

**Workplace sexual harassment: exploring the experience of tour leaders in
an Asian context**

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Introduction

One of the key factors in successful human resource management is the belief that every employee can make a significant contribution to the development of an organisation. To achieve this, employers need to provide a safe and supportive working environment where employees, among other things, are free to undertake their duties without the pressures and distress that can arise as a result of sexual harassment (Goldsmith et al., 1997). However, the diverse nature of the hospitality/tourism industry makes it difficult for most companies to implement effective equal rights procedures (Goldsmith et al., 1997; Ineson et al, 2013), particularly in this sensitive area. Therefore, employers need effective policies and measures to guarantee that their employees can work with confidence in an environment that is safe and supportive.

Workplace sexual harassment is an issue that has gained increasing prominence in recent years. Owing to factors such as long working hours, night shifts, the prevalence of alcohol and the intimacy of “hospitality service”, the hospitality/tourism industry is particularly susceptible to the problem of sexual harassment (Davis, 1998; Poulston, 2008b; Yagil, 2008). Sexual harassment can have numerous negative effects, including poor working relationships, monetary loss (Gutek, 1985; Schneider et al., 1997), employee dissatisfaction, loss of attachment to the organisation (Boyd, 2002; Gettman & Gelfand, 2007) and increased employee turnover intentions (Burke, 1995; Laband & Lentz, 1998). At an organisational level, high turnover and labour costs are recognised human resource management challenges in the hospitality/tourism industry and, therefore, it is critical for the industry to pay attention to the problem of sexual harassment. However, protecting associates from unwanted sexual attention, whether from colleagues, managers or customers, is also about an employer’s duty of care for their staff and touches on a range of associated equal opportunities and wider ethical concerns (Goldsmith et al., 1997).

The fast economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region has resulted in an increase in travel related activities. Previous studies indicate that group package tours are the most common mode of travel for outbound tourists in many Asian countries (Wang et al., 2002; Wong & Wang, 2009). Tourists, embarking on such packages, are generally supported by tour leaders who guide the groups through a range of experiences and services within the itinerary. As the

tour leaders effectively act as the interface between the travel agent and the group participants, their performances can directly affect customer satisfaction and the reputation of the travel organisation (Wang et al., 2004). Furthermore, due to the service-oriented nature of their work and the fact that they have the opportunity to work with numerous people in various settings, tour leaders face situations that can expose them to the dangers of sexual harassment.

Previous studies on sexual harassment in the tourism industry have been based on a marketing perspective and are set in Western contexts (Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Kozak, 2007). Moreover, limited studies within the tourism context have examined the experiences of sexual harassment by the specific group category of employees, namely tour leaders. Tour leaders are one of the main components of the tourism industry workforce and are expensive to train in terms of both time/experience accumulation and financial investment. Notwithstanding this investment, the risks associated with sexual harassment in the workplace and its effects on the job satisfaction and turnover of tour leaders remain largely ignored and evidence as to the scale of the problem is under-researched and largely unknown.

The Asian context presents a particular challenge with regard to this sensitive area. A number of studies have noted the notion of “face” in relation to sensitive behavior as a dominant cultural value in Asia (Agrusa et al., 2002; Coats et al., 2004). Asians, especially the Chinese, prefer to preserve face even in conflicting circumstances to maintain harmony and avoid exposing themselves, their colleagues and their customers to possible shame or ridicule. In addition, problems associated with largely subjective definitions of sexual harassment have contributed to limited research attention being paid to these problem in the hospitality/tourism industry. Our study focuses on Taiwan as a research setting, where these issues are in especially sharp focus. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap and to draw attention to the human resource management issue of sexual harassment in the tourism industry in Taiwan.

The purpose of the study is to investigate sexual harassment among tour leaders in Taiwan. The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate tour leaders’ experiences of sexual harassment behavior at work;
2. To investigate tour leaders’ awareness of the organisational policies/regulations relating to sexual harassment in the workplace.

This paper is organised as follows: the next section reviews the extant literature on sexual harassment. Then presents the methodology and reports the findings of this study. The final section discusses the research findings, assesses their implications and notes the limitations of the study.

Literature Review

This section reviews definitions of sexual harassment; the cultural, legal and regulatory context of sexual harassment in Taiwan and the reasons for and consequences of sexual harassment in the hospitality/tourism industry. Insofar as the literature enables, this review also addresses the nature of work of tour leaders in relation to the incidence of sexual harassment and organisational policies on sexual harassment.

Definitions of sexual harassment

There are a multitude of definitions of sexual harassment, which cross various disciplines including psychology, management, sociology and law (Samuels, 2003). Sexual harassment includes behavior that ranges from sexually suggestive remarks to sexual assaults. According to the definition of the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where submission is explicitly or implicitly demanded as a term or condition of employment. Furthermore, where submission or rejection is used as the basis for employment decisions and/or where the purpose of the conduct is to interfere with an individual's work performance or create an intimidating or offensive workplace (Gilbert, Guerrier, & Guy, 1998; EEOC, 2012).

Sexual harassment as a concept may be seen to be culturally and contextually constructed, there are consequent varied interpretations of sexual harassment and there may not always be general agreement as to whether a particular act constitutes sexual harassment (Schneider & Phillips, 1997). Gilbert et al. (1998) point out that individuals have varying perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment and that what is considered to be sexual harassment by one may be viewed as harmless by another. As an example, studies have found that while flight attendants commonly experience verbal and physical forms of harassment, they tend not to regard themselves as victims of sexual harassment (Froberg, 1990, as cited in Yagil, 2008). This also occurs in the hotel and restaurant industries where employees often

disregard incidents of what others might construe to be sexual harassment as they consider them to be common or normal in that particular workplace (Coats et al., 2004; Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995; Giuffre & Williams, 1994).

There are five categories of sexual harassment as explained by Fitzgerald et al (1988). First, *Gender harassment* refers to general sexist remarks or jokes aimed to convey insulting, degrading, or sexist attitude about another person. Second, *Seductive behavior* refers to inappropriate attempts to initiate romantic or sexual relations with another person. Third, *Sexual bribery* refers to solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior (e.g., dating) by promise of rewards. Fourth, *Sexual coercion* refers to forcing of sexual activity, or other sex-linked behavior under threat of punishment. Finally, *Sexual assault* refers to attempts to fondle, touch, kiss or grab.

Many employees in the hospitality/tourism industry also accept sexual harassment as "part of the job" and are conditioned to deny the existence of such incidents (Yagil, 2008). This denial may be a result of the patience and tolerance requirement of service-oriented industries and the lack of clearly articulated and supportive policies protecting employees from sexual harassment. According to Kensbock, Bailey, Jennings and Patiar (2015), the existence of power dynamic between the hospitality/tourism employees and the guest, increases the vulnerability of low power employees to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment regulations in Taiwan

The problem of sexual harassment in society begins to attract attention in Taiwan from the early 1990s. On May 22, 1994, a large-scale parade was staged by a number of women's rights groups in Taipei to protest about sexual harassment against women and to show their discontent with government inaction relating to this social problem. The enactment of the Gender Equality in Employment Act was finally in place in 2002. Due to the pressure of local women's rights groups, a new chapter was added in the so-called "consolidated" and "co-ordinated" versions of the bill and sexual harassment at work was treated as a form of sex discrimination in employment (Chiao, 2003).

Taiwan is a conservative society and the address to sexual harassment issue finally take place in 2006 when the Taiwanese government introduced the first laws to address sexual harassment in the workplace. Here, the legal definition of sexual harassment is mostly translated directly from the US sexual harassment legislation, which classifies sexual harassment as either quid pro quo or the presence of a hostile environment (Lin, 2006). Quid

pro quo occurs when getting or keeping a job is conditional on the acceptance of sexual advances, sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature; which are the most obvious forms of harassment. A hostile work environment occurs where unreasonable workplace conduct interferes with an employee's tangible benefits (Enghagen, 1996).

According to the 2006 legislation, government agencies, companies and schools in Taiwan are required to establish committees and rules on sexual harassment and provide channels for reporting violations. Findings from an annual survey on equal employment opportunities conducted by the Council of Labour Affairs in 2010, revealed about 80% of companies provide sexual harassment prevention policies and around 60% have set up channels for reporting violations. The survey also found that 6% of female and 1% of male employees experience sexual harassment in the workplace (Council of Labour Affairs, 2011). However, these levels of sexual harassment may be under-estimated because companies' hierarchies and power imbalances can also make victims feel they have no alternative but to keep sexual harassment to themselves (Wang, 2006). The Chinese cultural values related to "interdependence, harmony, and cooperation" may result in the avoidance of acknowledging or complaining to an authority about sexual harassment (Zimbardo, 2007). The imbalance of power in the workplace; the traditional Chinese cultural attitudes towards women and the lack of policies and education on sexual harassment in the workplace make it even harder to address the issue in a collectivist society such as Taiwan.

Sexual harassment in the hospitality/tourism industry

It is widely recognised that sexual harassment is pervasive in the service industry, in particular the hospitality/tourism industry, due to the ambiguity of the interactions during service delivery and the unusual working hours and working conditions (Mkono, 2010). Factors such as hierarchical organisational structures in the service industry, the low job status of service employees, levels of social interaction between employees of all levels, job expectations and the sexualised image that some organisations wish to promote can make the employees within the industry more vulnerable to harassment (Albano & Kleiner, 2007).

Furthermore, as Eller (1990a) points out, much of the hospitality/tourism industry involves social environments where employees are expected to satisfy the needs of guests. Accordingly, the boundary between service and entertainment may be misunderstood or misinterpreted, consequently leading to inappropriate expectations of guests and staff (Eller,

1990a). According to a recent survey findings from the Hong Kong based Equal Opportunities Commission to flight attendants working for Cathay Pacific, British Airways, United Airlines and other carriers working in partnership with the Hong Kong Flight Attendants Alliance, more than one fourth of all air hosts and hostesses indicated that they had been sexually harassed while on duty in flight over the past 12 months, while nearly half had witnessed or heard about one of their colleagues being sexually harassed. The survey results generated only a 4% response rate and the Commission claimed that such low response rate might be attributed to the fact that sexual harassment is an embarrassing subject to discuss (HKEOC, 2014).

The direct and indirect costs of sexual harassment in hospitality and tourism organisations have been discussed by several researchers. Albano and Kleiner (2007) suggest that low morale, poor workplace relationships, an unstable workforce and possible litigation are possible consequences of sexual harassment in the workplace. Gilbert et al. (1998) also note that sexual harassment can result in high turnover, poor working relationships and economic costs. Similarly, the costs can be in the form of monetary loss, legal costs, increased sick days, staff resignations, increased costs of hiring and training new staff, negative publicity, reduced staff productivity and low staff morale (Poulston, 2008b).

Tour Leaders and the nature of their work

In many Asian countries, including Taiwan, group package tours (GPT) are the most common mode of outbound tourism (Lin et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2000). In this context, the level and quality of service is one of the most important contributors to customer satisfaction and business success. As frontline employees, tour leaders play a critical service role in assuring competitive advantage and the success of different strategies (Mossberg, 1995).

In Taiwan, tour leaders are often viewed as “servers” rather than professionals, despite possessing professional qualifications and a range of valued personal abilities (Chang, 2006). Researchers and practitioners have identified tour leaders as possessing competencies such as problem solving skills (Zhang & Chow, 2004), reliability and trustworthiness, the ability to handle complaints and difficult situations, knowledge of tourist attractions, good manners, a willingness to help (Mossberg, 1995), intelligence, cultural sensitivity and kindness (Quiroga, 1990). Ap and Wong (2001) argue that the main responsibilities of tour leaders are to ensure that products and services are provided as contracted and to make customers happy.

The characteristics of hospitality-oriented service culture, customised service provision,

performance evaluation and long working hours with customers can make tour leaders susceptible to sexual harassment. In an exploratory study, Wong and Wang (2009) note that the performance of emotional labour by tour leaders in these circumstances may trigger sexual harassment. Their study found that tour leaders are commonly sexually harassed by customers, tour guides and bus drivers. Their study also revealed that the interpretation of sexual harassment can vary between male and female tour leaders. A recent sexual harassment complaint in Malaysia was made by a female tourist guide who was sexually harassed by a male tour bus driver since she was forced by a travel agency to share a room with him (Kaur, 2011). The Malaysian Women Tourist Guide Association President, Erina Loo Siew Ming, a tourist guide of 18 years, had also been sexually harassed in the cause of her tour guiding work (Kaur, 2011). However, the fear of becoming jobless forced most women tourist guides to tolerate such humiliation in silence.

Organisational sexual harassment policies and prevention strategies

Gardiner (1993) claims that victims' responses to sexual harassment have little effect on the harassers and can make the situation worse. The most effective preventive and remedial responses to sexual harassment can be seen to stem from the actions of employers. Accordingly, firms can benefit by adopting and implementing workplace sexual harassment plans (Aalberts & Seidman, 1996). Sexual harassment policies have been widely recommended as a tool for handling sexual harassment in the workplace (Gilbert et al., 1998; Worsfold & McCann, 2000). Fang and Kleiner (1999) propose a good sexual harassment policy should be valuable to an employer in three ways: (1) it can act as an employee relations management tool (2) it can provide basic education for employees on the issue, and (3) it can minimise legal liability in the event of litigation against the company.

Rutter (1996, as cited in Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009) suggest that employees should be taught to control their sexual boundaries and learn to respect the boundaries of others as a strategy for preventing sexual harassment. Previous studies have also suggested that continuous training and education can help prevent sexual harassment (Cho, 2002; Gilbert et al., 1998). In addition, the routine documentation of possible harassment cases within the organisation is an efficient way of updating sexual harassment policies and procedures (Titus & Dry, 1992; Eller, 1990b). Victims can also help halt further harassment through developing the skills to detect sexual harassment in their workplace (Theocharous & Philaretou, 2009).

Methodology

In this section, the research sample, research instrument, the reliability and validity of the data collected and the analysis of the findings with respect to this study are presented.

Research sample

There are more than 2,000 travel agencies in Taiwan, which employ about 20,000 tour leaders (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2011). Based on the research objectives, the primary criterion for the selection of the research sample was licensed tour leaders affiliated with a travel agent.

Research instrument

A questionnaire was used to elicit information from the tour leaders on sexual harassment encountered and the policies and support relating to sexual harassment provided by the organisation. The questionnaire was divided into two major parts:

(Part 1) Sexual harassment encountered: The respondents were first asked the sexual harassment behaviors experienced in the past one year in the workplace. Then they were asked to indicate the previous sexual harassment behaviors experienced at work and to describe the specific incidents they had experienced. Previous studies note that the actual experience of sexual harassment differs from the perception of sexual harassment and that the actual frequency of sexual harassment is often higher than the perceived level of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gutek, 1985). The participants were also asked to state the identity (colleague, customer etc.) and gender of the harasser, the scene of the harassment incident and the coping strategies used after the harassment in relation to specific sexual harassment cases they had encountered at work.

(Part 2) The policies and support relating to sexual harassment provided by the organisation: The questionnaire also investigated the sexual harassment policies and channels for reporting violations provided by organisations and the participants' participation in sexual harassment training/education programmes.

Six tour leaders and two hospitality/tourism human resource management scholars examined the content validity of the questionnaire. No major modifications were made except for the wording of some of the questions.

Data collection and analysis

In light of the nature of tour leadership, the data were collected in late 2013 using two different ways. First, three hundred and twenty questionnaires were sent to six travel agents, of which 172 valid responses were returned. Second, an online survey was conducted via referral, with 88 valid questionnaires being completed. A total of 260 usable questionnaires were reviewed and then analysed by SPSS version 18.0.

Findings

In this section, the respondents' background information and the findings based on the research objectives are presented.

Socio-Demographic data

More female (63%) than male (37%) tour leaders participated in the study. The majority of the respondents were aged 31-40 (43%), followed by 21-30 (28%) and 41-50 (24%). About 60% of the respondents were single and around 25% were married. Nearly 60% of the respondents were college/university graduates, around 25% had a degree from junior college and 12% had a postgraduate degree. Nearly half of the respondents had 1-3 years' experience as a tour leader with the current company, while 21% had less than 1 year and 21% had 4-6 years of experience with the current organisation. The distribution of the respondents' total work experience as tour leaders in the industry was quite even, with the majority having worked between 4 and 12 years in the tourism industry. Table 1 presents the socio-demographic data of the respondents.

Please insert Table 1 here

Sexual harassment experienced by tour leaders

Table 2 presents the percentages of respondents who had experienced particular sexual harassment behavior in the past one year in the workplace. More than 30% of the respondents had experienced "sexual jokes", "comments on figure or sexual appearance", "seductive conversation", "sexually discriminatory remarks", "inquires for dates although having been refused" and "repeated staring and/or leering" while working as a tour leader in the past one year. The most commonly experienced form of harassment was "sexual jokes", which was ranked number one (62%) by the respondents.

Please insert Table 2 here

In sum, the most common forms of sexual harassment reported by the respondents were

“gender sexual harassment” and “seductive harassment behavior”. The results of the crosstab analysis as shown in table 3 reveal that in more than half of the harassment behavior categories, the respondents’ experiences differed significantly with respect to gender, age and marital status. Respondents with different years of experience in the industry also differed significantly in “gender sexual harassment” and “seductive harassment behavior” categories. In particular, the experience of seductive harassment differed significantly among respondents of different gender, age, marital status and experience in current company and in the industry.

Please insert Table 3 here

The questionnaire further examined the respondents’ sexual harassment encountered at work and to state the incidents of sexual harassment in the past. About 28% (n=72) of the respondents indicated they had experienced sexual harassment previously at work. Crosstab analysis was then used to examine the differences in sexual harassment among respondents with different socio-demographics. As shown in table 4, significant differences were found with regard to gender, age and experience in the industry.

Please insert Table 4 here

Seventy-two of the respondents who had previous sexual harassment encountered at work were asked to identify the incident first came to their mind. The respondents were then asked to describe the identity and gender of the harasser, the scene of the harassment and the coping strategies the victim used after the harassment. The results indicate that the majority of harassers were male (86%) and that customer was the main harasser (43%), followed by bus driver (26%), tour guide (21%) and other tour leader (10%). Sexual touching, sexual looks/staring and sexual jokes were the most commonly reported incidents. The respondents also reported incidents of repeated requests for dates outside of work, trading sex for work and attempted rape. The main coping strategies the respondents’ reported were “find measures to prevent future occurrence of sexual harassment”, “convince oneself that this is normal in the industry” and “avoid the harasser”. Out of the total multiple coping strategies, about 56% of the strategies used are “convince oneself that it is normal in this industry”, “ignore”, “tell colleagues/friends/relatives” or “communicate with the harasser afterwards”. These figures indicate that victims tended to adopt passive ways of responding to incidents of sexual harassment (Table 5). The victims may perhaps feel worried or fear that others will misunderstand and criticize them and at the same time feeling embarrassed and humiliated.

Please insert Table 5 here

Awareness of sexual harassment policies/regulations in the workplace

As presented in table 6, almost half (49%) of the respondents were “unsure” whether their organisations had sexual harassment policies/regulations. Only 9% responded positively and indicated that they were familiar with the contents of the policies, while 39% claimed to be unfamiliar with the contents. Only 3% of the respondents indicated that their organisations do not have sexual harassment policies/regulations.

Only 4% of the respondents participated in sexual harassment training/education in their current organisations. Another 12% indicated that they had never participated in sexual harassment training or education even though their employers provided such programmes. Surprisingly, more than 84% of the respondents indicated that their organisations had never provided sexual harassment training or education.

When asked about the channels for reporting sexual harassment at work, most of the respondents listed Human Resources or the Personnel Department (38%) and email (22%). However, 29% of the respondents were unsure about the channels for reporting sexual harassment and 8% indicated that their current employers had no such channels in place.

Please insert Table 6 here

Discussion

This study investigated the sexual harassment that tour leaders encounter at work in Taiwan. Several findings appear to support those of previous studies on this topic in the hospitality/tourism industry.

First, sexual harassment appears to be a common phenomenon experienced by tour leaders in Taiwan. Over 60% of the respondents indicated that they had experienced certain forms of sexual harassment at work. This suggests that the government statistics indicating that 1% of males and 6% of females in Taiwan experience sexual harassment at work may significantly under-estimate the actual incidence of harassment, particularly in the tourism industry. This figure also supports the research indicating that the service-oriented nature of the tourism/hospitality industry encourages sexual harassment (Davis, 1998).

“The customer is always right” is a common blandishment in service settings. This is particularly true for tour leaders in Taiwan, as their income depends heavily on tips and commission from shopping and optional tours generated from tour participants. Therefore, the performance of tour leaders is closely monitored and influenced by their customers, who are required to complete customer evaluation or customer satisfaction/comment forms on tour

leaders' group assignments (Wong & Wang, 2009). In general, the tour leaders' job requires the collaboration of customers and other stakeholders (i.e. tour guides, drivers and other personnel in hotels, restaurants and attractions). Therefore, it can be challenging and, at times, overwhelming to be "professional" and "hospitable" when interacting with customers and other tour related stakeholders.

Second, the findings indicate that gender sexual harassment and seductive harassment behavior were found to occur more frequently than sexual bribery, sexual coercion and sexual assault. More than 74% of the respondents had experienced gender sexual harassment and nearly 40% had experienced seductive harassment behavior. These results indicate that the frequency of reported incidents declines as the degree and severity of the harassment increases. The results also suggest that tour leaders commonly confront hostile work environments. Although over 60% of the respondents indicated having experienced some form of harassment in the past year, only 28% of the respondents confirmed they had experienced sexual harassment at work in the past. Previous sexual harassment studies suggest that there is a gap between the numbers who say they have been harassed and those who report having experienced harassment behavior (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gutek, 1985; Lin, 2006). This study also found that fewer participants confirmed having been harassed than reporting having experienced such behavior. This type of discrepancy can result from factors such as organisations failing to institute sexual harassment policies, education and training and the different perception and definition of sexual harassment in the service-oriented tourism industry.

Third, the findings indicate that males (86%) were the main perpetrators and females the main victims of harassment. This result is in accord with previous studies (Lin, 2006; O'Donohue et al., 1998) that male harassers and female victims are common in harassment situations. In addition, customers, followed by bus drivers and other tour guides were identified as the main types of harasser. According to Article 3 of the Taiwan Sexual Harassment Prevention Regulations, the employer is expected to provide a hassle-free working environment for their employees (Council of Labour Affairs, 2011). Although customers, bus drivers and tour guides are external parties, a tour leader's affiliated organisation is still liable, both in terms of their duty of care for their employees and for any lawsuits that may result from sexual harassment in the workplace. These results also indicate that the employment relationship between tour leaders and their stakeholders, particularly the customers and those who work as part of a team during specific group assignments, is hard to

define. Based on the types of sexual harassment reported in this study, “sexual touching”, “sexual jokes”, “sexual staring/looks” and “repeated requests for dates out of work” were the most common scenarios. In addition to this seductive harassment behavior, tour leaders also experienced sexual coercion and sexual assaults at work. However, the results indicate that the victims tend to adopt extremely passive coping strategies for dealing with sexual harassment, such as “finding measures for future prevention”, “convincing oneself that it is normal in the industry”, “avoiding the harasser” and “ignoring it”. Even if they chose to report an incident of harassment, the victims usually turned to colleagues, friends or relatives, who may not have the expertise to assist them on such issues. Indeed, a study on sexual harassment among the collectivist Hong Kong Chinese also revealed talking to friends or colleagues about the incident to be the most prevalent coping strategy (Chan, Tang & Chan, 1999). It confirms Cortina and Wasti’s (2005) suggestion that the collectivist and patriarchal culture of Chinese women makes them more likely to engage in social support coping and less likely to engage in assertive, vocal, and public means of coping with sexual harassment (Cortina & Wasti, 2005).

Finally, more than half of the tour leaders in the current study stated they were either “unsure” whether their affiliated travel agencies had a sexual harassment policy or that their agency did not have such a policy. In addition, almost 40% of those who knew their company had a sexual harassment policy were unsure about the content of the policy. According to Taiwan’s sexual harassment prevention regulations, companies with more than 30 employees are required to set sexual harassment prevention, reporting and punishment regulations and companies with more than 10 employees are required to establish reporting channels for sexual harassment. A 2011 report by the Council of Labour Affairs indicated that 86% of the organisations in the art, entertainment and leisure industry (which includes tourism) have set sexual harassment regulations and 80.1% display the regulations in the workplace. In addition, 75.1% of the organisations in the industry provide reporting channels for incidents of sexual harassment (Council of Labour Affairs, 2011). Nonetheless, the high percentage of respondents who were “unsure” about the existence and the content of harassment regulations is a wakeup call for the tourism industry, indicating that organisations need to find effective methods for educating their employees on the content of their regulations and the reporting channels for sexual harassment. Moreover, 84% of the respondents reported that their organisations did not provide training and education on sexual harassment. Although more than half of the respondents indicated that their organisations had

one or more channels for reporting incidents of sexual harassment, almost half were unsure about their organisation's reporting channels and 8% responded that their organisations had no reporting channels. These figures help to explain the high percentage of tour leaders who experience sexual harassment at work. Previous studies have suggested that continuous training and education can prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment (Cho, 2002; Gilbert et al., 1998). Therefore, the tourism industry in Taiwan needs to take the results of the current sexual harassment research seriously and seek solutions to stop possible harm.

Limitations of the study

Due to the complexity and sensitivity of the research topic, this study has the following research limitations. Sexual harassment is a relatively personal issue. Although attempts were made to take this into account during the development of the questionnaire and the data collection, the respondents may have wanted to justify their responses and hesitated to reveal the real situation. The non-response bias may occur which requires careful interpretation to the findings.

There are constraints on time, resources and sampling method for this study. The sample of tour leaders was based on a convenience sample. Considering the numbers of registered travel agents and tour leaders in Taiwan, the research sample was relatively small. Therefore, the findings may have limited generalisability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results indicate that a large percentage of tour leaders in the tourism industry experience sexual harassment at work. Even though some of the respondents indicated that they were victims of sexual harassment, they tended to adopt passive coping strategies. It is unlikely that they will come into direct contact with the perpetrators of sexual harassment again in the workplace, because they are not regular work colleagues or repeat customers. Together with the sexual harassment policies, training/education and reporting channels reported within organisations, these findings indicate that tour leaders in Taiwan do not receive sufficient information on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Based on the results of this study, the following suggestions are provided for tour leaders, the tourism industry and the government. First, sexual harassment is not solely the responsibility of society and the organisation. Tour leaders should take an active role in

preventing the occurrence of sexual harassment at work by speaking out and adopting positive measures against sexual harassment. Second, organisations are responsible for setting sexual harassment prevention regulations which are displayed in the workplace and providing clear reporting channels for incidents of sexual harassment. However, because tour leaders spend most of their time outside their company premises, organisations should find ways (e.g. regular meetings, group assignments, regular training and education) of ensuring this information is delivered to their employees. Third, there is space for improvement in the government regulations on sexual harassment. The Taiwan government figures do not appear to reflect the actual levels of sexual harassment in the tourism industry. Government should ensure that industries adhere to the existing sexual harassment regulations by conducting regular and irregular inspections and examinations and punishing negligent organisations. Sexual harassment by customers seems to be a serious problem in the service industry. The idea that “the customer is always right” can “contribute” to sexual harassment and is often prioritised in the service industry. Furthermore, perpetrators of sexual harassment such as customers, bus drivers and tour guides can create a hostile work environment for tour leaders. It is important for the tourism industry to provide continuous education for their stakeholders regarding this matter. In the context of Asia, the idea of “face” is a significant factor affecting the reporting of sexual harassment, particularly in Chinese culture. Compared with Western countries, sexual harassment reports and lawsuits are relatively rare. The Taiwan government introduced a sexual harassment prevention law in 2006 and is responsible for policing the sexual harassment regulations in all layers of society. The women's groups have criticized the government's implementation of the sexual harassment law as ineffective (Wang, 2006). The law needs to be actively and intensive promoted, victims of sexual harassment should know where to turn for help. The current sexual harassment regulations, which require employers to provide a hostile-free work environment for their employees, may need to be examined carefully to provide a clear and detailed definition of the measures expected of organisations.

Sexual harassment is not only a significant human resource management issue, but is also an important indicator of the health of a society. Previous studies of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry indicate that sexual harassment is a serious problem. As this study is a pilot study on the tourism industry in Taiwan, the results provide some directions and suggestions for future study. This study is conducted in Taiwan and a study comparing sexual harassment in the Asian and Western tourism industries deserves further investigation. Some previous studies of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry use qualitative methods to

demonstrate the quality and richness of the data. In addition, with such a sensitive topic, more in-depth and accurate results could probably be achieved using qualitative research methods. Hence, future research should consider to adopt a novel approach such as case study or in-depth interviews to ensure the validity of the findings as well as providing new insights to the topic.

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Table 1 Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents

		Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	96	37
	Female	164	63
Age	Below 20	--	--
	21-30	72	28
	31-40	112	43
	41-50	62	24
	51-60	14	5
	Above 60	--	--
Marital Status	Single	167	64
	Married	67	25
	Divorced	22	9
	Separated	4	2
Education	Secondary school	1	1
	High school	7	3
	Junior college	66	25
	College/University	154	59
	Postgraduate	32	12
Experience as a tour leader in current company	Less than 1 year	53	21
	1-3 year	119	46
	4-6 year	55	21
	7-9 year	27	10
	10 years or above	6	2
Experience as a tour leader in the industry	Less than 1 year	13	5
	1-3 year	50	19
	4-6 year	57	22
	7-9 year	50	19
	10-12 years	46	18
	13-15 years	29	11
	16 years or above	15	6

n=260

Table 2 Sexual Harassment Behaviors Experienced by Respondents in the past one year

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Ranking	Type (%)
1. sexual jokes	62	38	1	Gender sexual harassment (74%)
2. sexually discriminated remarks	33	67	4	
3. comments on figures or sexual figures	37	63	2	
4. discussions about sex life	29	71	7	
5. display of pornographic materials	16	84	11	
6. post pornographic poster	2	98	18	
7. privacy inquiries about sex	23	77	10	Seductive sexual behaviors (37%)
8. seductive conversation	34	66	3	
9. inquiries for dates although having been refused	30	70	5	
10. repeated starrng and/or leering	30	70	5	
11. sexual gesturers and behaviors	23	77	9	
12. unwanted touching or fondling	27	73	8	
13. exposure of sexual organs	9	91	13	
14. trade sexual cooperation for benefits on performance grades	3	97	17	Sexual bribe (11%)
15. trade sexual cooperation for benefits on work	10	90	12	
16. threaten with performance grades for non-cooperation	4	96	14	Sexual coercion (5%)
17. threaten with work for non-cooperation	3	97	16	
18. attempted rape	4	96	15	Sexual assaults (4%)
19. raped	1	99	19	

n=260

Table 3 Crosstab Analysis for Sexual Harassment Experienced by Respondents in the past one year

	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Education	Experience in Current company	Experience in Industry	Type
Gender sexual harassment	.137	5.126	9.681*	1.639	3.546	6.103	
1. sexual jokes	1.235	3.868	12.294**	3.031	3.096	6.730	Gender sexual harassment
2. sexually discriminated remarks	.427	2.549	4.698	.882	8.017	8.144	
3. comments on figures or sexual figures	1.836	10.873*	6.942	5.743	5.038	12.581*	
4. discussions about sex life	4.761*	7.726	7.207	.968	2.853	5.361	
5. display of pornographic materials	6.336*	9.054*	8.317*	8.197	1.508	5.988	
6. post pornographic poster	.021	5.790	.961	2.067	1.840	4.891	
Seductive harassment behaviors	14.798**	16.182**	12.029**	3.726	11.584*	21.041**	Seductive harassment behaviors
7. privacy inquiries about sex	16.096**	18.768**	9.198*	1.774	4.057	10.979	
8. seductive conversation	17.702**	11.310*	7.845*	1.784	9.980*	13.637*	
9. inquiries for dates although having been refused	24.916**	14.487**	10.319*	2.586	6.333	26.078**	
10. repeated starrng and/or leering	19.631**	17.846**	13.808**	2.898	7.118	19.849**	
11. sexual gesturers and behaviors	12.211**	15.122**	9.690*	2.409	6.277	14.369*	
12. unwanted touching or fondling	21.077**	16.825**	17.973**	4.159	9.886*	20.911**	
13. exposure of sexual organs	5.596*	13.315**	10.252*	1.334	5.433	7.741	
Sexual bribery	3.235	21.633**	14.203**	5.043	3.614	8.720	Sexual bribery
14. trade sexual cooperation for benefits on grades	.504	6084	4.597	3.776	1.828	4.929	
15. trade sexual cooperation for	3.883*	17.837**	12.860**	4.611	4.269	8.148	

benefits on work							
Sexual coercion	.443	15.269**	8.240*	7.357	1.366	3.580	Sexual coercion
16. threaten with grades for non-cooperation	.002	17.161**	6.396	5.312	4.345	4.718	
17. threaten with work for non-cooperation	.052	5.343	5.192	4.049	1.399	6.714	
Sexual assaults	.214	1.216	3.944	2.092	3.619	6.888	Sexual assaults
18. attempted rape	.214	1.216	3.944	2.092	3.619	6.888	
19. raped	.148	.974	1.122	1.387	1.557	10.910	

n=260 (*significant at .05 level and **significant at .01 level)

Table 4 Crosstab Analysis for Specific Sexual Harassment Incidents at Work

	Yes	No	Value
Gender			
Male	9	87	25.50**
Female	63	101	
Age			
21-30	32	40	23.23**
31-40	33	79	
41 or above	7	69	
Marital Status			
Single	61	106	a
Married	8	59	
Divorced	3	19	
Separated	0	4	
Education			
Junior college or below	16	58	1.98
College/University	47	107	
Postgraduate	9	23	
Experience as a tour leader in current company			
Less than 1 year	18	35	6.08
1-3 years	38	81	
4-6 years	10	45	
7 years or above	6	27	
Experience as a tour leader in the industry			
Less than 1 year	3	10	19.12**
1-3 years	23	27	
4-6 years	21	36	
7-9 years	12	38	
10 years or above	13	77	

N=260; a=less than 5 samples in some category

Table 5 Specific Sexual Harassment Incidents at Work

		Count	Percentage
Gender of harasser	Male	62	86
	Female	10	14
Identity of harasser	Customer	31	43
	Bus driver	19	26
	Tour guide	15	21
	Other tour leader	7	10
Scene of the harassment	Sexual touching	31	43
	Sexual looks/starring	15	21
	Sexual jokes	12	16
	Repeated requests for dates outside of work	8	11
	Trade sex for work	4	6
	Attempted rape	2	3
Coping strategies	Find measures to prevent future occurrence	48	25
	Convince oneself that it is normal in this industry	37	19
	Avoid the harasser	34	17
	Tell colleagues/friends/relatives	25	13
	Ignore	21	11
	Communicate with the harasser afterwards	17	9
	Report to manager	10	5
	Request for external investigation	2	1
File a lawsuit to the company	1	< 1	

n=72

Table 6 Sexual Harassment Policy/Regulation/Training in the Organization

	Count	Percentage
Sexual harassment policy in organization		
Unsure	127	49
Yes but unsure of the content	101	39
Yes and familiar with the contents	23	9
No, training/education not provided	9	3
Participated in sexual harassment training/education		
No, training/education not provided	218	84
Unsure	32	12
Yes	10	4
Report channel in the organization		
HR department	134	38
Unsure	103	29
Email	78	22
None	27	8
Mail box	7	2
Others (management)	2	1

n=260