labor both in its practical sense and its potential contribution to tourist studies, it is timely to explore existing and emerging research themes in order to begin unraveling the complexities of labor issues. Furthermore, if dominant research themes are highlighted to take stock of existing research, this will help to avoid criticisms that much research in tourism offers nothing new, and that despite competent empirical research, little is added in terms of new concepts or holistic understanding ([Page, 2005](#)). If possible, tourism labor research would do well to avoid ad hoc development with little connections in terms of topics, issues, concepts and epistemologies, criticized by [Weed \(2005\)](#) in relation to sport tourism research.

Two points of clarification are necessary at this stage. First, the distinction between tourism and hospitality as one or two separate industries is beyond the scope of this paper. Although contentious, for this purpose, tourism is used in the broadest definition to include hospitality. Where previous research refers specifically to the hospitality industry it is discussed as a distinct sector. Second, a discussion of the total body of work on tourism labor is impossible within the context of a single paper. Therefore, the examples are illustrative of the main themes rather than exhaustive, with the hope that future discussion and exploration will further the development and understanding of the totality and constituent parts that comprise tourism labor research.

## TOURISM LABOR

Reflecting on tourism labor can include many different possibilities in terms of an appropriate starting point. For example, you could take a macro perspective of labor issues in the context of economics or social studies, or you could focus at the micro level and look at individual occupations and job experiences. Different perspectives could also be used as a means for reflection as in the case of using real life perspectives through narratives from, for example, tourism employers or

tourism employees. This use of narratives is adopted later in this paper as a means to illustrate the complexities of tourism labor.

In searching for an approach to exploring tourism labor, there are many rigorous and philosophical discussions of tourism knowledge creation that could serve as a guide. See, for example, Tribe (2010), Tribe and Airey (2007), Echtner and Jamal (1997), Xiao and Smith (2006). Developments in tourism research and knowledge creation over time by discipline, methodologies, paradigms and discourses are just some of the ways in which tourism research has been explored. Ontological, epistemological and methodological issues relating to specific research topics could also provide a framework, as in the approach taken by Ayikoru (2009) in the context of tourism studies. Certainly, an epistemological enquiry into the nature and structure of tourism labor would give rise to a critical analysis of the research field, with perhaps a focus on different paradigms or discourses offering additional insight. However, unlike the broad field of tourism which arguably shows signs of maturation (Ryan, Page, & Roche, 2007), tourism labor as a distinct subject is perhaps not quite yet developed enough to warrant this critical approach. Instead, an appropriate starting point is to explore tourism labor by broad themes, both mature and emerging, with critical analysis where appropriate. Whilst this approach could be criticized for merely providing additive knowledge, the intention is to illuminate developments in the field and provide a starting point for further discussion. In order to illustrate the complexities and interconnectedness of issues concerning tourism labor, an innovative approach of using three different perspectives of tourism labor are explored. These are a tourism worker, a tourism employer and a tourism researcher and they are considered through the use of a scenario.

### *Tourism Labor Research Themes*

The first step in exploring tourism labor is to identify and discuss the broad range and evolution of studies in the field. The paper takes a thematic approach and explores five themes, selected either because they represent the dominant or emerging areas of research. As is often the case in trying to create a coherent picture of any body of research, chronological developments are often problematic due to co-existence and divergence. Equally, the themes are not neatly separate but have overlaps, perhaps with slightly different emphasis. However, the broad trends behind these themes mirror developments within tourism research generally which do have a chronological element. Well established disciplines such as geography, sociology and anthropology dominated the late 70s, followed by a shift in focus to management and economics in the early 80s, with these topics giving way to sociocultural and environmental issues from the 90s (Xiao & Smith, 2006, p. 495). Tourism management with its primarily economic underpinning has emerged as a distinct field from tourism studies where the basis is a social and cultural focus (Aitchinson, 2006, p. 417). It is the area of practical application that provides the first of the themes for discussion.

*Tourism Labor Theme 1: A Management Perspective*

There is a body of knowledge established largely in response to searching for answers to practical labor considerations that impact upon the tourism industry. As in early studies of tourism, this research was generated largely from the context of practice, management and governance (Tribe & Airey, 2007, p. 3). This body of knowledge has been developed almost entirely, although not exclusively, from a management perspective with a practitioner focus. The management perspective draws from a largely scientific-positivist paradigm and offers insights into practical issues within the tourism industry. Beginning with this management perspective, a number of comprehensive texts explore human resources and employment issues within the industry, with the main focus often on the hospitality sector (Baum, 1995, 2006; Go, Moncahelo, & Baum, 1996; Nickson, 2007; Riley, 1991; Tanke, 2001; Tesone, 2008). Issues such as pay, working conditions, job satisfaction, organizational structure, management styles, globalization, skills, education and training, labor markets and service quality are typically covered, leading to a broad understanding of the issues relating to managing, training, educating and developing people in the industry. The focus is firmly in the business and management agenda set within service industries.

It is not coincidental that many of these human resource texts focus on the hospitality sector as one of the main problems of researching tourism labor and employment issues is trying to define the broad tourism industry. Although not without problems, the hospitality sector has the advantage of at least being more visible and contains organizational and career structures that are easier to recognize and in certain cases are more established. However, when attempting to examine employment outside of organizational contexts and in the wider labor market, both tourism and hospitality are problematic (Szivas, 1999). The sheer size and scale of the industry causes problems for analysis (Riley, Ladkin, & Szivas, 2002, p. 2). A blurring of the boundaries between work and life means that labor markets and occupations are becoming even less ridged, opening up the doors for an alternative way of how we might define and conceptualize tourism labor markets. Notions of 'new work' and its complex mixing of globalization, migration, the new economy and individualization (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008, p. 167) further compound this issue of complexity of defining the industry and occupations.

In recognition of the pragmatic need to make sense of tourism employment, an early attempt to define tourism occupations was undertaken by Airey and Nightingale (1981). The result was an occupational classification for tourism based on sector of employment (tourist destination organizations; suppliers of tourist attractions; facilities and services; travel organizations and intermediaries; other sectors), by function (general and specialist) and by role and grade. It is widely recognized that the problems of defining tourism labor and their associated labor markets is detrimental to understating the value of tourism employment, which is a constant concern for governments

and policy makers. Currently the ILO (2008) in conjunction with the United National World Tourism Organization are working to improve national methods of data collection of employment in the tourism industry as a means to a more accurate measure of employment.

Crucial to any understanding of tourism labor is a consideration of occupations in terms of the skills and experiences required to gain employment in the sector. The problem with trying to do this centers on the diversity of the industry and the generic nature of many skills. Additionally work may take place in the informal sector and is therefore invisible. From a management and employers perspective, how jobs are structured within the organizational context is essential for human resource practices and developing careers in the industry. Occupations and pay levels are clearly important in determining the economic drivers of labor markets, and the general terms of ‘tourism labor’ or ‘tourism employment’ mask the complexities of occupations that continue to be poorly defined or understood. This is clearly problematic for those who are charged with measuring labor markets and the potential supply of and demand for labor.

Characteristics of hospitality work have been well documented (Baum, 1995; Lai & Baum, 2003; Wood, 1997). The attractiveness of the industry is identified as flexible hours, opportunities for minorities and females and the opportunity to learn new skills. The opportunity to travel, meet people, foreign language use and task variety are also identified (Szivas, Riley, & Airey, 2003). However, the many negatives include long unsociable hours and unfavorable pay and conditions (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004; Rowley et al., 2000) poor wages, shifts, sexual discrimination and narrow job functions (Choi, Woods, & Murrmann, 2000), low skilled work and lack of training opportunities (Szivas et al., 2003). Negative aspects for women have been particularly noted for example by de Kadt (1984) Faulkenberry, Coggeshall, Backman, and Backman (2000), Momsen (1994) and Pattullo (1996). The characteristics of the industry give rise to a certain image of hospitality work that has not changed over time.

### *Tourism Labor Theme 2: Human Capital Accumulation*

The second theme for discussion is human capital accumulation. Human capital can be defined as “the amount of education and experience required by a job or possessed by an individual” (Riley & Szivas, 2003, p. 448). Human capital in terms of job requirements are documented in the management literature, but what those employed in tourism bring to jobs is also of interest. Despite many of the occupations being low skilled, there is evidence to suggest that many people working in the industry are highly educated (Baum, Hearn, & Devine, 2007; Szivas, Riley, & Airey, 2003). In addition to the human capital provided by employees it is important to try and understand what people can learn from their jobs. This relates to the attractiveness of the sector and considers motivations for employment. Recent research suggests a number of different elements that motivate people to seek work

in the industry, some related to accessibility of jobs, and others to the opportunities to develop human capital.

Elements of cultural theory offer some interesting perspectives on requirements for working in certain tourism occupations. The staging of work performances is a central concept in cultural theory that has relevance to many tourism occupations. Edensor (2001) reviews the extensive body of work that has developed around tourism and performance (and tourists as performers), highlighting work by Crang (1997) who examined how the tourism product is performed by workers who are trained to enact roles that fit with the setting, and are characterized by attributes such as friendliness, eagerness to please and deference (Edensor, 2000, p. 324). Directors and stage managers, those engaged in cultural performances and cultural intermediaries are three types of workers identified as those who stage tourism in different ways (Edensor, 2001). Embedded in many of these work performances are notions of emotional labor and hostessing, which may also contain a power element. Thus, the worker employed to perform local traditional dancing as part of hotel evening entertainment at one level simply has ‘dancing’ as the human capital requirement for the job. However, cultural theory allows us to explore the much larger issues this inevitably raises.

Cultural studies have also challenged the notion of human capital. As articulated by Adkins (2005), the concept of human capital assumes that various forms of capital stick to the human subject (Adkins, 2005, p. 112). In the new economy this assumption is not necessarily met as people may not be able to accumulate property in the person as the relationships between property and people are being challenged. This raises many questions concerning culture, ownership and property, and challenges the traditional understanding of what is meant by human capital.

### *Tourism Labor Theme 3: The Economic Value of Tourism Employment*

The third tourism labor research theme is firmly grounded in economics and considers the economic value of tourism employment. The first substantial and leading body of academic research in tourism came mainly from the economists (Tribe & Airey, 2007, p. 3). As with the management focus, economic perspectives dominated the research in the 80s and it continues to remain significant today. Employment impacts, income generation and wages are well documented areas for discussion with the overriding aim of highlighting and evaluating the economic benefits that tourism can bring to destinations and host societies. A scientific and positivist paradigm again dominates. Due to the need for pragmatic policy guidance and decision making, the economics discipline provides a valuable perspective on tourism labor issues, with a common theme being tourism development and its effect on host communities and the economic impacts and benefits to host communities (Mathison & Wall, 1989; Pearce, 1989; Such & Zamora, 2006; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000). It is widely recognized that

the benefits to host communities are varied (Hammes, 1994; Huse, Gustavsen, & Almedal, 1998) and are dependent on different factors. Criticisms of the job creation standpoint are that it doesn't consider the quality of jobs or the actual employment performance (Hall, 2000; Leiper, 1999). Furthermore, it is often claimed that economic benefits are exaggerated. A critical addition and area of emerging significance to the economic perspective of perceived benefits and job creation is the notion of power relations. Those who win and those who lose from tourism development can be predicated with only a cursory glance at the political and societal context they sit within. Access to information, resources and ultimately power is a crucial determining factor in access to labor and wage rates. On the positive side, job opportunities and entrepreneurship created by the development of small businesses are a valuable income generator (Wanhill, 2000) and the entrepreneurial benefits of tourism are widely acknowledged (Domenico, 2005; Getz & Petersen, 2004; Shaw & Williams, 2004). Again, these need to be considered within the context of power relations. There is a clear need to consider other societal factors at work that influence the economic value of tourism labor and the many benefits and tradeoffs that underpin employment in tourism. A sociological enquiry focusing on cultural and political practices may be a useful addition here.

#### *Tourism Labor Theme 4: Labor Mobility*

The economic variables within labor markets influence labor mobility, which is the fourth dominant tourism labor research theme. Labor mobility operates at different spatial levels and is a consequence of many factors. Labor mobility into tourism due to economic transition has received comprehensive attention in previous research (Liu & Wall, 2005; Szivas & Riley, 1999; Vaugeois & Rollins, 2007). These are essentially behavioral studies set against economic imperatives, and have practical implications for labor market research.

The wider context of labor mobility considers tourism as a factor in human mobility, which is an area of much recent debate. If migrant labor is viewed as a form of mobility, migration for tourism employment could be an area that can develop in connection to mobility theory, thereby partly addressing the claim that tourism studies have yet to embrace higher level theories of mobilities (Coles, Duval, & Hall, 2004). The production and consumption of global labor along with goods and services is an important factor with respect to mobilities (Hall & Williams, 2002), and one that has been largely overlooked until recent years. Furthermore, if we consider the argument put forward by Coles, Hall, and Duval (2009) that the emergent study of mobilities is particularly suited to a post-disciplinary approach, tourism labor may have an important contribution to make to epistemological and methodological discussions. This approach places tourism within a wider social theory context (Hannam, 2009, p. 101).

There are social and cultural implications of mobile work forces. For example, in the case of Polish hospitality workers in the UK, Janta and Ladkin (2009) explored the social implications in terms of workers leaving existing ties and social support structures and making new social relationships in the host destination. Culturally, the workers bring with them their own specific style of working, and in the case described here, it has resulted in a positive effect for the UK hospitality industry. This positive aspect is reaffirmed by Lyon and Sulcova (2009) who explore hotel employer's perceptions of Eastern European workers. In other areas, the influx of migrant workers has resulted in such workplace diversity that traditional imagery often used in destination marketing is not a true reflection of the situation, as in the case of Ireland (Baum et al., 2007, p. 6). In many instances, the implications of the movement of large numbers of people with different backgrounds and motivations from one place to another have a profound influence on all social and cultural aspects of host societies (Kinnaird, Kothari, & Hall, 1994). Therefore, the spatial element of labor market structure has far reaching implications.

#### *Tourism Labor Theme 5: Tourism as Gendered, New Work*

The final theme identified is a recent, significant and challenging development in tourism labor research, and explores the interwoven themes of tourism as work, new forms of work and gender. The broad concept of tourism as work approaches tourism from the perspective of work and workers instead of the more commonly used view of the global economy, employment impacts, or the tourist experience. Tourism as work articulates work and labor as research subjects in their own right. According to Veijola (2009), with some notable exceptions, workers have not been properly introduced to the scholarly audience as crucial agents of expertise, experience, knowledge and know-how in the tourism industry (Veijola, 2009, p. 84). The theme of tourism as work has been published as a timely special issue of *Tourist Studies*, which comprises a multidisciplinary collection of articles that explore work, labor and knowledge and value production in the tourism industry within the context of changes in contemporary working life (Veijola, 2009, p. 84). In this special issue, papers draw from sociology, cultural geography, hospitality management, feminist theory, cultural studies and of tourism and critical consumer research to produce a complex investigation of tourism as work and labor. This removes work and labor from its traditional base and places it firmly in a multidisciplinary sphere.

Changes in contemporary working life have given rise to new forms of working practices. Of particular relevance to the overarching concept of tourism as work is the notion of 'new work' and tourism. New work represents an ideology of the flexible labor market of the new economy from the perspective of lived labor of the workers (Adkins, 2005; Adkins & Jokinen, 2008; Veijola & Jokinen, 2008, p. 167). The processes of the new economy, migration, globalization,



individualization, the implementation of new technology and neo-liberal policies combine to create notions of a flexible labor market (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008). As each of these processes impact upon tourism it can be argued that tourism occupations fit into the notions of new work. Furthermore, there is an added complexity of the blurring of boundaries between work and home which characterizes many jobs in tourism. New work appears to challenge established notions of masculinity and femininity as work-related competence by enabling feminine capabilities to engender careers and profit. Whether this has a real effect on increasingly equality between or within genders remains to be seen (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008, p. 176). Clearly tourism labor has a role to play in these debates.

The feminization of working practices is clearly related to notions of new work, as articulated by Veijola and Jokinen (2008) and Adkins and Jokinen (2008). The ‘feminization’ of work refers to the growing importance of affective labor, with three main tendencies identified in this process. First, precarious and atypical working practices that traditionally have beset female labor are now becoming common to men as well. Second, the labor markets is increasingly feminized as more women employ more masculine jobs in increasing number, and third, many workers are often required to exploit their genders in a variety of way to succeed at work (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008). Traditional notions of work are being challenged, including a core principle that work has always been a separate sphere of an individual’s life and/or identity. The traditional ‘occupation’ in areas that can be characterized as new work is likely to become more difficult to define. Indeed, ‘occupation’ may even become a redundant term.

Further issues concerning gender are evident in tourism labor research. As stated by Adkins (1995), despite the concentration of women working in tourism relatively little attention has been paid to either the position of women workers within the tourism industry or its gendered work relations. Adkins pioneering work on the conditions of women’s employment in tourist services was a bold attempt to explore the gendering of contemporary labor markets, specifically in relation to sexuality and the family. Fieldwork undertaken in two tourist establishments indicated that sexual relations were central to an understanding of the power relations between men and women. Whilst the books main contribution was to labor market theory in general and feminist labor market theory specifically, the focus on tourism and women’s employment provided an early insight into the gendered nature of tourism and ‘service’ work.

At around the same time, tourism and gender was becoming a developed body of knowledge with a number of texts devoted entirely to this subject, for example; Kinnaird et al. (1994) and Sinclair (1997). Tourism and gender has been the subject of a recent text edited by Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic, and Harris (2007), and although this work addresses wider issues than just those associated with work, the gendered nature of tourism work is a key theme within the text. In the Editors introduction, the authors are clear about why issues of gender, sexuality and embodiment matter in tourism. They argue that as

tourism employs disproportionately large numbers of women, combined with its ability to empower and advance women in terms of finding a voice, enabling independent decision making and participation in local decision making in developing countries, tourism work potentially offers many opportunities to improve the economic, social and political status of many women (Pritchard et al., 2007, p. 9). All processes constructed out of social relations inevitably result in different experiences by gender, therefore, issues of labor mobility, employment opportunity and wages are clearly gendered. Although a review of all the issues raised is beyond the scope of this paper, the point to be made is that experience of tourism work is clearly defined and experienced along gendered lines as labor mobility into tourism affects and is experienced differently according to gender. Traditionally many economic migrants were male, but increasingly both genders comprise the mobile workforce. Women have long been the dominant gender is the low skilled, more precarious and exploitative jobs, however, others have been very successful as small business operators, particularly in the hotel sector (Ghodsee, 2005). For tourism labor research, the introduction of gender studies is a notable departure from the scientific positivist paradigm, with interpretative and critical approaches playing a more dominant role.

Considerations of work and gender and the inequalities evident inevitably leads to issues of power and control. Inequalities of work, power and control are intertwined with and involve gender relations (Sinclair, 1997). As tourism related activity has become an important process of development, the social, economic and political relations which result are part of overall issues of power and control. These power relations can be articulated through race, class or gender (Kinnaird et al., 1994, p. 5). In other words, power relations are an embodied part of all tourist activity. With respect to labor mobility, this is especially apparent where labor moves from peripheral to core areas at different spatial levels, for example rural to urban migration, or from poorer counties in the South to wealthier counties in the North. Power, control and economic imperatives are crucial factors in determining labor mobility.

In summary, there is evidence of an increasing and developing body of knowledge in tourism labor research. It is too early to critically analyse this knowledge creation, but it is clear that in common with tourism studies in general, the scope, themes and boundaries of the subject are beginning to become defined. These will not remain static but will change over time. If we take the example of tourism labor market research, in the past it was concerned with issues such as education and qualifications and impacts of tourism development and training programs. Recent years have seen an emergence of studies that explore mobility, the role of women in the labor force and the expansion of the international hospitality workforce (Baum et al., 2007; Devine, Baum, Hearn, & Devine, 2007a, 2007b; Matthews & Ruhs, 2007). Gradually, the dominant management positivist paradigm is witnessing a decline with alternative approaches and methodologies gaining ground. There

are new challenges to be faced in terms of pushing the limits of the traditional approaches to exploring tourism labor.

### *The Complexities of Tourism Labor: Three Perspectives*

The previous discussions have attempted to illustrate the dominant and emerging themes in tourism labor research. It is argued that much research is embedded within a single discipline and is often narrow in focus. This is not surprising, as usually research is undertaken to fulfill a particular need and therefore comes with a preconceived set of constraints, either intentional or not. However, new approaches are emerging, with recent developments in the areas of mobility, the feminization of work and tourism as work beginning to take centre stage.

The remainder of this paper aims to show that the complexities of tourism labor lend themselves towards diverse research approaches. In order to illustrate the complexities and interconnectedness of issues concerning tourism labor, three different perspectives of tourism labor are explored. The approach adopted here is to take three linked perspectives of a tourism worker, a tourism employer and a tourism researcher and consider them through the use of a scenario. These perspectives were selected over others as they best illustrate the complexity of tourism labor. Borrowing from interpretivist approaches to human enquiry, proponents of this approach share the goal that understanding the complex world of the lived experience can be best seen from the vantage point of those who inhabit the world (Schwandt, 1998). The approach adopted here is based on the work by Veijola and Jokinen (2008), who explored the forms and relations of mobile work through the narration of two fictional stories. These two stories were derived from empirical data collected for previous research for the purpose of articulating theory in real life terms.

In this paper, the discussion is based on a fictitious scenario. The author in this instance has amalgamated and adapted stories evident from real cases and lived examples known to the author from previous research by Janta and Ladkin (2009) and Janta, Ladkin, Brown, and Lugosi (in press) exploring Polish migrant workers in the UK hospitality industry. Motivations for undertaking employment in hospitality, job search techniques, working environments and experiences and the development of networks and friendships have been adapted from diverse real stories. The stories, therefore, have been contrived to illustrate a certain point. Furthermore, it is unorthodox as the narratives do not claim necessarily to have a theoretical underpinning but are an illustration of potential elements that influence tourism labor, some of which have a theoretical basis. This may be a current limitation of the approach used. However, the point of using the three perspectives is to illustrate the interwoven facets of tourism labor as a starting point for later theoretical discussions, which are beyond the scope here. In this case, it could be argued that the perspectives are in fact a methodological tool that make the labor situations visible. As a final point to note, the scenario described is a positive one, describing an ideal type

employment situation comprised of harmonious relationships. Previously discussed issues such as power relations or exploitation are not contrived within the stories.

*The Perspective of The Tourism Worker.* The scenario here is a Polish migrant worker who is employed in the hospitality sector in the UK. She is female, in her early twenties, and is currently studying business and law at a university in Poland. She is seeking to earn money over the summer vacation, and wishes to come to the UK to improve her English language skills. She has heard from the media that it is relatively easy to come to the UK and find work in the hospitality sector, and although she feels over-qualified to undertake un-skilled work, it is really the opportunity to work abroad she is seeking, so she decides to pursue the idea. Her name is Anna.

By moving from Poland to the UK Anna is engaged in mobility. In this case, spatially and politically the mobility is international. She will be leaving social ties and networks in Poland, and will be entering into new relationships in the UK. She will bring a different cultural perspective which will have impacts in the host country both in general terms (e.g. expanding the Polish migrant community) and also at her place of employment. She will be easily identified by language differences. At work, she will bring a particular set of skills and abilities, her own human capital, and she will have an impact on the work place she has entered. The people Anna meets in the UK both at work and elsewhere will be affected by engaging with somebody from outside of the UK. Anna's reasons for seeking work in the UK are a combination of financial and human capital accumulation, in her case, the development of language skills. She is also looking forward to new challenges that living and working away from home will bring. As part of Anna's decision to come to the UK she has considered how much time she would like to spend away from home. In her case, it will be for the summer only, and therefore is temporary and short term. This gives her some security in the decision, as she thinks that even if she is homesick or doesn't like what she is doing, it will only be for a short time. To find a job in the UK she used a number of different social networking sites to gain information about vacancies and opinions of working practices. She has been reading many different things about living and working in the UK from the Internet sites, and this has affected her expectations about working in hospitality. Some of the comments are quite negative, but as this is not a serious career route for Anna, she does not really mind. However, due to a very poor image, Anna has already decided she does not want to work in hotel or restaurant kitchens, and would prefer to deal more with customers. She has also come across some unscrupulous employers from the on-line discussions, so she will avoid these if possible.

As part of her job searching and planning to come to the UK, Anna has been wondering about a number of different things. She wonders if when she finds and accepts a job if she will be given a contract. She wonders about different rates of pay, and she is not certain about UK

regulations regarding taxation and immigration policy. She is worried about not completely understanding the employment systems, and her language ability may hinder her in trying to find things out. However, labor migration to the UK has been made easy by recent Government policy, so she hopes to follow well publicized guidelines regarding this process.

After months of planning Anna finds a job in the UK. It is a small hotel in the South Coast of England. She has spoken to the owners of the hotel Clive and Margaret, and she thinks they seem very friendly. She arrives in the UK and things go as planned. She finds despite it being physically hard work, she quite likes her job, which ranges from bar work, to waitressing to receptionist duties. It gives her a range of different experiences and she gains new knowledge and skills. Importantly she knows her English is improving, as she has to use it at work and also she has made friends with a local English girl who is also a university student working during her summer holidays. Anna shares her experiences via social networking sites and therefore retains ties with her friends and family at home. Her experience is better than expected, and although sometimes she gets tired of always having to be polite and smile all the time when customers are demanding, she feels she has been lucky in her choice of job and location. Although she is only working there for three months, she feels she has begun to adjust to life in the UK, and she thinks it has given her much more confidence to do other new things. She knows she has gained many things from her experience. She has worked very long hours, but this has meant she has been able to save money. She has not yet decided if she will take this money back to Poland to help fund the new semester at University, or whether to take some time to travel and take a holiday while she is in the UK.

The scenario from Anna's perspective illustrates the many different processes and issues that occur by engaging in tourism employment. Anna has engaged in issues such as mobility, financial planning, economics, personal motivations, expectations, employment conditions and contracts, government policy, social networks, gender issues, performance, human capital accumulation and friendships. Some of these issues are structural, for example, government employment policy and labor law, others are personal, as in the case of decision making, expectations and the development of friendships. Anna's perspective shows us the diversity of elements that impact upon engaging in tourism employment from a personal view.

*The Perspective of the Tourism Employer.* To continue our scenario, the employer of Anna is a small family run hotel in the South Coast of England. It is a husband and wife team, Clive and Margaret, helped by a part-time cleaner and a full time Chef. The hotel is in a holiday destination which peaks in terms of demand from June to the end of August, and therefore requires seasonal labor. Clive and Margaret would like additional help with their busy restaurant and general hotel duties. They have found it difficult to recruit from the local labor

market in the past, and they think for this season they have to recruit from somewhere further afield. Clive has heard through his industry contacts and in the media that Polish people are coming to the UK and looking for work in hotels, and that they are very hard working. Their hotel is located in a rural area, and Margaret thinks they should offer accommodation in addition to wages to someone from overseas, especially as they might normally consider moving to a city to work. The hotel advertises on the Internet, explaining about the job requirements and pay, the hotel as a place to work, and the local environment. Clive and Margaret hope the hotel's location by the Sea will attract people to apply. Margaret has checked with the relevant authorities and has discovered it is easy to employ people from Eastern Europe under the new EU regulations, so she is more confident about pursuing this route. She is delighted to quickly receive a number of applications by email, and after talking to possible candidates on the telephone, (having decided that the level of English is an essential requirement for the job), Margaret offers the job to Anna. Margaret is a little concerned that Anna only has limited experience in hotels, but she decides she seems like an intelligent and friendly person, and Margaret thinks she will be able to pick up the skills she needs easily.

Anna arrives in the UK as planned, and she immediately gets on well with Margaret and Clive. They are really pleased with her work and also relieved that she makes friends with the student they have also employed as the part-time cleaner for the summer. They are delighted with the contribution she has made to the hotel. Clive notices that many local people have not met a Polish person before, and in the bar they enjoy chatting and learning about Anna's experiences of life in Poland. Both Clive and Margaret have found Anna to be a valuable member of staff, with their expectations regarding the hard-working nature of the Polish people being met. They are also happy that next season's labor problems may have already been resolved as Anna has agreed to return next year, and they tell her if business is good they may employ an additional temporary staff member. They have asked Anna to let them know if she knows anybody else who may want a job next summer. They feel they have been lucky to employ Anna, and although they know she does not intend to stay working in the hospitality sector, they hope she learned some new things. They both comment at the end of the season how much more confident she is with her English.

At first glance, an employer's perspective of tourism labor may appear to be largely concerned with practical or structural labor considerations. Issues such as vacancies rates, salary, conditions of employment (wages, working hours, and contracts), organizational structure, skill requirements, labor supply and legislation all play a part. This certainly is the case, however, the employers perspective described above indicates the presence of additional considerations, including seasonality, temporariness, information networks, image, social and cultural exchange, friendships, expectations and stereotypes. Clive and Margaret's perspective shows us the diversity of interacting elements that surround tourism employment.

*The Perspective of the Tourism Researcher.* The final perspective comes from a tourism labor researcher, James. He is a male post-doctoral researcher in his mid-thirties located in a British University. He is in a school of tourism and hospitality located in a Management faculty. James has a two year full time contract, and has the freedom to determine the direction of the project within the parameters of the funding, which is to explore migrant worker experiences in the tourism industry. This is quite a daunting task, and the project Supervisor has advised James in the first instance to consider three questions as a means of getting started; ‘what to research?’ ‘how to approach it?’ and ‘why undertake the research, or rather, for what purpose?’

Beginning with what to study, using the perspectives of Anna, Clive and Margaret previously described, the direction of his research into tourism labor could go in many different directions. For example, James could be interested in exploring labor markets from an economic perspective in trying to determine why Anna should wish to come to the UK to work, rather than staying in Poland. He would have to consider labor market indicators, wage rates, numbers in the workforce and economic imperatives. Another interest may be in the political structures that influence labor mobility, in other words, what is it about the UK situation that enables people like Anna to take up employment in hospitality? In this case, James may be interested to look at macro opportunities including regulations and restrictions on mobility at the host destination. Both of these approaches have a substantial amount of previous research that could help James get started. James could also take a completely different direction, and choose to follow an emerging area of research that examines the role of the Internet in job seeking and may explore social networking sites, image creation and marketing opportunities. Both Anna’s perspective as a job seeker and user of social networking sites and Clive and Margaret’s use of the Internet for recruitment could be considered here. Another possibility might be in gendered work and may look at the different roles, expectations and experience of tourism workers in this context. This would put the focus on Anna’s gendered experiences of work, or Clive and Margaret’s expectations of roles based on gender. James quickly realizes that the possibilities are endless, but ultimately it is his personal interest, research experience, data considerations and to a certain extent, the faculty he is located within, that will define his topic selection.

In terms of ‘how’, James has to engage in debates surrounding approaches and methods. Location within one discipline, a multi disciplinary approach or perhaps one that transcends disciplinary boundaries as in the case of mobilities are issues to consider. James’ stance is also part of this debate. Decisions concerning methods and analysis are also required. James knows that positivist approaches and quantitative techniques have dominated much of the research into tourism labor, but is also aware of a growing interest in ethnographic approaches and qualitative methods. He also discovers there is much support for a mixed method approach. James thinks he needs to discuss his theoretical and methodological ideas with people who are sympathetic to a variety of approaches in this early decision making stage.

Finally, James has to consider the ‘why?’ question. James has to consider if his research will aim to find solutions to practical problems, or whether it will contribute to wider societal debates or theoretical contribution through tourism labor research. It may do all of these.

In the case of James, as a tourism labor researcher, he has many choices. The three questions given to James are related, and are affected by different actors and constraints. Tribe and Airey’s (2007) five influential forces on the researchers gaze; person, position, rules, ends and ideology are beyond the scope of the discussion, but are a useful guide when considering the issues raised above. As in the previous two perspectives, James’s dilemma shows us the diversity of elements that impact upon engaging in tourism labor research.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to explore tourism labor research themes, and offers three different perspectives of tourism labor with the purpose of understanding the complexities of the subject. It reveals that tourism labor research has been influenced by a range of different imperatives and approaches, some have added to emerging debates in cultural and societal studies and others have offered a more pragmatic management approach to understanding tourism labor. An insight into the many different aspects and perspectives is perhaps what this exploration has achieved so far, offering an initial contribution towards an improved understanding of tourism labor and, perhaps more importantly, opening the door for dialogue between different perspectives.

Certainly, tourism labor research can contribute to disciplinary debates. Disciplinary developments that have taken place in wider tourism studies have been well documented by Tribe (1997) and Echtner and Jamal (1997). Tribe suggests that it may be more appropriate to consider tourism as an ‘indiscipline’ due to the many approaches to tourism studies that are not mutually exclusive (Tribe, 1997, p. 653). If we follow the advice of Tribe (1997) to abandon the search for tourism as a discipline and instead celebrate the diversity of tourism studies, this may actually be more helpful and it lends itself towards the multi-disciplinary approach. Certainly, this has taken place in the last decade. Furthermore, it could be argued that disciplines are less relevant if we are focusing on the practical issues of tourism labor. Some may argue that tourism labor research has been dominated for too long by management themes, and the real value lies in what it tells us about wider societal issues. Whatever we take from the debate, tourism labor researchers are well placed to overcome disciplinary barriers and to encompass diverse methodologies and philosophical approaches (Echtner & Jamal, 1997, p. 881). Coles et al. (2009) urge us to look beyond disciplines in tourism research, arguing that disciplines can be restrictive in terms of what researchers see, disciplines may not be capable of addressing complex contemporary problems and the development of disciplines is often too slow to keep pace with change (Coles et al., 2009, p. 87). The approach is deemed to be



particularly useful in the study of mobilities. A central advantage of a post discipline approach is it allows scholars to free themselves from intellectual shackles (Coles et al., 2009, p. 87). That said, post disciplinarity is not intended to be an intellectual ‘free-for-all’, but are framed by what preceded them and the four components of shared interest, competencies, worldview and outlook (Coles et al., 2009, p. 87).

Further evidence supporting a multi-disciplinary approach is given in the context of tourism as work (Veijola, 2009). A multi-disciplinary investigation into tourism as work and labor enriches our understanding of the complex processes that shape working lives, and can lead to new developments in understanding tourism and the tourism industry. If we refer to the three different perspectives of tourism employee, tourism employer and tourism labor researcher described earlier, it could be argued that multi-disciplinary approaches are the only way in which we can begin to unravel and understand the many facets of tourism labor.

Disciplinary context notwithstanding, tourism labor research also has a role to play in methodological debates. Tribe (1997) and Echtner and Jamal (1997) both identify the traditionally scientific foundations and methods used in tourism studies. Certainly positivist approaches and quantitative techniques have dominated much of the research into labor markets and employment. At the other end of the spectrum support for qualitative research approaches has been recently voiced by Hollinshead and Jamal (2007). They offer a commentary on the state of qualitative research in tourism studies, prompted by Phillimore and Goodson (2004) coverage of the epistemological and ontological issues. They argue that tourism as a creative field of lived experiences requires that it should be more deeply explored interpretively that requires researchers to use human intuitive.

Tourism labor researchers furthermore are acknowledging the value of using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods to enhance understanding. Recognition of the value of using both quantitative and qualitative methods combined with a pragmatist approach suggests the value of mixed methods in tourism labor research. Mixed methodologist work primarily within the pragmatist paradigm and are interested in both narrative and numeric data and their analysis (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 4). Evidence to support the use of mixed methods is provided by recent research into migration into hospitality (Baum et al., 2007; Devine et al., 2007a, 2007b). However, it is also possible to argue that holistic studies using a mixture of methods can lead to a confused methodology. Equally, innovative approaches such as the three perspectives described in this paper may not add to a theoretical contribution. This raises the question as to whether a theoretical frame is in fact always necessary to work as an effective and critical means of doing research.

In addition to illustrating the possible advantages of taking a mixed method approach, the use of the three perspectives describing the employment scenario draws attention to the construction of narrative accounts. Although narratives are not new in tourism (Ghodsee, 2005; Veijola & Jokinen, 2008) innovative qualitative approaches such

as story telling and life histories can make an important contribution to the understanding of tourism labor and workers experiences. For example, the use of narratives could be valuable in exploring tourism as gendered, new work from the perspective of the workers.

This paper concludes that a combination of viewpoints and approaches can only be of benefit to the improved understanding of tourism labor, and indeed may be essential to uncover the intricacies and complexities of the subject. It is no surprise that the management and economic perspectives dominate much of the research, but the complex societal and cultural factors cannot be ignored and the contribution that studying tourism labor can have on wider societal debates is significant. Reflecting on tourism labour research, it appears the intricacies of tourism labor afford an opportunity for multi-disciplinary boundaryless research that promotes dialogue between different perspectives. If we come full circle and return to the economic imperatives for developing tourism employment along with the management and development of human capital, then surely it would be beneficial for those working in the industry to have been exposed to multi-disciplinary educational environments. Veijola (2009) advocates that future tourism experts should be multi-disciplinary educated which would foster a greater understanding of all issues rather than to operate in silos, each to their own. It would be difficult to argue against this suggestion.

Whatever viewpoint is taken, tourism labor clearly has a role to play in future economies and societies, whilst also having the potential to make a contribution to theoretical debates. Raising an awareness of the state, complexities and importance of tourism labor is a starting point for future discourse. **A**

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