

## **IIPT Occasional Paper No. 6 (March 2006)**

### **AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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#### **Abstract**

The central role of the hospitality provider is reviewed in this paper. On the basis of research conducted into employment criteria and management attitudes to training, the author concludes that a commitment to peace, while implicit in the vision of many hospitality organisations, is not reflected in practice. She suggests a number of strategies by which the industry could enhance its recognition of and responses to cultural diversity and encourage understanding among visitors and local communities.

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# AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Diane Phillips

## Introduction

### **The transnational nature of our industry affords us the opportunity to be leaders in the struggle for and promise of peace.**

Working and managing in the hotel industry has raised my awareness of the culturally diverse industry we work in - to the point where I feel I am one element in the melting pot we call planet earth. This chapter reflects this position and prompts me to ask: Could hospitality be an industry version of the United Nations?

It never ceases to amaze me how contact with other cultures and communication can break down barriers and predispose an individual to openness and difference. From 12 years in the hospitality and tourism industry and 11 years as a hospitality educator, whenever I have been at a conference, assembling the team at a staff meeting, in weekly management briefings or dining in the staff facility, I would sit with associates and colleagues, students and social groups from far-flung places. I have often reflected on what an amazing industry we work in and what opportunities we have to widen our cultural perspectives compared to other industries. If anyone has the opportunity to make a difference, to increase and promote peaceful cultural perspectives, it is hospitality front line staff.

Globalisation has greatly reduced the ability of a country's hospitality industry to operate in isolation. Successful interaction between hospitality operators and visitors from other cultures requires receptivity, respect, and basic human kindness, all fundamental to the sustainability of hospitality and tourism. Brown (in Al Farawati, 2000) notes that tourism is now replacing war as the single human enterprise that, more than any other endeavour, mobilises people, skills and resources in today's globalised world, despite the impact of terrorism, religious fanaticism and what seem to be insurmountable cultural differences.

Hospitality locates itself as an industry which does not reflect the complexities and problems of the wider world. At an organisational level there is no reported concern about cultural purity or radical and extreme ideologies, despite the cultural diversity of the industry. There have, of course, been concerns for culture of another kind - that of the quality of the 'service culture' and the image we project. It is more important that each of us contributes to lifelong camaraderie that extends over space and time, to friendships which overcome economic, social, cultural, political and environmental obstacles. Is it possible that something so simple as 'getting to know you' will improve our intercultural attitudes?

The transnational nature of our industry from market, economic and human resource perspectives affords us the opportunity to be leaders in the struggle for and promise of peace. The hospitality industry has the potential to be the unofficial 'congress of peace', an assembly with agencies throughout the world, contributing to an improvement in communication processes and recognition of the value of cultural differences. We in the

industry need to be aware of how we can shape a culture of peace. Our responsibility is the creation of a working space that mirrors in micro forms the complex nature of cultural diversity and demonstrates the possibilities for peaceful relationships, firstly in our organisations, then locally and finally globally. We can create a milieu in which the people of the world will be able to engage in a 'congress of peace' as tourists, operators and communities simply by being a part of the peace through tourism process.

A number of authors, including Hall and O'Sullivan (1996), recognise that war and political unrest seriously disrupt tourist flows. Thus the potential for hospitality to be a major contributor to peace is not only important for ethical reasons but also for economic sustainability. For example, we need to consider our use of energy and water resources, and the contribution we can make towards ecological sustainability and reduction of the potential for conflict over access to such resources.

Reisinger (1997) argues that the success of international tourism development depends on the understanding of cultural differences. Knowledge about our visitor cultures is useful, but it is not enough to sustain the industry. There is a need to consider the cultural attributes of staff and local suppliers in our communities. Hospitality professionals must accept responsibility for constructing and sustaining thoughtful journeys that map a course for travelers through the culture of the host country. To do this we need to ask ourselves some probing questions about current practice and policy.

Stephen Lewis, the General Manager of the Four Seasons Hotel in Sydney, wholeheartedly supports this concept of cultural responsibility. He said, "I believe we have a responsibility not only to our employees and our guests but to be a 'good citizen' in Australia. We [at Four Seasons Hotels] are very proud of the way we respect cultural differences. ... We are the leaders in the hotel industry in respect to cultural diversity."

If we follow the Four Season's lead we need to begin by asking ourselves, how do we plan, design, create and nurture successful human interactions for visitors from other cultures through appropriately hospitable market-focused services? Can hospitality and the hospitality industry be a transformative tool in the search for peace? Can we be a force in the lives of individuals, groups and societies in improving international relations? Does hospitality have the potential and leadership to be a force for peace?

Intelligent and compassionate individuals worldwide have been promoting the concepts of thoughtful and sustainable cross-cultural tourism, tourism which can provide "journeys of celebration, discovery and rejuvenation" (Brown in Al Farawati, 2000). Surely, if we make an effort as a global industry the results will be multiplied. However, unless we listen, we will not realise the efforts of this work. Instead, we will be overpowered by the noise and chaos of random world events, corporate cultures, economic rationalism and concern only for the profits of mass tourism which silence these diligent voices and with them the promise of peace.

We need to consider the psychology and behaviour of our consumers, of politics and the impacts of current economic trends and perspectives, not from a narrowly ethnocentric perspective - defined by Champion et al, (2003:3) as 'the tendency to evaluate others' societies and their way of life purely by the standards and practices of one's own society' - but from a broad and open perspective. In exploring the potential for hospitality to build a culture of peace, we find ourselves at a significant moment in time. This requires a change by operators, to go beyond the current norms and take a proactive

approach to peace through the development of appropriate strategies for the hospitality industry.

The following discussion examines informal strategies which appear to have evolved in the hospitality industry. In addition, it canvasses a range of thoughts and ideas from a number of hospitality managers (with differing corporate philosophies, beliefs and values) considering how to develop harmonious relationships among people from different cultures.

Many hotel managers subscribe to the peace traveller's affirmation (the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism Credo of the Peaceful Traveller) commented on in the Jordan Times and written at the Hilton Addis Ababa by Mr. Louis D'Amore's focus group, and by the program for development and dedication of "Peace Parks" around the World.

### **Issue in focus: Ethics and wellbeing in hospitality education**

A number of commentators (eg, Morrison and O'Mahony, 2002) have suggested that there is a need for a new paradigm in hospitality education, a liberal approach which includes philosophy and ethics in the developmental framework. There is reference to calls for employees who are well trained in the practicalities of the industry, but who are also able to appreciate the historical perspective, social significance and aesthetic merit of their work.

*The overall aim ... is to provide students firstly with the opportunity to reflect on issues associated with hospitality per se ... (and) learning activities which encourage reflection, doing, valuing, feeling, behaving and relating to social others; and sensitise students to a holistic concept of hospitality (and) the manner in which it manifests itself within society ... (pp192-193).*

Gurel and Yaman (2004) note that the majority of tourism and hospitality courses in the United States include ethics, but report research findings suggesting that sensitivity to ethical issues is greater among graduates who include liberal arts subjects in their business courses. They also recognise the difficulties inherent in the imposition of perceived 'Western' values in hospitality courses run in developing countries.

Nonetheless, these and other authors regard hospitality as a means of ensuring the welfare of others and having, thereby, a 'deep-seated social significance' (p193). Indeed, Peter Ellyard, an Australian futurist, expects tourism and hospitality to be 'the wellbeing industry' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ellyard provides (in Kelly, 2004) a scenario for visitor destinations as sanctuaries for the healing and wellbeing of bodies, minds, spirits and relationships. In addition to the mainstream hospitality functions, such centres will provide the services of healthcare professionals offering a range of activities and therapies which recognise the intercultural aspects of wellbeing - yoga, tai chi chuan, tae kwon do, acupuncture, shiatsu, feldenkreis, aromatherapy, many kinds

of massage (Thai, ayurvedic, and Swedish) and various forms of healing, including Chinese herbal medicine, ayurveda, naturopathy and homeopathy. These services will be available to the local community as well as visitors and may be delivered by people from the source countries.

The wellbeing industry will be knowledge-rich and involve borrowing many of the essential components of wellbeing from other cultures. It will provide recreation in its original meaning, re-creating and renewing people.

## **Current strategies**

### **Many industry professionals interviewed believed that individuals have a responsibility to promote equity and peace.**

This research surveyed 60 Australian-based front-line staff from 55 hospitality organisations and the results reflect the current strategies of hospitality management. These are reported below, with some indications of shortcomings and suggestions for improvement with respect to an emphasis on the pursuit of peace and harmony in intercultural relations. Future research will build on the results to date.

#### ***Strategy 1: A world traveller or a well-travelled worker***

The majority of the hospitality and tourism operators interviewed stated that their employees should travel more. The main reason provided was that management had concerns about Australia's isolation as a continent with its people insulated from cultural diversity. Managers surveyed also stated that travel is a means of personal enrichment and is likely to be reflected in the quality of encounters between people from different societies, an important consideration in the employment of industry personnel. Travel for hospitality personnel is therefore the first of the informal strategies identified in these discussions, suggesting that for the interviewees, the contact theory (that travel expands a person's mind about people and culture) is more than a platitude.

This is a positive approach, and as an industry we employ a great many of the travelling 'human capital' the world has to offer. However, while there are managers who value well-travelled staff because of their contribution to the effectiveness of the operation, there are many staff who travel but never come to appreciate the importance of cultural difference. So what is the potential for changing a person's values through travel and contact with visitors from other cultures?

#### ***Strategy 2: On being friendly and 'nice' to other people***

Strong opinions emerged about the power of Australian hospitality employees and the importance of friendliness and being 'nice' to other people. Managers agreed that being friendly and nice supports communication and is vital to the success of any business.

However, is this strategy again more of an economic than an ethical one? Is this more about revenue generation than cultural consideration? Furthermore, does being nice demonstrate an individual's appreciation of cultural difference and give us as individuals a deeper understanding? Do we feel greater respect for other nationalities and cultures because of our ability to be nice? Is it a rational assumption that all people of the world could enjoy positive relationships without actually understanding each other's cultures? Will there be more willingness to accept and understand other cultures if people are nice? Is it the case that being friendly and nice to others is desirable but not necessarily a basis for corporations or industries to build on in the pursuit of peace?

### ***Strategy 3: The inactivity of belief in personal values***

According to Bacchi (1999:10), "values, assumptions and presuppositions" are how one evaluates the prospects for peace through tourism. The results will depend on how one reflects on our values and beliefs. In the interviews conducted, two issues emerged with respect to values and their impacts: firstly, the interpretation of hospitality as a force for peace, and secondly, the impacts of corporate values and beliefs on peace tourism.

Many industry professionals interviewed believed that individuals have a responsibility to promote equity and peace in our culturally diverse world. However, there appears to be a distinct deficit in recognition by managers of the impacts of personal values on an organisation. In the transcriptions of the interviews there were numerous references to 'company culture and values', and this was reinforced through the analysis of mission statements and other reference to organisation values. But when managers were asked if they considered peoples' values when employing, the response was, "No, we employ on personality." Does a person's personality reflect their innermost values and beliefs?

There is a contradiction in this situation. On one hand the individual may be required to participate in processes significant for intercultural harmony while, on the other, the individual's personal values are not taken into consideration for employment, regardless of where they will sit within the business framework.

In addition, hospitality managers did not appear to have a clear understanding of what is meant by the terms 'values' and 'beliefs', with many taking a neutral stance involving neither rejection nor acceptance. A desire for peace, however, is more positive, and may be reflected in personal inclinations beyond tolerance to compassion, goodwill, a sense of justice and respect (Kelly, 2003).

These areas should be considered when recruiting and employing staff. Managers should re-strategise to include interview questions which expose, for example, an individual's ethnocentric perspectives. This approach does not preclude a strong focus on identifying the right person to match the company's culture and meet its standards with respect to the conduct of its business.

### ***Strategy 4: Staff exchanges***

Leaders in the hospitality industry emphasise the importance of developing harmonious relationships in the industry and in our workspaces. Strategies such as staff exchanges among properties around the world are a commonly accepted practice, used mainly to

develop potential senior management. This illustrates that corporations and chains are aware of the need for cultural awareness at management level, and according to senior management comments, the incorporation of cultural diversity in management teams breaks down barriers and creates unity. However, despite this recognition, there is no policy to promote and support it at the lower levels of staffing.

### ***Strategy 5: Employing from different cultures***

Many of the managers interviewed noted that one way of encouraging harmonious relationships amongst different cultures is to employ people from different cultures in helping staff learn the fundamentals of cultures and languages of the main segments in the organisation's market mix - Spanish, Korean, Mandarin and Cantonese, with a current emphasis on Japanese. In this approach each cultural group educates the others about their particular culture.

Again, however, while some chains and properties recognise the potential value of this strategy, all those interviewed agreed that there has been insufficient action to date to implement this strategy or to achieve any significant measurement of staff awareness of visiting cultures. It is noted by management that such a training process is not documented in any staff training or induction procedures or manuals.

### ***Strategy 6: Policy inaction***

At this point in the discussion there is a question which must be asked. Why do some issues receive attention as worthwhile in government, industry or organisation policies while others do not rate a mention? As Bacchi (1999:3) noted, "[W]e need to reflect upon why certain reform responses get taken up and why others get dismissed." In many cases there is purposeful inaction, as if acting on an issue is simply inappropriate.

From the empirical research conducted using questionnaires, observations and interviews it appears there has been limited thought put into how corporate policy impacts on cultural diversity issues and the concept of peace tourism. There are indeed policies which are compliant with anti-discrimination legislation. However, does being a multicultural nation or organisation mean we are not incapable of insensitivity? Does this also mean that denying a need for such policy will increase or decrease acceptance of cultural difference?

Most managers interviewed concurred with the statement, "We do not need to consider multicultural issues." There is a view that their organisations are multicultural, due to the frequency and volume of cultural diversity dealt with on a daily basis. Clive Scott, General Manager of the Sofitel (Wentworth Hotel), Sydney, in his interview, highlights this issue of awareness and diversity. "I believe we are an international, culturally diverse industry. ...I don't think anybody has stood up and said as an industry we could be waving the flag a little bit more on cultural diversity and highlighting the fact that we are diverse."

There is indeed a positive approach to understanding different cultures. Bearing this in mind, organisations in the future will need to utilise staff in creative training programs where they educate each other about their culture, language, religions and history.

Organisations should be applying this, regardless of market mix, star rating or employee background.

### ***Strategy 7: Blind spots in a culturally diverse industry***

Another major finding of the research concerns a multitude of what might be termed blind spots. Statements like “We are a culturally diverse nation; of course we understand other cultures!” suggest the creation of one of these blind spots. Blind obedience by many managers is a noticeable characteristic where cultural diversity and peace through tourism are concerned. The gaps are generated through a corporate policy perspective, especially where there is a corporate headquarters geographically divorced from the localities of operations. There is likely to be a centralised generic policy or strategy to handle issues of cultural diversity which is not directly relevant to a specific location.

These blind spots need to be identified within the hospitality industry and discussed in relation to the industry's potential to be the ‘congress for peace’. Gough (2002:4) comments: “My own view of it is that by sustaining the conversations through which we illuminate each other's blind spots and blank spots... we might be able to learn enough about ignorance for a particular people in particular situations to use it to make sense...of research”. On the positive side, there are some organisations that enter into the heroics of localising corporate policy and challenging corporate norms, and this is apparent in their considerate manner, in their planning for and behaviour towards visitors from other cultures, and in the development of harmony in the workplace.

### ***Strategy 8: Hospitality involvement in peace projects***

The research findings suggest that there is innocent ignorance rather than a reluctance to get involved in peace projects. From the interviews and surveys conducted not one property participated in peace projects in 2003. Operators had low levels of awareness of the strength and impact of such projects on staff and customers. It is suggested here that by being more involved in local and global peace projects, destination organisations and communities would acquire a deeper understanding of visitor cultures and aspirations.

#### **Case Study: Food**

The UNESCO Declaration of Cultural Rights (1996) regards culture references as a tool “through which individuals or groups define and express themselves and by which they wish to be recognised.” Food is one cultural reference of which some traditional element remains as a constant example of heritage and shared meaning.

As noted, "... eating is never just eating; there are ways of eating, so that, for example, what might be seen to be the same food will have different meaning depending on the social relations, social space and rituals" (Game and Metcalf, 1999:126). “Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family and community relationship. Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food ... (and) food is both a scholarly concern and a real life concern” (Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997:2).

Food has the ability to convey the meaning of a culture through its symbiotic nature.

"(E)veryone eats and many people cook; the meanings attached to food speak to many more" (Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997:2). Food and its cultural identity are immersed in everyday practice, food is a symbol of a way of life, that anyone can relate to and it contains a "wealth of ideological meanings" (Weismantel, 1988:7-8, in Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997:2). "Scholars have noted how food presents a rich symbolic alphabet through its diversity of colour, texture, smell, and taste; its ability to be elaborated and confined in infinite ways; it's how food communicates" (Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997:2).

It is undeniable that food touches everyone, every day, even if we go without food. It is the foundation of every country's economy and is a central piece in the political strategy of states and in the humble dwellings we call our homes. Food can convey a sense of power due to its symbolic significance. Food and culture are deeply entwined in every country and region. Even religions have their own culinary traditions. In a world of globalizing forces, increasingly controlled by corporate commands, transnational organisations, impersonal governing bodies and bureaucratic regulatory regimes, the most resistant vestige of cultural identity may be food.

To sustain hospitality operations, we need to recognise the nature of food and its symbiotic relationship with culture. People of any culture will recognise food and its underpinning cultural identity and the links that can be forged through the manner in which the food is consumed.

Many operators stated that their guests wanted to have an Australian experience with respect to food and accommodation. However, the majority of operators had only partial awareness of the views visitors had of our culture through its food. It is difficult to understand culture through food if you cannot read the menu, but once the food is consumed the visitor can use this experience to shape an opinion about the host culture.

The translation of menu items into various languages is still limited, and people from non-English speaking cultures are still expected to be able to read English, whereas most English speakers automatically expect that in all non-English speaking countries menus will be written in English. Some hotels are providing technology based telephone systems that will translate any query, menu order or request from one language to another at a cost to the guest but in general there are low levels of awareness of and empathy for the non-English speaker.

Menus, beverage lists and room service menus are provided for inbound Japanese tourists groups in their own language. However, many managers, in both food and beverage and accommodation sectors, stated they were reliant on tour guides for guest relations with most non-English speaking inbound groups. Many apartment-based properties or hotels have no food and beverage outlets. Outsourced food and beverage services for conferences or banquets use menus mainly written in English. The reason most commonly provided for English-only menus is that it is not 'cost effective' for operators to provide translations into many languages. It appears that, as an industry, we are not aware of the benefits food can provide and how inextricably linked food is to culture. It has the ability, through the basic need we all have for nourishment, to constitute a tool for peace.

***Strategy 9: Hospitality operational staff and their role as culture brokers.***

**Front line employees have a critical role to play in contributing to harmonious relations involving people from different cultures.**

As hospitality organisations we can gain additional benefits from our employees' daily roles as cultural brokers. Front line employees that connect with the guest have a critical role to play in contributing to harmonious relations involving people from different cultures. However, the information that is provided to front line employees does not include ethnicity or other visitor culture references. Many floor staff feel that they receive minimal information on market segments from management. If information is power, it is vital for staff to receive information to increase their awareness and develop deeper understanding of visitor cultures. While the questionnaire results revealed that front office employees appear to be more informed on visiting cultures than other operational departments, most respondents noted that they are provided with negligible information on the market mix of the organisation, no training in dealing with cultural diversity, and no or only very basic language skills.

Table 1 displays the rating of operational positions from a questionnaire distributed to 60 front line staff and management from 55 hotels, tourism providers and resorts with regard to each operational position's ability to be a cultural broker. All analysis was completed using a rating scale of 1(lowest) to 10 (highest). As culture brokers, Guest Services Agents rated the highest with 79.5%, and the position of Concierge rated the second highest with 77%. Surprisingly management rated third along with the position of porter at 70%. Property or tour guides/guest relations and public relations rated 68%, 11.5% lower than front desk positions. Food and beverage service positions rated 55% across the range of job roles. Housekeeping and retails assistants came lowest with 40% and 35% respectively.

**Table 1: Rating the impact of operational positions as cultural brokers**

<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Operations Position</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
79.5%	Guest Services Agent	1
77%	The Concierge	2
70%	Porter	3
70%	Management Any Level	3
68%	Property or Tour Guides/Guest Service/Public relations	4
55%	Food & Beverage Attendant	5
55%	Room Service Attendant	5

40%	Housekeeping	6
35%	Kiosk/Gift Store	7

***Strategy 10: Representations and language***

Content analysis was conducted with respect to the terminology used in internal and external printed mission and vision statements, policy, procedural and marketing materials. The table below notes the usage frequency and ranking of relevant terms identified by Kelly (2003) in the context of peace through tourism. The highest rating at 45% was given to the term 'respect'. However, in general overall there was a low usage of these terms in the hospitality and tourism industry.

**Table 2: Use of peace-related terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Frequency of usage (%)</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Respect	45%	1
Goodwill	40%	2
Tolerance	40%	2
Equality	40%	2
Anti-discrimination	40%	2
Sympathy	40%	2
Empathy	35%	3
Fairness	35%	3
Dignity	30%	4
Compassion	25%	5
Sense of Justice	25%	5

***Strategy 11: Service interaction and the competitive edge***

Discussions with professional operators about the attention paid to cultural differences when designing services raised many issues. Do we design services with peace and a strong awareness of cultural diversity in mind? Given that a great deal of experience has gone into designing services to suit the clientele who are from varied backgrounds, it is time to concentrate on those who are depended upon to deliver this service.

With respect to the peace proposition, “One of the core contributors for ensuring positive outcomes is the quality of service provided at the destination” (Tomljenovic and Faulkner, 2001:31). Are we aware that hospitality could be a great force for peace through the thoughtful design of services? Are we sufficiently passionate about designing services as a host culture with this concept as a driving force in the hospitality industry? If hospitality organisations are to promote the concept of being truly hospitable, and thereby acquiring a distinctive competitive edge (Kelly, 2003), a concerted effort to design services for visitor cultures and the use of rigorous service operations models will result in a more considered approach.

Support for this view came from a young innovative manager Daniel Kingston at the “W” hotel in Woolloomooloo, Sydney.

*The 'W' Hotel is designed to complement the local community as well as involving them ...(and) it makes for a better working relationship, one where our front line staff has the most important role ... I think in respect to cultural diversity that hospitality can contribute on a larger scale ... You need to promote to your staff the importance of being culturally sensitive.*

It is true that paying attention to cultural difference may mean a distinctive level of service. However, respecting cultural difference is a completely different basis on which to design services. Are employees made aware of the service and design issues required when focusing on cultural sensitivity without the support of policy or setting of standards? How does an international corporation without a policy about cultural diversity provide purposeful, considerate service?

### ***Strategy 12: Induction and Training in a Culturally Diverse World***

'Culture of peace through tourism' programs in the hospitality workplace would focus on international understanding that fosters awareness amongst staff and management and an ability to resolve intercultural conflicts. Global hospitality organisations can play a part in this process, but we also need to dedicate ourselves to protecting our own social and cultural environments. Local governments, community groups and hospitality employees, among others, should see themselves as hosts to visitors from other societies.

The results from the research conducted suggest that 27% of hospitality organisations include cultural diversity in their new employee induction programs. Another 27% state they only discuss these issues when they induct new employees from non-local cultural backgrounds. The other 46% of organisations make no attempt to discuss cultural diversity issues with new staff. The majority of respondents stated they prefer to employ staff from the current market segments in the business.

As an industry, if we are to capture the potential for peace we need to adjust attitudes towards peace tourism. Hospitality operators, for the most part, recognise that each of us has our own beliefs and that everyone is equal. This raises the question of how employees can be really aware of the promise hospitality has for peace if there is little or no focus through lack of policy initiatives, or from limited development of cultural awareness in induction and training programs. If these issues are not identified and raised at induction and training programs, there is minimal opportunity for recognition of hospitality as an advocate for peace. Change will only occur when educational components are incorporated into both employee and traveller experiences.

Where no cultural awareness program is conducted, it could mean that some operators have a blind spot. Why would an organisation that claims to promote equality among and understanding about different cultures ignore this very important element? Is it because these organisations have an in-built culture which must be protected as it is synonymous with their reputation and brand?

Respondents also indicated that fewer than 10% of properties were involved in the education of their local community in relation to cultural diversity. 21% felt they were involved in the protection of cultural resources, a figure which was slightly higher when the properties were heritage listed. 75% percent of respondents noted they were never involved with indigenous organisations, while 20% have been involved only through secondary sources. Only 50 % of respondents said they record staff and customer cultural exchanges in daily operational reports.

There is a voice arguing that induction and training are the way to build harmonious relationships among employees from different culture groups. This process brings people from different cultures together so that they can socialise with each other and understand the importance of respecting cultural differences. From the research conducted it is apparent that many organisations very rarely emphasise the importance of harmonious relationships among employees from different cultures during the induction. Managers base their induction and training on the concept that “everybody understands what a multicultural society looks like” and that “we already understand and appreciate cultural difference.”

## **Conclusion**

### **As an industry we have yet to achieve an acceptable level of understanding.**

The objective of this research was to determine the level of awareness that hospitality managers and employees have of cultural diversity in the workplace, and how these groups can contribute to cultural harmony and peace through tourism in the future. The results would strongly suggest that as an industry we have yet to achieve an acceptable level of understanding.

The approach used in accommodating cultural diversity appears to be primarily market oriented. Concern about cultural differences seems to be somewhat superficial despite recognition that developing a harmonious relationship among employees from different cultural background is a complex and largely neglected task. There is need for a higher level of awareness of cultural diversity issues and development of approaches that will match the circumstances of specific locations. The evidence indicates that the industry in general has not attempted to revise approaches it currently considers effective in meeting changing labour market needs in a culturally diverse industry and world.

The qualitative analysis also suggests that rather than demonstrating understanding of cultural diversity, the responses reveal more about corporate culture and the impacts of personal values. Induction and training are ways of building harmonious relationships among employees from different culture groups, but managers need a more consistent policy approach to the concept of peace through tourism.

Seven main themes have been determined in this research.

1. Addressing the problem of values and beliefs.
2. Locating blindspots: the “We are already culturally diverse” attitude.
3. The importance of food as a tool for peace
4. Service design and interaction for peace.
5. Induction and training for sustainability.

6. Front line staff as cultural brokers.
7. Changing a market oriented approach.

The opportunity to make a difference, to increase and promote peaceful cultural perspectives and to be a transformative tool in the search for peace is a serious responsibility for the hospitality industry, and one which may underpin the success of international tourism in the future. Successful interaction between hospitality operators and visitors from other cultures requires more than receptivity and basic human kindness. Changing corporate values and beliefs, and encouraging the hospitality industry to become leaders in developing harmonious relationships is a challenge for the future.

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### **Action Agenda: Adelaide Greeters and the ‘Ask About Adelaide’ Program\***

'Greeters' programs are clearly one way of providing hospitality in its broader sense and ensuring that visitors form positive first impressions of a destination and enjoy contact with residents in circumstances which help relieve anxieties and initiate friendly relationships. These, and similar programs such as 'City Ambassadors', illustrate the potential for members of a community to make a global contribution while acting at the local level.

Success for us is a smile, a 'thank you', or comments such as:

- "We felt totally welcome in your city";
- "It was like having friends in the neighbourhood";
- "They made our stay here so enjoyable"; or
- "More volunteers like the two we met; they were wonderful."

The idea for the 'Adelaide Greeters' first saw the light of day on a tram trip to the Adelaide beachside suburb of Glenelg in 1996. Mrs Gloria Bristow and her husband encountered a Japanese couple who were having difficulty with our language and currency during the journey. They interceded, helped them, and spent part of the day escorting them around the sights of Glenelg.

Mrs Bristow thought it would be very good to have a service that would meet and welcome visitors to Adelaide and provide them with information to assist them to get the most out of their visit. She held a meeting in her local community, and more than 50 volunteers put up their hands to participate in the service.

But (and isn't there always a 'but'?) she was unable to raise any support from a number of government departments, councils or businesses contacted. She periodically raised the idea of the 'Adelaide Greeters' for a further four years without success.

However, in November 2000, Mrs Bristow attended a course at the newly opened Community Centre in North Adelaide, funded by the Adelaide City Council. She approached the Centre Coordinator with her idea. The Coordinator and the Committee recognised the value of the project, both for the community and for visitors to the State, and agreed to support its establishment.

The Community Centre provided funding for basic essentials - a telephone, a computer, an account with an Internet Service Provider, development of a web page, office space and the usual consumables. Several meetings were held at the Centre to find

participants to establish the service, and in February 2001 Mike Dawson agreed to undertake the role of coordinator.

Contact was made with two existing services that operated in a similar manner, the Big Apple Greeters in New York and the Melbourne Greeter Service in Australia. Information and advice were sought from both, and ongoing contact was established. In 2002 the City of Chicago launched its Greeter service and was added to our resource list.

Further support came from the Adelaide Passenger Transport Board, which now provides each of our volunteers with a day trip ticket to attend their appointments, and accompany their visitors. The manager of a business school in Adelaide volunteered to design a Microsoft Access database that allows us to record our volunteer and visitor details, and provides a tool for matching visitor to Greeter by a common language or interest. Numerous volunteers provided their time during the development stage, including one who operates his own printing business and was able to design our brochure for us. The program was officially launched on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2001 by the State Minister for Transport, who enabled the program to obtain funding for its first full colour brochure.

Our program aims to provide visitors with a 'friend' in the city, someone who will assist them to become familiar with the city and its ways, and where the various attractions are. We currently have 30 volunteers with a range of backgrounds, experiences and ages. More than half speak a language other than English, including French, German, Spanish, Swedish and Indonesian. There are two who speak Esperanto.

Visitors can be from overseas, interstate or intrastate. Our first visitor, in February 2002, was a student from Denver Colorado, who was visiting to undertake one semester of her teaching degree course at Adelaide University. Since then the number of appointments has been growing, with international visitors from the USA, Canada, Scotland, France, New Zealand, and England.

During this period the Adelaide City Council developed a number of Visitor Information services under the banner of 'Ask About Adelaide'. This Council initiative, launched in January 2002, has proved very popular, with the 50 two-person teams of City Guides in their distinctive green uniforms each being asked for information or help up to 20 times a day - 100,000 face to face contacts in a year. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 the 'Adelaide Greeters' moved its base of operations to the offices of the Adelaide City Council, becoming part of 'Ask About Adelaide'.

The program works well with the service provided by volunteers in the centrally located Visitor Information Centre. Since the Centre commenced operations in 1994, it has become a major community and tourism information outlet in the city, assisting visitors and locals with details on current events and major attractions in Adelaide and South Australia. The volunteer staff deals directly with over 7000 enquiries per month with more than 20000 visitors entering the booth each month to collect community and tourism information. It is also used by the Adelaide Greeters as the major venue for meeting their visitors.

The City Guides provide a mobile information service for visitors and residents. They also provide a positive and highly visible Council presence on the street and by lending a hand, ensure that a visitor's Adelaide experience is an enjoyable one. Ultimately, City Guides are dedicated to enhancing Adelaide's local and international reputation as a friendly, safe, welcoming, culturally diverse, exciting and vibrant City which is an ideal

jumping off point to the Outback and the hundreds of tourism destinations the State has to offer.

The City Guides will be found roving the City centre, at the airport and at many major events run in the City. The City Guides Adelaide Airport commitment is on Sunday mornings. They meet and greet passengers at the International Terminal with a friendly smile and warm welcome - a wonderful way to set the tone for the visitor's stay in Adelaide.

City Guides are all volunteers who have been selected because of their approachable, friendly nature and their extensive local knowledge. Before joining the program all are required to undertake training in visitor and tourist information, safety awareness, customer service and conflict resolution. In addition, they are regularly updated on current events. Tourism students from the Adelaide TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Centre for Tourism and International Languages are also supporting the program and have been rostered to work in the Visitor Information Centre.

City Guides also act as extra eyes for the Council, directly reporting faulty street lighting, required streets repairs, blocked drains, graffiti and any opportunity to improve Adelaide, while providing a helping hand to visitors and residents.

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