Making Fun: 
Work and Organisational Practices 
in Australian Aquatic Theme Parks

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The Australian aquatic theme park segment is a vibrant and significant part of the Australian tourism industry because as a tourism generator it is a direct contributor to the economy and to employment growth. Research in this area can provide a deeper understanding of the complexities of the industry and its future effectiveness. Tourism organisations, such as aquatic theme parks, need to rely on the commitment and performance of a well-trained, multi-skilled workforce in order to achieve a competitive position, especially in terms of providing high quality customer service. This suggests that tourism organisations need to adopt effective organisational practices that enhance the motivation of employees and improve organisational effectiveness by providing the level of quality customer service required to become and remains competitive.

Although the tourism industry in general and the theme park segment in particular make an important contribution to the Australia economy, minimal research has been undertaken to determine the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of organisational practices that influence work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). As a related issue, no research has been undertaken to examine the perception of professionalism of employees undertaking marine science activities within Australian aquatic theme parks. Accordingly, one of the objectives of the present research was to examine the impact of organisational practices (training and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. The second objective was to examine whether the impact of such organisational practices on these work-related outcomes varies between employees designated to undertake marine science related activities and other theme park employees (salespersons, food and beverage and administrative). The final objective of this research was to examine whether employees designated to undertake marine science related activities perceive themselves as professionals.

The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework (based on the Meaning of Working (MOW) model developed by Westwood and Lok, 2003) is used in this research as a conceptual framework to enable a better understanding of the meanings and significance that aquatic theme park employees attach to their work roles. Understanding the basic meanings that individuals attach to their work roles provides relevant insights into the nature of employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, given the apparent impact of perceived work significance on employee attitudes and behaviours. Application of the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework therefore broadened the conceptual framework of the present research to include and clarify the central constructs of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance in Australian aquatic theme park workplaces.

The present study was undertaken with employees from three Australian aquatic theme park companies, including “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, with a particular emphasis on the former group of employees. The nature of the current study suggested the value of using both quantitative and
qualitative methods (mixed methods methodology) and so, the adoption of the pragmatist paradigm was appropriate in framing and answering the thesis' research questions. Quantitative and qualitative methods in this study were conceptualized, designed and implemented sequentially. Quantitative methods (e.g. survey) were conducted first in order to develop a level of generalisation that not only added knowledge to the theory but also enabled a prediction in understanding levels of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Qualitative methods (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) then provided in-depth information and insights into the link between organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) and work-related outcomes and perceptions of professionalism for marine science employees.

The findings of this study have broadened the scope of the MOW model developed by Westwood and Lok (2003) in a number of significant and original ways. In particular, consideration of the relationship between employees and customers and analysis of the values maintained by the organisational culture and their influence on the particular subcultures within the organisations studied proved to be essential in understanding the work meanings patterns in this study. The present study further developed the MOW model by clearly demonstrating the critical role played by training and communication in influencing patterns of work meanings. In addition, this study also expanded the Westwood and Lok’s (2003) MOW model by including issues related to professionalism.

The findings of the present study highlighted the pivotal role played by a key HRM practice (on-the-job training), which is more relevant in influencing work-related outcomes than the impact of communication processes, as demonstrated in the study data and analysis. Contrary to expectations, the findings suggested that communication processes play an indirect role in influencing organisational effectiveness, in terms of providing high quality service because of an identified ‘gap’ in beliefs and behaviours regarding customer service. Both training and communication processes appeared to be relatively ineffective in reducing this ambiguity regarding customer service for both group of employees within the aquatic theme parks studied. This should lead to a re-thinking of both training and communication practices to enhance the focus on, and delivery of quality customer service. A number of suggestions are canvassed. Another major finding of this thesis indicates that marine science employees not only perceive themselves as professionals but their status (job/occupation) within the tourism community supports a perception of emerging professionalism.

The results revealed in the present study have the potential to impact positively on the tourism industry in general and on the aquatic theme park segment in particular. However, it is clear from the present research that the vibrancy of the tourism industry and the aquatic theme park segment can only be enhanced with more attention to communication and training, with an emphasis on improving employee self-efficacy, especially in the area of customer service.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no other material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in this thesis itself.

_______________________
Silvia Azevedo Nelson
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... II
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY ........................................................................................ IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................ V
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................ X
LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................ XII
LIST OF APPENDICES .................................................................................................. XIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. XIV

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 1
1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH ........................................................................... 1
1.2.1 THE AUSTRALIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY ............................................................... 2
1.2.2 THE AUSTRALIAN AQUATIC THEME PARK SEGMENT ....................................... 4
1.2.3 LACK OF DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT MARINE SCIENCE OCCUPATIONS .... 6
1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM ...................................................... 9
1.3.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION 1 ...................................................................... 14
1.3.2 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION 2 ...................................................................... 14
1.3.3 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION 3 ...................................................................... 15
1.4 THE MEANING OF WORKING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .................................. 15
1.5 GAP IN THE LITERATURE ......................................................................................... 20
1.5.1 RESEARCH IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AND THE THEME PARK SEGMENT ....... 21
1.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH ...................................................................... 26
1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .................................................................................... 27

CHAPTER 2 - THE MEANING OF WORKING

2.1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 28
2.2 IMPORTANCE OF WORK .......................................................................................... 28
2.3 THE MEANING OF WORKING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .......................................... 30
2.3.1 THE MEANING OF WORKING (MOW) MODEL ................................................... 31
2.3.2 MODIFICATION OF THE MEANING OF WORKING (MOW) MODEL ....................... 36
2.3.2.1 Work Centrality ............................................................................................. 42
2.3.2.2 Importance of Work Goals ........................................................................... 44
2.3.2.3 Valued Work Outcomes .............................................................................. 46
2.3.2.4 Work-role Identification ............................................................................. 47
2.4 FACTORS AFFECTING WORK MEANINGS ................................................................. 49
2.4.1 SOCIETAL CHANGES ......................................................................................... 49
2.4.2 CULTURAL INFLUENCES ................................................................................... 52
2.4.2.1 Culture ......................................................................................................... 53
2.4.2.2 Subculture ................................................................................................... 56
2.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION .......................................................................................... 59
CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 62

3.2 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ............................................................................................................. 62
  3.2.1 HYPOTHESIS 1 .............................................................................................................................. 70
  3.2.2 HYPOTHESIS 2 .............................................................................................................................. 70
  3.2.3 HYPOTHESIS 3 .............................................................................................................................. 70
  3.2.4 HYPOTHESIS 4 .............................................................................................................................. 70
  3.2.5 HYPOTHESIS 5 .............................................................................................................................. 70
  3.2.6 HYPOTHESIS 6 .............................................................................................................................. 70
  3.2.7 HYPOTHESIS 7 .............................................................................................................................. 71

3.3 COMMUNICATION PROCESSES ............................................................................................................. 71
  COMMUNICATION FREQUENCY ........................................................................................................... 72
  COMMUNICATION MODE ..................................................................................................................... 73
  COMMUNICATION CONTENT ................................................................................................................. 74
  COMMUNICATION FLOW ......................................................................................................................... 75
  3.3.1 HYPOTHESIS 8 .............................................................................................................................. 78
  3.3.2 HYPOTHESIS 9 .............................................................................................................................. 79
  3.3.3 HYPOTHESIS 10 ............................................................................................................................ 79
  3.3.4 HYPOTHESIS 11 ............................................................................................................................ 79
  3.3.5 HYPOTHESIS 12 ............................................................................................................................ 79
  3.3.6 HYPOTHESIS 13 ............................................................................................................................ 79
  3.3.7 HYPOTHESIS 14 ............................................................................................................................ 79

3.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPES OF EMPLOYEES .................................................................................. 80
  3.4.1 HYPOTHESIS 15 ............................................................................................................................ 81

3.5 COMMITMENT ...................................................................................................................................... 81
  3.5.1 COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANISATION ....................................................................................... 84
  3.5.2 COMMITMENT TO THE OCCUPATION ........................................................................................... 86
  3.5.3 COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMERS .................................................................................................. 88

3.6 ROLE AMBIGUITY, JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE ............................................ 91

3.7 PROFESSIONALISM ............................................................................................................................. 94
  3.7.1 ANGLO-AMERICAN MODEL OF PROFESSIONALISM ................................................................. 96
  3.7.2 HALL’S PROFESSIONAL MODEL .................................................................................................. 97
    3.7.2.1 Referent Dimension ................................................................................................................ 99
    3.7.2.2 Self-Regulation Dimension .................................................................................................... 99
    3.7.2.3 Autonomy Dimension .......................................................................................................... 100
  3.7.3 HYPOTHESIS 16 ............................................................................................................................ 102
  3.7.4 HYPOTHESIS 17 ............................................................................................................................ 102
  3.7.5 HYPOTHESIS 18 ............................................................................................................................ 107
  3.7.6 HYPOTHESIS 19 ............................................................................................................................ 107
  3.7.7 HYPOTHESIS 20 ............................................................................................................................ 107
  3.7.8 HYPOTHESIS 21 ............................................................................................................................ 107

CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................................... 109

4.2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK ..................................................................................................................... 109
  4.2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGMS .............................................................................................................. 109
    4.2.1.1 Positivism ............................................................................................................................... 110
    4.2.1.2 Constructivism ....................................................................................................................... 111
    4.2.1.3 Pragmatism ............................................................................................................................ 112
CHAPTER 5 - QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 165
5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES ................................................................. 165
5.3 DEMOGRAPHICS .................................................................................................................. 169
5.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS .................................................................................................. 170
5.5 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS ISSUES ......................................................................................... 172
5.5.1 PROCEDURES .................................................................................................................. 176
5.5.2 ASSUMPTIONS ................................................................................................................. 178
5.5.3 HYPOTHESIS RESULTS .................................................................................................. 180

CHAPTER 6 - QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 201
6.2 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION ....................................................................................... 201
6.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS .......................................................................... 202
6.4 QUALITATIVE OUTCOMES RELATED TO COMPANIES A, B AND C .................................... 203
6.4.1 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES ............................................................... 203
6.4.1.1 Hypotheses 1 and 2 ................................................................................................. 203
6.4.1.2 Hypothesis 3 ......................................................................................................... 207
6.4.1.3 Hypothesis 4 ......................................................................................................... 210
6.4.1.4 Hypothesis 5 ......................................................................................................... 211
6.4.1.5 Hypothesis 6 and 7 ............................................................................................. 213
6.4.2 COMMUNICATION PROCESSES .................................................................................... 216
6.4.2.1 Hypotheses 8, 9 and 10 ......................................................................................... 222
6.4.2.2 Hypotheses 11 and 12 ......................................................................................... 225
6.4.2.3 Hypotheses 13 and 14 ......................................................................................... 226
6.4.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPES OF EMPLOYEES ..................................................... 227
6.4.3.1 Hypothesis 15 ..................................................................................................... 228
6.4.4 PROFESSIONALISM ISSUES .......................................................................................... 230
6.4.4.1 Hypothesis 16 ..................................................................................................... 231
6.4.4.2 Hypothesis 17 ..................................................................................................... 233
6.4.5 DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSIONALISM ........................................................................... 234
6.4.5.1 Hypotheses 18 ................................................................................................... 241
6.4.5.2 Hypothesis 19 ................................................................................................... 242
6.4.5.3 Hypothesis 20 ................................................................................................... 244
6.4.5.4 Hypothesis 21 ................................................................................................... 245
6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY .......................................................................................................... 246

CHAPTER 7 - DISCUSSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 247
7.2 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING ............................................................................. 247
7.3 EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT .................................................................................................. 249
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1  Summary of Operations by State, 2000-01  6
Table 4.1  Scientific Paradigms  116
Table 4.2  Five Purposes for Mixed Methods Designs  122
Table 4.3  Framework for Focus Group Research  152
Table 5.1  Demographics  170
Table 5.2  Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations  171
Table 5.3  Summary of Reliability Analysis  176
Table 5.4  Regression analysis detailing relationship between Training and Development and Affective Commitment  182
Table 5.5  Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis Regressing Training and Development, Job Satisfaction and Ambiguity Regarding Customers  184
Table 5.6  Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis Regressing Training and Development, Employee Performance and Ambiguity Regarding Customers  185
Table 5.7  Regression analysis detailing relationship between Communication Processes and Affective Commitment to the Organisation  188
Table 5.8  Regression analysis detailing relationship between Communication Processes and Affective Commitment to the Occupation  190
Table 5.9  Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis
Regressing Communication Processes, Job Satisfaction and
Ambiguity Regarding Customers  192

Table 5.10  Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis
Regressing Communication Processes, Employee
Performance and Ambiguity Regarding Customers  193

Table 5.11  Independent samples test: marine science employees and
other theme park employees  196

Table 5.12  Demographics about education/qualification and occupation  197

Table 5.13  Results of multiple regression analysis detailing the relationship
between dimensions of professionalism, affective commitment
(organisation and occupation), job satisfaction and employee
performance  199

Table 7.1  Results of hypothesis testing  248
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The structure of the Australian tourism industry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Meaning of Working Model - (MOWIRT, 1987)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Modified Meaning of Working Model</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Westwood &amp; Leung, 1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Modified Meaning of Working Model</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Westwood &amp; Lok, 2003) – Adapted-Proposed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Research Process Map</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Conceptual Research Model</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Meaning of Working Model</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Westwood &amp; Lok, 2003) – Findings-Contributions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>Survey Instrument 1 – “Marine Science Employees”</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Survey Instrument 2 – “Other theme Park Employees”</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>In-depth Interviews Questions – Company A</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>First In-depth Interviews – Companies B and C (Questions)</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>Second In-depth Interviews – Companies B and C (Questions)</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6</td>
<td>Focus Group Questions – Company A (managers/supervisors)</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7</td>
<td>Focus Group Questions – Company A (employees)</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8</td>
<td>Description of Participants – Focus Groups Company A</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9</td>
<td>Key themes from the Qualitative Data – Companies A, B and C</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 10</td>
<td>Types of occupations within the marine science area</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 11</td>
<td>Professional Bodies - Marine Science Employees</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 12</td>
<td>Reliability Analysis for Training and Development, Communication, Ambiguity Regarding Customers and Professionalism</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 13</td>
<td>Reliability Analysis for Affective Commitment (to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers), Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Australian tourism industry is a vibrant and important part of the Australian economy. Research in the area can provide further understanding of the complexities of the industry. This chapter provides an overview of the general context of the research area and research processes. The importance of this cross-disciplinary study to the Australian tourism industry is discussed, particularly in relation to the aquatic theme park segment. The aims and objectives of the research are introduced, background information is provided on the research problem and the research study and the primary research questions are introduced. The chapter ends with a brief summary of each chapter and the contribution of this research to the existing knowledge base of specific disciplines.

1.2 Importance of the Research

The Australian aquatic theme park segment was selected for this research because of its importance to the Australian economy, in particular to the Queensland and New South Wales economies, whose regions are dominant destinations for tourists. The discussion below addresses the importance of the tourism industry to the Australian economy in general, as part of the service industry, and the importance of the research to the aquatic theme park segment in particular. The discussion below also addresses an important emerging need for detailed and substantial information about marine science occupations in aquatic theme parks.
1.2.1 The Australian Tourism Industry

The tourism industry is not an ‘industry’ in the traditional sense; it underpins a wide range of activities, ranging from accommodation, to hiring cars, to air transport (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Because the tourism industry combines a cross-section of services and activities, its sectors and sub-sectors are usually classified broadly, in particular in relation to the recreational sector. As a relatively new industry, the Australian tourism industry ‘is not well defined. It is fragmented, its sectors are diverse, and it has a wide range of organisations, enterprises and occupations.’ (Worthy & Schneider 2001, p.25). The structure of the tourism industry shown in figure 1.1 below comprises the following sectors: arts, sports and recreation. The segments of the recreation sector are based on the classification used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005).

Figure 1.1: The structure of the Australian tourism industry

**Figure 1.1: The structure of the Australian tourism industry**

```
TOURISM INDUSTRY
/
SERVICE INDUSTRY
/

ARTS SECTOR
/
/
HOSPITALITY SEGMENT
/
/
TRAVEL SEGMENT
/
/
AMUSEMENT AND THEME PARKS SEGMENT
/
/
OTHER RECREATION SEGMENTS:
- Casinos, lotteries
- Other gambling services
- Outdoor recreation:
  Caravan and camping grounds

SPORTS SECTOR
/
/
RECREATION SECTOR
```
In the last two decades, the service economy (including retail, investments, information and food industries) has grown faster than the traditional manufacturing industries such as autos, durable goods and equipment (Quinn, 1992). For example, entertainment and recreation have been the fastest growing sectors of the economy in many parts of the world (Wolf, 1999), and in the tourism industry, where the employment rate has doubled since 1979 (Herzenberg, 1998). Indeed, tourism has become one of the world’s largest, fastest growing and most economically significant industries (Office of National Tourism, 1998). It has therefore become a significant employer and important job creator (World Tourism Organisation, 2006). Interestingly, the worldwide theme parks industry, with an estimated 119 major theme parks, has emerged as a major sector within leisure, recreation and tourism activity patterns in the developed world, becoming a US$ 11 billion year business in 1996 (Ryan & Page, 2000). In 2001, the world amusement and theme park facilities attracted more people than ever before, with a record of 250,516,523 people for the 50 most visited theme park facilities (O’Brien, 2001).

In Australia, tourism has long been an important factor in national economic development (Healey, 1997). Around the turn of the century it took its place as the country’s major foreign exchange earner (Go & Jenkins, 1997). It has also been an important contributor to employment generation in a number of Australian regions and has offered outstanding prospects for future growth (Hall, 1997). Recently, tourism in Australia has grown to the extent that it is now recognised as an extremely important contributor to total economic activity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). In 2002-03 tourism in Australia accounted for approximately 4.2 per cent of total gross domestic product (GDP), directly generated 540,700 jobs and contributed
11 per cent of the total exports of goods and services (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). In terms of attendance levels per capita of population, Australian theme parks had an average of 0.5 theme park visits per person, which was the third highest rate in the world in 1996, behind only the USA and Japan with similar levels of demand at 0.6 theme park visits per capita (Camp, 1997).

Thus, the tourism industry has importance from a worldwide perspective and to the Australian economy, it has particular significance. Research in the area has much to contribute to understanding the complexities of the industry and its future effectiveness. However, it is impossible to examine the whole tourism industry, particularly because it is such a fragmented industry. One approach is to examine, in depth, some aspects of the industry in the hope that others will follow and examine other aspects. Over time, it is expected that a more coherent understanding of the industry will emerge. The contribution of this thesis will be to examine a number of organisational practices and their impact on work behaviour within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. The discussion below examines the importance of this research to the Australian aquatic theme park segment, as one significant part of the tourism industry.

1.2.2 The Australian Aquatic Theme Park Segment

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1994, p.23) defines a theme park as a centre which ‘provides a range of entertainments and/or displays organised around specific themes, such as at the movies or pioneer life and may offer an educational, in addition to an entertainment component’. The Australian aquatic theme park sector is classified as a subdivision of the Australian Culture and Leisure Classification, class
Introduction – Chapter 1

421, ‘Amusement and theme parks’ within the service industry structure (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Within the tourism industry, the Australian aquatic theme park segment is classified within the Recreation sector.

A 2000-01 survey of 30 major Australian amusement and theme parks, conducted by the ABS, found that these companies employed over 4,150 persons, had gross income of $287 million and attracted more than 8.9 million visitors (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Findings of this survey indicate that the majority of employees working at amusement and theme parks during 2000-01 were casual employees (54%). Only 33 per cent were permanent full-time employees and a further 13 per cent were permanent part-time employees. Results of this survey also reveal that the seven theme parks in Queensland earned 71% of the total theme park income and had 59% of the total employment. The 12 parks in New South Wales earned 24% of the total income and had 36% of the total employment. Interestingly, Queensland and New South Wales amusement and theme parks were the most important, in relation to other Australian states, in terms of number of visitors, employment and gross income – see table 1.1 below.
Table 1.1: Summary of operations by State, 2000-01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Businesses at end June 2001</th>
<th>Total Visitors 000</th>
<th>Employment at end June 2001</th>
<th>Wages and salaries (m)</th>
<th>Gross Income (m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1,496</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>203.6</td>
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<td>Other States and Territories</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>4,150</td>
<td>101.0</td>
<td>287.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS/2005

Given these trends, it is clear that the amusement and theme park segment is important to Australia, in particular to Queensland and New South Wales, because it is a direct contributor to the economy, to employment growth and as a tourism generator. Notwithstanding its significance, specific characteristics have largely been overlooked in the research. The following focuses on important characteristics on employment and work conditions within the tourism industry. Previous research within the tourism industry in general and within the theme park segment in particular will be discussed, and the gaps in the existing literature of relevance to the present study will be identified.

1.2.3 Lack of detailed information about marine science occupations

Although the amusement and theme park segment makes a substantial contribution to Queensland and New South Wales economic growth, detailed and reliable information on the segment continues to be scant. The growth of tourism, at least over the past two decades, has precipitated an increasing need for comprehensive,
reliable and timely statistics for policy analysis, market research and programme management (Grey, Edelmann & Dwyer, 1991). According to the Statistical Working Group (1995) of the Sport and Recreation Ministers Council, data on employment for the Australian Sport and Recreation industry is considered unreliable, is not well organised and is not readily accessible. Although the Australian recreation industry has developed since the publication of the National and Vocational Education and Training Plan 1995-97, Worthy and Schneider (2001) continue to contend that the industry is still characterised as fragmented, diverse and consisting of a wide range of organisations and occupations.

The first ABS survey on amusement and theme parks was conducted during 1994/95 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996). However, results from this survey did not include detailed data for each sector included in ‘Other Recreation Services’, such as theme parks, because the ABS analysed the recreation sector en masse rather than segment-by-segment. The second (and latest) ABS survey of major amusement and theme parks was conducted in 2000-01. However, this survey included only 30 major amusement and theme parks, in Australia, which is less than the 1994/95 ABS survey of 70 major companies. In addition, the ABS did not differentiate the theme park segment from amusement parks and as a consequence, the data from this survey in relation to theme parks can only be used as indicative and is not reliably representative of aquatic theme parks. A major reason for this difficulty lies in the differentiation between amusement parks and theme parks. Those differences relate to specific theme parks, such as marine or aquatic theme parks. Examples of the variety of amusement and theme parks included in the latest ABS surveys are Luna Park, (Melbourne, Sydney), Old Sydney Town (Somersby, NWS), Greenhills
Adventure Park (Victor Harbor) and Sydney Skytour. These companies focus on quite different themes and have as a result a wide variety of job specialisations.

As mentioned above, there is a lack of detailed and reliable information available on the theme park segment, particularly in relation to occupation classifications in aquatic theme parks. The Australian Culture and Leisure Classifications (ACLC) were developed by the ABS in an attempt to provide substantial detail about components of the culture and leisure sector (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). The ACLC consist of three major classifications including industry, product and occupation classifications. However, the ACLC does not cover the level of detail required by the aquatic theme park sector, particularly in relation to the occupation classifications, because it excludes occupations that are not specifically ‘culture or leisure’ in nature (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005), such as most marine science occupations. The occupations in aquatic theme parks included in the classifications of the ACLC include Marine Biologist and Zoologist, which are related to “Life Scientists’ (a subgroup of professional occupations). In addition, Veterinary nurse is located in the group of ‘intermediate clerical, sales and service workers’.

Thus, there is a need for further classifications and examination of the characteristics of occupations within Australian aquatic theme parks, particularly in relation to marine science occupations. This study addresses, in part at least, this need by outlining major characteristics of employees working within Queensland and New South Wales aquatic theme parks, based on a comparative analysis between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” (e.g. food and beverage, retail and administrative). The decision to compare these two groups of employees was
based on a common characteristic of “marine science employees” in regard to their attachment to the animals (e.g. dolphins). This attachment provides a clear differentiation between the two groups and therefore, a potentially richer study. Given that one of the objectives of the present research is to examine perceptions of professionalism for “marine science employees”, a major focus includes the characteristics of those employees, their attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, this study identified the major occupations associated with marine science (e.g. animal trainers, veterinarian and aquarists), which are outlined in appendix 10. As well as sharing the types of work and professional occupations, there is a real need to study the organisational processes as they relate to these particular roles. The academic literature on the impact of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance can illuminate the background to this research.

1.3 Background to the Research Problem

In an increasingly competitive environment, service firms, such as aquatic theme parks, are finding that an emphasis on achieving defined job outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance and reducing role ambiguity is the key to organisational effectiveness (Kelley 1992; Reynolds & Beatty 1999; Varona 1996). Effective training and communication practices may play an important role in improving organisational effectiveness. It is suggested that aligning strategic HRM practices (e.g. training) and organisational goals can contribute to an organisation’s competitive advantage by fostering the commitment of employees to the organisation (McElroy 2001; Meyer & Smith 2000) and enhance work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and employee performance (Allen & Meyer 1996;
Cascio 1982; Gould-Williams 2004). In addition, the way that organisational goals are communicated to employees and their role in achieving them, strongly affects job commitment (Anderson & Martin 1995; Haskins 1996), which is, in turn, linked to job satisfaction (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2004; Johlke, Duhan, Howell & Wilkers 2000) and productivity (Clampitt & Downs, 1993).

The quality of communication practices is likely to affect clarity about job outcomes. Should there be resultant role ambiguity, it will negatively influence organisational profitability by affecting the provision of quality of service. It is argued that employee perceptions about company practices (e.g. the nature and intent of HRM practices such as training) are more likely to have a direct influence on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance than the actual practices themselves (Meyer & Allen 1997; Meyer, Allen & Smith 1993; Ogilvie 1986). This suggests that the messages communicated to employees about organisational practices (such as training and development) influence not only employee commitment but also employees’ level of job satisfaction and their performance. Specifically, Vinter, Lane and Hayes (1997) argue that ineffective communication practices may enhance the level of ambiguity, which in turn, may have a negative impact on employee commitment. This also suggests that when the message communicated to employees about organisational practices (such as training and development) is ambiguous, increasing levels of ambiguity regarding those practices can negatively influence their level of commitment, with a consequent impact on job satisfaction and employee performance.
This is particularly relevant for service organisations, such as aquatic theme park firms, where satisfying customers by providing high quality service is a critical factor in employee and organisational performance (Adsit, London, Crom & Jones, 1995) and therefore, organisational effectiveness. In the context of this research, work performance is understood to comprise the directed effort to achieve specific outcomes. Work performance is therefore assessed in terms of contribution to the outcomes specified for each particular job. For instance, work performance for “marine science employees” involves the delivery of high quality service to customers (outcome 1) and effective husbandry for the animals in their charge (outcome 2). It is clear therefore that service companies depend heavily on the ability of their employees, through their attitudes and behaviours, to effectively deliver high quality service. In turn, the delivery of a high quality service by employees depends (at least in part) on the ability of management to provide clear and relevant communication and information about employees’ roles (Chebat & Kollias, 2000), and appropriate training about customer service. When the information given to employees regarding customers’ needs and the organisation’s policies in meeting those needs and expectations is ambiguous, it is likely to increase their perception of role ambiguity, which in turn negatively affects employee satisfaction with their job and their level of performance. Consequently, ambiguous information and direction may well have a negative affect on the delivery of a high quality service.

Empirical evidence suggests that employee role ambiguity has a negative impact on job performance and job satisfaction (Singh, 1993) with a consequent negative impact on the delivery of customer service. Because role ambiguity refers to the effect of the clarity of information about employees’ roles (Keller, 1994), employee role ambiguity,
particularly regarding customers, may be an important moderator between organisational practices (training and communication) and work-related outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction and employee performance) for service firms such as aquatic theme parks. This suggests that lower levels of employee role ambiguity should enhance the impact of organisational practices (training and communication) on job satisfaction and employee performance.

Previous research has examined the impact of training practices on affective organisational commitment (McGunnigle & Jameson, 2000), job satisfaction (Paul & Anantharaman, 2004) and employee performance (Burke & Day, 1986). Likewise, past research has also been undertaken to examine the impact of communication practices on affective organisational commitment (Varona, 1996), job satisfaction (Goris, Vaught & Pettit, 2000) and employee performance (Johlke & Duhan, 2000). Although these studies have demonstrated a link between training and communication practices on work-outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) there is a gap in the literature in relation to the impact of these organisational practices on the three dimensions of affective commitment (organisation, occupation and customers), and on job satisfaction and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks. In addition, previous research has not examined whether ambiguity regarding customers acts as a moderator in relation to organisational practices and job satisfaction and employee performance within the Australian theme park segment.

Accordingly, the first objective of this study is to examine whether training and communication practices have a positive influence on affective commitment, job
satisfaction and employee performance within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. Part of this objective is to examine whether employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between organisational practices (training and communication) and work-related outcomes (job satisfaction and performance of employees) of Australian aquatic theme park companies. The second objective is to examine whether the impact of these organisational practices on these work-related outcomes varies between different types of employees working at Australian aquatic theme parks, with a particular focus on employees designated to undertake marine science related activities and other theme park employees (salespersons, food and beverage, administrative, etc).

The final objective of this paper is to examine whether employees designated to undertake marine science related activities (thereafter known as “marine science employees”), perceive themselves as professionals. “Marine science employees” include marine biologists, aquarists, animal trainers, zoo keepers, veterinaries nurses, animal carers and others. Despite this diversity of occupations, a common issue for employees in this group would appear to be their attachment to the animals, which would suggest that they share a common subculture within the general over-arching culture of their own, and perhaps more broadly, aquatic theme parks in general. Additionally, these occupations involve highly specialised skills and levels of high technical knowledge, based on experience and research. However, there has been no systematic attempt in the literature to understand perceptions of professionalism for marine science occupations within the Australian aquatic theme parks.
Because employees’ perceptions and behaviours may influence the delivery of quality customer service, this paper examines how the meanings that aquatic theme park employees attach to their work influences their perceptions of the effectiveness of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) on their level of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework is used in this research as a conceptual framework to provide the lens for better understanding how differences in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” can affect their perceptions about the significance of work, commitment to work processes, levels of job satisfaction and performance, and perception of professionalism for “marine science employees”.

Based on these objectives, this study sought to address the following primary research questions:

1.3.1 Primary Research Question 1

PRQ₁ What is the impact of organisational practices (in relation to training and development and communication) on work-related outcomes (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) within Australian aquatic theme parks?

1.3.2 Primary Research Question 2

PRQ₂ How does the impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance levels of theme park employees vary between those
designated to undertake marine science related activities and other theme park employees (salespersons, food and beverage, administrative, etc.)?

1.3.3 Primary Research Question 3

PRQ3 How do those employees designated to undertake marine science related activities perceive themselves as professionals?

In order to answer PRQ3 three secondary research questions were developed.

SRQ1 How do education levels determine professionalism?

SRQ2 How do perceptions of professionalism determine professionalism?

SRQ3 What is the impact of dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities?

1.4 The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework

As mentioned above, the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework is used in this research as a conceptual framework to enable a better understanding of the meanings that aquatic theme park employees attach to their work roles. While this conceptual framework will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, it will be presented an overview here to introduce the framework for the thesis. The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework suggests that the meanings that individuals associate with their work may influence the development of a number of variables including job performance, job satisfaction, commitment, motivation, turnover and pro-social behaviour (Lundberg & Peterson 1994; Westwood & Lok 2003). Because of this impact, the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework has the potential to function as a conceptual framework, because it can be used to integrate research and improve application (Ruiz
Quintanilla, 1991). Understanding the basic meanings that individuals attach to their work roles may assist, therefore, in fostering a better understanding of the nature of employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, given the apparent impact of perceived work significance on employee attitudes and behaviours.

Understanding work meanings necessarily entails an understanding of organisational culture, based on the prevailing assumption that ‘work’ is culturally defined (Joyce, 1987). The classic definition of organisational culture is that of Hofstede (1980, p.25) who said that ‘culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another’. Culture is manifested in organisations through a number of symbolic devices including myth, symbols, heroes and rituals, which can be used to influence, to some extent, individuals’ feelings, beliefs, attitudes, values and loyalties (Deal & Kennedy 1982; Van Maanen & Kunda 1989) through socialisation and education experiences (Hofstede, 1997). Thus, the meaning and significance of work may be strongly mediated by individual and group perceptions of the nature and significance of the work processes of the organisation, such as training and communication practices.

Effective communication is considered an important mechanism to encourage and shape the development of corporate culture (Deery & Shaw 1998; Haskins 1996; Schein 1990; Wilkins 1984). These findings suggest that positive perceptions about the factors that shape the corporate culture, such as training and communication practices, are likely to result in positive outcomes to the organisation, such as high levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. An analysis of the dynamics of the values, beliefs and meanings associated with the corporate culture may be
useful in developing a better understanding of the attitudes, behaviours and work meanings of Australian aquatic theme park employees, and how these factors are related to the work-related outcomes examined in this study.

This study focuses on work meanings for two groups of employees (“marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”) working in the Australian aquatic theme park segment, and the influence of the organisational culture on the particular subcultures that characterise the attitudes and behaviours of these two groups of employees (Hofstede 1998; Van Maanen & Barley 1984). Because each subculture is characterised by a different work identity, entailing different attitudes and behaviours (Martin, 1992), one of the objectives of this research is to understand the key features of the different work identities of these two groups including their expectations, attitudes about work and the influence of these work meanings on the levels of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Thus, understanding the interaction of the dominant organisational culture and subcultures, and the different values and beliefs associated with them may facilitate an understanding of the meaning and significance of work for aquatic theme park employees, and how these meanings influence the nature and focus of their commitments, and their level of job satisfaction and performance.

Of central importance in the analysis of corporate culture and its influence on the constituent subcultures is the issue of customer service, which is a critical factor underlying organisational effectiveness for service firms (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996) such as aquatic theme parks. This highlights the importance of the development of a customer service ethos or values within each subculture and therefore the need to
ensure that both training and communication practices enhance a focus on customers. However, as mentioned above, if the message communicated to employees about organisational practices, via training and development, is ambiguous, then the resulting level of ambiguity regarding those practices could influence work-related outcomes, particularly job satisfaction and job performance.

A common theme in relevant research is the consistent negative relationship between high job role ambiguity and job outcomes, such as job satisfaction and employee performance (Hartline & Ferrel 1996; Jackson & Schuler 1986; Johlke & Duhan 2000; Singh 1993). Given that the factors that affect job satisfaction also affect job performance (Goris et al. 2000; Petty, McGee & Cavender 1984), it is likely that both training and communication practices will have an influence on both job satisfaction and job performance in this study. However, given that ambiguity regarding customer service roles is a critical factor in the delivery of customer service, the effective impact of training and communication practices is dependent on whether such practices are likely to reduce employee ambiguity, particularly regarding customers and therefore enhance levels of satisfaction and performance. Therefore, this study examines whether ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between organisational practices (training and communication) and work-related outcomes (job satisfaction and employee performance).

The interaction of the dominant organisational culture and subcultures, and the different values and beliefs associated with them underpins one of the major objectives of this thesis: the perception of professionalism for “marine science employees”. This study attempts to analyse the meanings and significance of work
for the “marine science employees” subculture, and how these meanings influence their perception of professionalism, and in turn enhance their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. Because one of the basic characteristics of professionals is their specialised knowledge, based on education and training of exceptional duration and within an academic environment (Emmert & Taher 1992; Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitzgerald & Pettigrew 1996; Greenwood 1957), this study also examine whether education levels influence the perception of professionalism for “marine science employees”.

Work meanings vary according to a number of factors including the nature of the job, demographic and personal characteristics, types of skill and occupational levels, cultural differences, time, place and social stratification (Fox 1976; Gilmer 1975; Hall 1994). This suggests a differentiation in attitudes and behaviours between professional and non-professional groups in any particular industry. Work meanings are relevant in this analysis because the highly specialised knowledge and technical skills involved in the work of “marine science employees” suggests that they may possess some of the characteristics normally associated with the work of professionals.

Work, for professionals, has an inherently high value and significance and usually attracts high level of commitment by its very nature (see Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), because the content and subject of the work is central to professional values. This is in turn reflected in professionals’ satisfaction with their jobs, compared to non-professionals. Professionals possess particular abilities (knowledge and skills) and place a special significance on the nature of their work (Emmert & Taher 1992; Friedson 1994; Van Maanen & Barley 1984). Work for professionals is not just a
matter of doing a job or merely receiving the wage (Brien, 1998); work for them is usually interesting, creative and self-rewarding (Osinsky & Mueller, 2004).

In summary, understanding the different values and beliefs associated with their work may facilitate an understanding of the meaning and significance of work for aquatic theme park employees, and how work meanings influence their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. However, there is a gap in the literature examining work meanings within the Australian aquatic theme park segment, which is the focus of the following discussion.

1.5 Gap in the Literature

There is a lack of existing research within the Australian aquatic theme parks, particularly in relation to the impact of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). Although the tourism industry in general and the theme park segment in particular make an importance contribution to the Australia economy, minimal research has been undertaken to determine the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of training and communication practices in influencing work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). Minimal research has also been undertaken to examine the perception of professionalism for employees undertaking marine science activities within Australian aquatic theme parks. These research gaps are discussed as follows.
1.5.1 Research in the tourism industry and the theme park segment

The growth of Australian academic journals such as the Annals of Tourism Research, the Journal of Travel Research and the Journal of Tourism Studies has highlighted the recognition of tourism as a legitimate area of study in Australia. However, the tourism industry is still seen as one of the least researched industries, in comparison with research in other major industries (Davidson 2000; Witt and Moutinho 1995). In Australia, major research studies have focused on the tourism product and marketing (Stimson, Daly, Jenkins, Roberts & Ross, 1996), but little attention has been given to the analysis of the impact of organisational practices on employees’ perceptions and behaviours and how employee perceptions influence organisational effectiveness, in terms of providing high quality service.

For the labour-intensive tourism industry, it is claimed that a skilled workforce is critical for ensuring quality in service delivery (Doswell 1997; Foley, Lennon & Maxwell 1997; Kotler, Bowen & Makens 1999). A well-trained, multi-skilled workforce has therefore become essential for tourism companies coping with national and international competition by providing efficient quality service. Tourism organisations need to rely on the ability of their workforce to deliver quality products and services in order to meet existing and anticipated demand and to achieve a competitive edge (Baum, Amoah & Spivack, 1997). This suggests that tourism companies need to adopt effective organisational practices, such as training and communication, in order to enhance employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, and in turn organisational effectiveness, specifically in terms of providing high quality customer service.
However, it appears that the tourism industry has traditionally considered labour a cost of production, a replaceable item to be disposed of in the low season (Poon, 1993). The tourism industry is characterised therefore by a relatively high proportion of unskilled and poorly paid people, high turnover, high levels of casual and part-time jobs, low levels of training and low job security (Deery & Shaw 1998; Hall 1997; Mangan 1999; Witt & Moutinho 1995). Flexible employment practices such as part-time, seasonal, and temporary work are common in the tourism industry. These work structures are designed to manage capacity efficiently, in order to reduce labour costs and to manage fluctuating demand. However, jobs associated with those practices are characterised as ‘bad jobs’ with poor job characteristics (Kalleberg, Reskin & Hudson 2000; McGovern, Smeaton & Hill 2004). Indeed, a large number of students are utilised as a cheap, flexible labour force, reflecting the above-mentioned employment patterns in the tourism industry (Kotler et al. 1999; Lucas 1995). Findings from research conducted by Milman (2001, p.142) on North American theme parks indicate that the majority of jobs in the theme park and attraction industry require unskilled labour, mandate long, non-traditional working hours coupled with monotonous tasks and that many of these jobs are poorly paid and often associated with high turnover rates.

Commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance therefore may be related to factors other than employment conditions in the aquatic theme park segment, although there is no research evidence on this issue at the moment. Casualisation may be one of these factors. For instance, the high level of casual employment in the aquatic theme parks is likely to have some level of impact on these work-related outcomes. Likewise, the significant proportion of female employees may also influence social
identities and therefore, commitment, job satisfaction and performance. Casualisation and employment of women may well be related factors but no specific research is yet available on the impact of such factors on work-related outcomes within Australian aquatic theme parks.

In discussing trends in North America, Herzenberg (1998, p.4) states that: ‘with deregulation and new competition in sectors ranging from trucking to retailing to health care, employers have sought to cut labour costs, treating workers as interchangeable parts and accepting the high turnover and low commitment to the job that result’. This generalisation could also apply to the tourism industry in Australia. The employment patterns and strategies found in tourism, however, may be well adapted to the needs of the unskilled labour market segment, including students, which provides a critical part of the employment requirement of the industry. The present study contributes to that research requirement. While there has been a significant study exploring employment relations at an Australia theme park (Townsend, Russell, Allan & Houghton, 2003), which has some relevance for the present study, the focus of this paper was on examining the link between employment relations and working time flexibility, with emphasis to the satisfaction of employees with the number of hours worked. In contrast, one of the objectives of the present paper is to examine the influence of organisational practices (e.g. training and development) on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

According to Ryan and Page (2000), research on theme parks generally remains a neglected area within the tourism literature and most of the relatively few studies are descriptive and lacking in analysis. As more than half of tourism employment is
related to the hospitality industry (Richardson, 1995), researchers have concentrated their studies in this sector (Davidson 2000; Finegold, Wagner & Mason 2000; Harrington & Akehurst 1996; Hoque 1999). In relation to the theme park segment, there has been some major research work examining consumers’ perceptions and behaviours (Fodness & Milner 1992; Johns & Gyimothy 2002; Ah-Keng 1993; McClung 1991). For instance, McClung (1991) surveyed US theme parks in order to examine consumers’ selection and expectations of theme parks, while Johns and Gyimothy (2002) conducted research to analyse visitor experience at a Denmark theme park. Other studies have focused on the future and development of theme parks (Milman 2001; Jones 1994), and service failure (Lewis & Clacher, 2001). In addition, it is notable that most of the major studies of the segment are of the overseas theme parks including Curwen (1995), Camp (1997) and Johns and Gyimothy (2002) on European parks; Derek (1989) and Butterworth (1992) on U.K. parks; Ah-Keng (1993) on Singaporean parks and Jones (1994) on Japanese parks.

The above indicates the paucity of research in the area of the adoption of organisational practices and their contribution to work-related outcomes, particularly within the Australian theme park segment. However, a number of non-empirical overseas studies have demonstrated the role played by organisational practices such as training and communication in influencing organisational effectiveness in terms of achieving high levels of quality service. For example, Florida Theme Park, a large and major U.S. theme park, has provided extensive training of employees and ongoing communication as strategic tools designed to ensure high levels of employee performance and to help employees make customers happy by making the right decisions in each customer encounter (Mayer, 2002). Granada Studios Tour, a
leading U.K. theme park, implemented an intensive training and recruitment program, based on a TQM approach, which is considered one of the major contributors to achieving its business objectives (based on quality, value for money and customer loyalty) and becoming more competitive (Butterworth, 1992).

A limitation shared by these studies is that their main focus is to ‘describe’ the organisational practices adopted from a management perspective only. For example, Debra Butterworth (Butterworth, 1992), who authored ‘The show must go on’, is a personnel manager at Granada Studios Tour in U.K, and her work was not empirically based. Mayer (2002) conducted his research using management data and views only, and such an approach may raise questions about the validity of the results. In the present research, such skews are avoided by ensuring that employees’ views are assessed and analysed to determine how their perceptions of organisational practices are influencing the levels of work force commitment, job satisfaction and performance within the Australian aquatic theme parks studied.

These findings suggest that there is a lack of research examining the impact of organisational practices on organisational effectiveness within the Australian aquatic theme park segment, especially in terms of providing high quality customer service. The present research addresses this gap by examining the impact of specific organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance within the Australia aquatic theme park segment, in particular within Queensland and New South Wales. The current research is important, therefore, because it will add to the scant body of Australian literature in the area.
Another objective of this research focuses on the impact of perceptions of professionalism by employees undertaking marine science activities within Queensland and New South Wales aquatic theme parks and how these perceptions enhance their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. The discussion above addresses the lack of detailed information about marine science occupations within the Australia statistical indicators, despite evidence of the emergence of a sense of professionalism among marine science employees in Australian aquatic theme parks.

1.6 Contribution of the Research

Four major contributions to the literature are anticipated in this research study. The first of these contributions relates to the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework whereby the ‘Meaning of Working’ model developed by Westwood and Lok (1996), would be broadened on a number of significant and original ways:

- by analysing the values maintained by the organisational culture and its influence on the particular subcultures within the organisations studied;
- by clearly demonstrating the critical role played by on-the-job training (HRM practice) in influencing work meaning patterns;
- by including significant variables including commitment (to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers) and employee performance; and
- by exploring the influence of work meanings on perceptions of professionalism for employees undertaking marine science activities within Australia aquatic theme parks.

Further anticipated outcomes relates to the impact of organisational processes and practices (training and communication) on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, and the provision of significant insights into theoretical and
practical issues surrounding the process of professionalisation of marine science employees.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1 contextualises the Organisational Behaviour research within a tourism context and Chapter 2 examines the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework model and its application in this research. Chapter 3 provides a detailed literature review of key concepts including training and development, communication, commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance and professionalism while Chapter 4 consists of a detailed research methodology. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the quantifiable empirical results while Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the findings from the qualitative data gathered for this study. Chapter 7 provides a discussion of the research findings (from the quantitative and qualitative data) and Chapter 8 focuses on the conclusions and implications of this research study.
CHAPTER 2 – THE MEANING OF WORKING

2.1 Introduction

Because of its important role in framing this thesis, this chapter examines the Meaning of Working conceptual literature with emphasis on analysing concepts associated with the meanings that individuals attach to their work with a consequent impact on work-related outcomes such as employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. First, the importance of work is explored, followed by a discussion of the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework. After that, a discussion of the Meaning of Working (MOW) model is provided followed by an analysis of the modifications of the original MOW model and a discussion of work domains including work centrality, importance of work goals, valued work outcomes and work-role identification. For a better understanding of the meanings that individuals attach to their work, this chapter will also explore the major factors affecting work meanings including social changes and cultural influences.

2.2 Importance of Work

The subject of work meanings has attracted relatively more attention in the last two decades, especially from sociologists and psychologists, as compared to other life roles such as family, leisure, community and religion (see England 1990; MOWIRT 1987; Roe & Ester 1999). The significance given to work is reflected in a number of factors. First, work plays a central role in an individual’s social life, not only in relation to the provision of economic benefits (e.g. income) but also in relation to non-economic incentives, because work is viewed as a source of social participation,
social status (e.g. prestige), self-esteem and self-actualisation (Probert 1989; Steers & Porter 1979; Westwood & Lok 2003).

Notwithstanding this centrality of work in individuals’ lives, however, not all individuals have associated similar feelings to their work activities. While some people enjoy the work they do and have benefited from their work, a considerable proportion of people are not satisfied with the work they do because they may view it as boring and unchallenging (see Argyle 1989; England 1990; Grint 1991). On the other hand, an increasing number of individuals have attempted to balance their work with other aspects of life including the family and the community (Steers & Porter, 1979), in an attempt to maintain work-life balance (Guest 2002; Sverko, Arambasic, & Galesic 2002). Other factors reflecting the importance of work include the indirect impact of work meanings on working attitudes (e.g. commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) and other variables such as motivation, turnover and flexibility (see Lundberg & Peterson 1994; Westwood & Lok 2003; Wilber 1998). Clearly, understanding the meanings that individuals associate with work is quite a complicated process because work meanings have a great deal of individual variability (England 1988; Friedman & Havighurst 1977; Stewart 1990). The factors affecting such variability may have practical implication for organisations, particularly concerning commitment, job satisfaction and performance policies.

The meanings that individuals attach to their work represent and reflect patterns of employees’ beliefs, values, expectations and preferences (Ruiz Quintanilla 1991; MOWIRT 1987). Given the apparent impact on employee attitudes and behaviours and ultimately on organisations and societies, understanding the meanings that
individuals attach to their work roles is important also in achieving a better understanding of optimal work design and work processes. Such an improved understanding of work meanings is useful, therefore, for organisations in restructuring and/or developing policies and practices (see Roe & Ester, 1999). Furthermore, managerial strategies directed toward such issues as motivational and commitment regimes, rewards structures, leadership style and retention practices can also be better understood with a Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework (Westwood & Lok, 2003). A discussion of the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework as developed in a number of contemporary research studies follows.

2.3 The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework

Application of the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework will broaden the conceptual framework of the present research to include and to clarify the central constructs of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance in the Australian aquatic theme park workplaces. It is argued that the meanings that individuals associate with their work may influence the development of a number of variables, including job performance, job satisfaction, commitment, motivation, turnover and pro-social behaviour (Lundberg & Peterson 1994; Westwood & Lok 2003). Because of this impact, the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework has the potential to function as a core concept, integrating research and improving application (Ruiz Quintanilla, 1991). The linkage between work meanings and work-related outcomes is important for the present study because one of the primary objectives of this study is to examine whether employees’ perceptions of organisational practices (e.g. training and development practices) influence their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. Understanding the basic
meanings that individuals attach to their work roles may assist in fostering a better understanding of these relationships, given the apparent impact of work significance on employee perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

These insights will assist in the comparative analysis of different and distinct employee groups within Australian aquatic theme parks such as “marine science employees” and other theme park employees”. The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework will also be important in understanding perceptions about professionalism on the part of “marine science employees”. A discussion of the conceptual model developed by the Meaning of Working International Research Team (MOWIRT) follows.

2.3.1 The Meaning of Working (MOW) Model

As a consequence of the impact of societal and economic changes on the work context and work environment, and therefore on work meanings since the 1980s, a number of large-scale empirical studies have focused on the meanings and significance that individuals attach to their work activities. This attention by researchers has included the Work Importance Study (Super & Sverko, 1995) which analysed the changing paradigm of work significance in a number of national cultures, over a particular period of major change impacting on the workplace. Also, significant research has been undertaken by the Meaning of Working International Research Team (MOWIRT, 1987), which conducted a major study in an attempt to understand the psychological meanings that individuals attach to their work roles. It is this study that is the focus of the next section.
The MOWIRT study (thereafter MOW study) was undertaken by a team of 14 scholars who, in the early 1980s, assessed work meanings in eight countries including Belgium, Britain, Germany, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, the United States and Yugoslavia. The MOW research team developed a three-level conceptual model (see Figure 2.1 below) in an attempt to demonstrate the similarities and differences about the formation, existence and consequences of work meanings across countries. The MOW research team analysed variations within countries by comparing differences on work meanings across demographic, occupational, and occupation status levels (MOWIRT, 1987). The sampling strategy adopted by the MOW research team was based on a set of ten occupational groups (unemployed, retired, chemical engineers, teachers, self-employed businessmen, tool- and die-makers, white collar employees, textile workers, temporary workers and students).

The MOW model consists of three major set of variables including (1) conditional variables (antecedents); (2) central variables (Meaning of Working); and (3) consequences. In this model, there are three major conditional variables (antecedents), including: (i) personal and family situation, (ii) present job and career history, and (iii) macrosocio-economic environment. In relation to the central variables (Meaning of Working), the model depicts five distinct constructs including (i) centrality of working as a life role (work centrality); (ii) societal norms about working; (iii) valued working outcomes; (iv) importance of work goals; (v) and work-role identification. The MOW research team conceptualised the consequences in terms of (i) subjective expectations about future working situations and (ii) objective outcomes of working.
The MOW model is ‘based on the conception that work meanings are determined by the choices and experiences of the individual and by the organisational and environmental context in which they work and live’ (MOWIRT 1987, p.15). The MOW model suggests that experiences with work and work conditions influence the patterns of work meanings developed by individuals and in turn impact on organisations and societies (e.g. mobility, productivity and conflict). Although the MOW research team conceptualised five distinct central variables, the focus of the research project and analysis was related to only three meanings constructs. These three major and distinct constructs are: work centrality; societal norms about working; and valued work outcomes and work goals. These three domains represent the ‘core domains’ of the MOW model as they capture the beliefs and values that individuals associate with their work, and ‘function theoretically to describe different bases for the attachment of individuals to the phenomenon of working’ (MOWIRT 1987, p.16).

The construct for ‘work centrality’ involves issues related to identification with work and the strength of involvement with and commitment to work. ‘Societal norms about working’ relates to societal expectations of an individual’s obligation to work and entitlements received from work. ‘Valued working outcomes and work goals’ is associated with the outcomes that people seek from working and work goals they consider to be important. The central variable ‘work-role identification’ was treated as a major component of ‘work centrality’; ‘work goals’ was combined with ‘valued working outcomes’.

The MOW model has been revised by Westwood and Leung (1996) and later by Westwood and Lok (2003). The present study adopted the 2003 Westwood and Lok modified MOW model. These modifications to the original MOW model are
discussed below, followed by a discussion of the application of the meaning of working constructs, with the exception of ‘societal norms about work’, which is beyond the scope of the present research.
Figure 2.1 Meaning of Working Model – Heuristic model (MOWIRT, 1987)
2.3.2 Modification of the Meaning of Working (MOW) model

The MOW study was one of the first and most comprehensive national surveys and has resulted in a growing body of research and a large number of papers in the area of the meaning of working (Claes & Ruiz Quintanilla 1993; England 1991; Harpaz 2002; Peterson & Ruiz Quintanilla 2003). However, these studies were more focused on testing or validating parts of the MOW heuristic model rather than on extending, modifying or refocusing this model. Westwood and Leung (1996), based on a sample with Chinese workers (Beijing), was the first study that attempted to revise the MOW model by including a number of variables that were neglected by the MOW research team. According to Westwood and Leung (1996), the nature, meaning and experience of work is shaped by a complex set of factors including the individuals’ background and past experiences; cultural norms and values associated with work; the economic and political environment; the organisational context; and factors related to the work environment.

They also suggest that work meanings are likely to have important consequences for the work-related attitudes, motivations, actions and work performance. Based on their analysis, Westwood and Leung (1996) modified the MOW model by introducing a set of variables. The main modifications to the MOW model proposed by Westwood and Leung (1996) were: (1) the ‘macrosocio-economic environment’ conditional variable was replaced by a ‘Macro-societal level’ variable incorporating economic, political/ideological and socio-cultural factors; (2) the other two conditional variables of the original MOW model (personal/family situation and present job/career history) was replaced by a ‘psycho-social, micro-personal level’ variable incorporating family and personal factors; (3) inclusion of an ‘organisational level’ variable between the
antecedents and central variables in order to emphasise the influencing role played by organisational factors on work meanings and in turn on consequences; (4) collapsing the five work domains into three, following the original MOW model; (5) incorporation of the ‘psycho-social responses’ variable into the ‘consequences’ variable (see figure 2.2).
Figure 2.2 Modified Meaning of Working Model (Westwood & Leung, 1996)

The Meaning of Working – Chapter 2

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
Two of these modifications were significant. The first was the inclusion of organisational factors associated with organisational culture and structures, employment relations and HRM practices, management and leadership style, and the working environment and job design. The second was the addition of work-related outcomes (consequences) including motivation, job satisfaction and commitment. Although this modified model has usefully extended the original MOW model, there remain a number of limitations in the modified model that need to be considered. The first is the omission of customer service issues from the ‘organisational level’ variable, which is a critical factor in any research examining work meanings within the service industry. The second issue in this model relates to the fact that Westwood and Leung (1996) did not attempt to analyse the impact of work meanings on work-related outcomes, such as commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. The main emphasis was on the relationship between the macro-societal/organisational level factors and the central MOW variables.

Westwood and Lok (2003), based on a sample of Hong Kong and Beijing workers, adopted the modified MOW model proposed by Westwood and Leung (1996) with some further modifications (see Figure 2.3 below). The first modification relates to the ‘macro-societal level’ variable, where the three variables of the Westwood and Leung model were collapsed into two: socio-cultural and political economy. The second, and major modification is related to the central MOW variables. Instead of three variables, Westwood and Lok (2003) included five variables, as first suggested by the MOW research team (MOWIRT, 1987) but not included in their model, nor in the modified model of Westwood and Leung (1996). The two additional central domains (‘work-role identification’ and ‘work goals’) provide more detailed
information about work meanings as distinct work domains rather than by combining their constituent variables with others. The present study adopts the modified MOW model of Westwood and Lok (2003). The shaded areas within Figure 2.3 illustrate the variables of interest for the present research including: (1) organisational variables (organisational culture and subculture, training and development and communication practices); (2) central variables or work domains (work centrality, importance of work goals, valued working outcomes; and work-role identification). Note that “societal norms about working’ is excluded because it is beyond the scope of this study. (3) psycho-social outcomes (affective commitment to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers; job satisfaction and employee performance). A discussion of each of the four relevant central variables or work domains follows.
Figure 2.3 Meaning of Working Model (Westwood & Lok, 2003) – Adapted-Proposed

**Macro-societal level**
- Socio-cultural
  - Cultural values
  - Social norms and expectations
- Political economy
  - Stage of development
  - Industrial organisation
  - Labour market functioning

**Micro-personal level**
- Family
  - Dependencies and commitment
  - Obligations
  - Socialisation
- Personal
  - Demographics
  - Career
  - Working experience and expectations

**Organisational Level**
- Organisational culture and structure patterns (subculture)
- Employment relations
- Human resource practices (Training)
- Working environment and job design
- Management style and leadership (communication)

**Valued Work Outcomes**

**Work Centrality**

**Work Role Identification**

**Importance of Work Goals**

**Societal Norms about Working**

**Psycho-social outcomes**
- Motivation, Job satisfaction, Affective commitment

**Objective outcomes of working employee performance**

**Subjective expectations and calculations about future work situations**

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
2.3.2.1 Work Centrality

The MOW research team (MOWIRT 1987, p.17) defined ‘work centrality’ as the degree of a ‘general belief about the value of working in one’s life’. ‘Work centrality’ therefore is concerned primarily with the individual’s identification with work and the general importance they attach to their work roles (MOWIRT, 1987). The ‘work centrality’ domain involves two distinct but related theoretical components including:

(i) the belief/value orientation (centrality of work as a life role) and (ii) the decision orientation (commitment to work is a selective process in relation to other life spheres); (Ruiz Quintanilla & Wilpert 1988; MOWIRT 1987). Overall, findings from the MOWIRT (1987) studies suggested that respondents placed work as the second most important and significant issue, exceeded only by family.

Results of a number of studies conducted during the period 1982-1989 revealed that the level of importance and significance attached to work has undergone a moderate decline, as individuals are placing more emphasis on other life spheres such as family and leisure and less emphasis on the work domain (England 1991; Ruiz Quintanilla & Wilpert 1991). This lowered work centrality can be interpreted as an attempt to maintain a work-life balance (Sverko et al., 2002). A higher emphasis on family and leisure activities would seem to entail a corresponding reduction in commitment to work (Guest, 2002). However, as work meanings are not similar for all individuals, various individuals and groups attribute different levels of significance and value to the work they do, with a consequent variation of impact on work-related outcomes. For example, while Beijing respondents put work above family (Westwood & Lok, 2003), Hong Kong respondents place more emphasis on their work (Westwood & Leung 1996; Westwood & Lok 2003). Findings from a study conducted by Bu and
McKeen (2000), suggest that Chinese future managers and professionals place work (occupational roles) above family. Findings from the MOWIRT’s (1987) study suggest that chemical engineers had the highest scores for work centrality while temporary workers had the lowest scores.

Furthermore, a number of studies have examined ‘work centrality’ and its implications for work-related outcomes. For instance, findings from Peterson and Ruiz Quintanilla (2003), based on a study examining work meanings in the United States, suggest a significant and positive relationship between work centrality and both intrinsic satisfaction and individual effectiveness. It may well be that some employees from particular occupational groupings, especially professionals, still tend to express a higher value and significance about the work they do (see Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), which in turn enhances their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance compared to other workers. Therefore, the features of ‘career’, particularly for professionals, involving higher levels of skills, knowledge and abilities, are associated with increased job status and prestige which can lead to an increase in the centrality of working as part of the total identity of the individual professional (MOWIRT, 1987).

The results of previous studies will be compared to the findings of the current study which will undertake a comparative analysis of patterns of work meanings of “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. A major focus of the present research is to examine the centrality of work in the lives of these employees and the implications for their levels
of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, as well as for perceptions of professionalism for “marine science employees”.

### 2.3.2.2 Importance of Work Goals

The ‘valued work goals’ construct is concerned with the importance of work goals and values to individuals, as indicated by their preferences for particular outcomes that they value from work (MOWIRT, 1987). The ‘valued work goals construct’ involves four dimensions including the **expressive dimension** (interesting work, variety, autonomy, good match between job requirements and use of abilities/experience); the **economic dimension** (good pay, job security, opportunity for upgrading and promotion); the **comfort dimension** (physical working conditions, convenient work hours); and the **learning/improvement opportunity dimension** (opportunity to learn, opportunity for upgrading and promotion) (MOWIRT, 1987). Findings from the MOWIRT (1987) study demonstrated that the most important work goal is having interesting work, followed by good pay and good interpersonal relations.

Good pay has been identified as the most important work goal in two relevant studies examining work meanings (Westwood & Leung 1996; Westwood & Lok 2003). However, Westwood and Leung (1996) found that while Chinese graduates (highly educated) rated ‘opportunity to learn new things’ as the most important work goal, the general Chinese working population placed high importance on financial rewards. This finding highlights the need to analyse work meanings on a comparative basis between types of employees. These studies also highlight the need to take into account social-cultural influences in the workplace, as strong deep-rooted Chinese
culture is very influential in determining work patterns for Chinese subjects. Such factors (socio-cultural) are not included in the present study.

Although Westwood and Leung (1996) did not analyse the impact of work meanings on work-related outcomes, other empirical research attention has focused on the relationship between work values and organisational commitment (Elizur 1996; Kidron 1978; Oliver 1990; Putti, Aryee & Ling 1989). Elizur’s (1996) study for example, based on a sample of workers in Israel, demonstrated that cognitive work values (e.g. job interest and use of abilities) were more related to organisational commitment than instrumental work values (e.g. pay and benefits), although ‘pay’ had a positive impact on organisational commitment as well. Results of research conducted by Lundberg and Peterson (1994) demonstrate a significant contribution of ‘expressive work goals’ (interesting work, autonomy, personal investment) and ‘learning goals’ (opportunity to learn new things) in explaining intrinsic job satisfaction and individual effectiveness. However, there is very little research examining the impact of work goals on work-related outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance and specifically none within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. A major issue to be addressed in the present study is to identify the goals that motivate “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. This study adds to the literature by examining which goals establish values and support work meanings for aquatic theme park employees and also how these work meanings influence levels of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.
2.3.2.3 Valued Work Outcomes

Valued work outcomes represent the relative importance to the individual of various work outcomes as indicated by the individual’s preferences in ordering of different outcomes of working. ‘Valued work outcomes’ refers to the results an individual intends to obtain from working (MOWIRT, 1987). In order to understand the general outcomes and/or opportunities individuals seek from working and their relative importance, the MOW research team identified six valued outcomes including: the status and prestige-providing function of working, income-producing function of working, time-occupying function of working, interpersonal contact function of working, societal service function of working, and the intrinsic function of working (working being basically interesting and satisfying to the individual) (MOWIRT 1987, p.65). Findings from the MOWIRT (1987) study suggest that the income-producing function of working is perceived as the most important function by the labour force in every country, followed by the intrinsic function of working (working being basically interesting and satisfying to the individual). Findings from other studies have also suggested that workers viewed income as the most valuable working outcomes (Westwood & Leung 1996; Westwood & Lok 2003). Findings from a research review by Roberts and Glick (1980) suggest that part-time workers appear to value working outcomes such as interpersonal relations, comfort, and also pay more highly than full-time workers. Findings from one qualitative study suggest that, among those who were satisfied with their jobs, many strongly identified with the status of their position (Probert & Macdonald, 1996). These various results will be compared to the findings of the present study. A major focus is to identify what it is about working (and work outcomes) that Australian aquatic theme park employees value and find
important, and how these values influence their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours and in turn their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and on the job performance.

2.3.2.4 Work-role Identification

Work identification is the outcome of a cognitive consistency process centred on a comparison between work as an activity and perceptions of self (MOWIRT, 1987). This suggests that work identity is the outcome of the interplay between the relationship of the work that individuals do and their sense of identity, achievement and self-esteem. Because not all individuals view work as central to their sense of identity, there are many and diverse ways in which work and identity are linked. The level of work-role identification indicates whether or not working is a central or minor part of an individual’s self-identification in terms of various roles, such as their task role, organisational role, product or service role, work relations role, occupation or professional role, and producing income role (MOWIRT, 1987).

However, the link between work and role identification has been overlooked in the literature because the majority of studies exploring the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework have focused on only three work domains representing the ‘core domains’ of the Meaning of Working model, including work centrality, societal norms about working and valued work outcomes and work goals. One exception is found in the study of Westwood and Lok (2003) whose findings suggest that income was viewed by Chinese workers (Hong Kong and Beijing) as critical to their self-identification. However, findings from a qualitative study examining work meanings (but not using the MOW model) demonstrated that one highly skilled nurse participant passionately identified with her occupation, despite her sense of being
grossly underpaid and having to work in an increasingly underfunded environment (Probert and Macdonald 1996, p.17). Probert and Macdonald (1996) however also reported that paid work was critical to the sense of individual and social identity for the majority of the people who participated in their study, particularly for women as providers for dependent children. A comparative analysis between “marine science employees’ and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment will be useful to identify which of the roles mentioned above are central to each of these groups.

Meaning of Working model domains in summary

Analysis of the four work domains, as outlined above, will assist in better understanding the work meanings patterns for both ‘marine science employees’ and ‘other theme park employees’ within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. Although these four work domains are analysed separately, they are interrelated in terms of making up the patterns of work meanings for employees. For example, most studies using the MOW model reported that the majority of participants had high work centrality but most of those participants also place high value on income. Money is certainly important to all individuals, as reinforced by the MOW studies, but because work meanings are not similar across individuals/occupational groups, individuals tend to report a range of other reasons for working. Past research suggests that ‘low centrality workers’ scored high on work values including ‘having time for personal needs’ and ‘the method of wage payment’ (Dublin, Champoux & Porter, 1975). Findings from a study reviewed by Gallie and White (1993) suggest that the majority of participants were committed to the principle of being employed, but a number of factors related to those individuals are worthy of consideration: they were
not necessarily committed to their particular jobs; they were not committed to working full-time, but rather stated a preference for a working week of between 16 and 30 hours and they did not necessarily want to maintain their existing conditions of employment. These findings suggest that there are other factors that may have a significant influence on work meanings, such as societal changes over the period covered by these studies and the influence of organisational culture and subculture. An analysis of these factors follows.

2.4. Factors Affecting Work Meanings

The issues explored in the following sections will provide a context for a better understanding of work meanings. The impact of societal changes (e.g. economic and a shift to service sector employment) and cultural influences on work-related outcomes will provide insights into the meanings that Australian aquatic theme park employees attach to their work roles.

2.4.1 Societal Changes

In the last two decades economic, political and technological changes have significantly impacted on the society and its social values, which in turn have influenced the work environment and the meanings that individuals associate with their work roles (Inglehart 1990; Offerman & Gowing 1990). For example, the importance of economic incentives such as high salaries and rewards on people’s lives has shifted somewhat, as an increasing number of people have placed more emphasis on autonomy, more interesting and more meaningful work (Cherington 1980; Inglehart 1977). Many people value work which provides them with the opportunity to exercise and develop their skills and abilities. It is suggested that professional

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
employees are more likely to be committed to their work, irrespective of economic incentives, precisely because their work offers such opportunities, in comparison to semi-skilled manual workers (Noon & Blyton, 2002).

Other social changes include a shift to a more dominant service sector employment. This may be one of the main factors that has contributed to growth in part-time and casual employment, particularly for women, because the majority of part-time and casual jobs has been undertaken by women (see Hall 1995; Harley & Whitehouse 2001; Mangan 1999; Noon & Blyton 2002). In the Australian amusement and theme park segment, during 2000-01, casual employees accounted for 54 per cent while permanent full-time and part-time employees accounted for 33 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005).

For many people, part-time and casual employment is convenient (Noon & Blyton, 2002) as they can combine family duties and work, seeking a satisfying work-life balance (Guest, 2002), with minimum role conflict and maximum job satisfaction (Sverko et al., 2002). As a result, some companies have adopted work-life benefit programs (e.g. flexible work arrangements, on-site child-care facilities & family leave), in order to help employees, especially single parents, to maintain a work-life balance, and also as a strategy to attract and retain employees (Sverko et al., 2002). These work-life balance policies can also be viewed as an indirect attempt to foster employee commitment to the organisation (Hochschild, 1997) and enhance job satisfaction and employee performance.
The strategic approach in helping employees maintain their work-life balance, especially for women, is not similar across organisations/industries. Part-time and casual jobs in the service sector such as in the tourism industry, are usually associated with lower pay, benefits and status; less autonomy, responsibility and job security; and also higher turnover and lower levels of training (Noon & Blyton 2002; Weaver & Oppermann 2000; Witt & Moutinho 1995). As a consequence many people, particularly women, may view their part-time jobs as ‘intrinsically and extrinsically poorly rewarded’ (Noon & Blyton 2002, p.63). This situation may well pertain to casual and seasonal employment throughout the service industry, including tourism, where flexible employment practices such as part-time, seasonal, and temporary work are common. Although such practices have been utilised to manage capacity efficiently, to reduce labour costs and to manage fluctuating demand, jobs associated with those practices are often characterised within society as ‘bad jobs’ with poor job characteristics (see Kalleberg et al. 2000; McGovern et al. 2004).

These practices may affect the meanings that individuals attach to their work roles, which in turn may influence their commitment (Guest, 2002), job satisfaction and performance. The tourism industry (service sector) has traditionally considered labour as a cost of production, a replaceable item and an item to dispose of in the low season (Poon, 1993). Such practices are at odds with those normally associated with effective organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) that foster employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. These attitudes may result in high turnover and low employee commitment (Hezenberg, 1998) and low levels of satisfaction and performance. These employment patterns and strategies, however, may have been adapted to the needs of this labour market segment, which
provides a critical part of the employment requirement of the industry. Employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks therefore may not be affected by the nature of employment (e.g. casual and seasonal employment) although there is no research evidence on this issue at the moment in relation to the theme park segment.

The present study will contribute to this research requirement by examining the factors that influence the impact of organisational practices (e.g. training and commitment) on employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance in the Australian aquatic theme park segment. The present study will also undertake a comparative analysis between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, with particular attention to “marine science employees”. Thus, the analysis of changes in the nature of employment relationship, in particular in the Australian service sector (e.g. aquatic theme parks), may assist in fostering a better understand of the impact of training and communication practices on employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

2.4.2 Cultural Influences

An analysis of the influence of organisational culture and subculture on work meanings will now provide insight into the meaning and significance of work for Australian aquatic theme park employees.
2.4.2.1 Culture

Based on the prevailing assumption that ‘work’ is culturally defined (Joyce, 1987), an understanding of work meanings necessarily entails an understanding of organisational culture. The classic definition of organisational culture is that of Hofstede (1980, p.25) who said that ‘culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another’. A wide variety of definitions of organisation culture have emerged focusing on different central concepts including patterns of basic assumptions about behaviour (Schein, 1984) and shared core values (Peters & Waterman, 1982). However, most definitions of organisational culture involve a common central concept concerning shared common values, attitudes and behaviours (see Dessler 2005; Stone 2005; Triandis 2002).

These definitions suggest that organisational culture is strongly related to the meaning and significance of work as an activity within the organisation. Culture is manifested in organisations through a number of symbolic devices including shared myths, symbols, heroes and rituals, the construction of which can be used to influence, to some extent, individuals’ feelings, beliefs, attitudes, values and loyalties (Deal & Kennedy 1982; Van Maanen & Kunda 1989) as well as through socialisation and education experiences (Hofstede, 1997). Thus, the meaning and significance of work may be strongly mediated by individual and group perceptions of the nature and significance of the work activities of the organisation. These perceptions are shaped by the culture of the organisation. The management of multi-factorial cultural artefacts and behaviours is a challenge confronting many contemporary organisations because it is thought that culture has a real impact on behaviour. A number of factors
have been identified in the organisational culture literature as important mechanisms to encourage and shape the development of corporate culture and subcultures, including activities concerning recruitment, selection, socialisation, training and development programs, benefits and comprehensive rewards as well as effective communication (Deery & Shaw 1998; Haskins 1996; Schein 1990; Wilkins 1984).

Since the early 1980s there has been an extensive literature on organisational culture, possibly because of the underlying assumptions concerning the influence of organisational culture on a number of variables, such as commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance (Deal & Kennedy 1982; Lincoln & Kalleberg 1990; Peters & Waterman 1982; Randall 1993). According to O'Reilly (1989) organisational culture is considered a potential variable in developing and maintaining employee commitment. Empirical evidence has suggested that employees’ perceptions about organisational practices (e.g. benefits) are likely to influence employee commitment (Meyer & Smith 2000; Ogilvie 1986). Clugston, Howell and Dorfman (2000) found, based on data from an American public agency, that certain cultural dimensions (e.g. collectivism) have a positive impact on affective commitment to workgroup. Lok and Crawford (1999) examined the relationship between organisational culture/subculture and commitment/job satisfaction in a study of Australian nurses and showed that innovative nursing ward culture is positively related to organisational commitment. These findings suggest that positive perceptions about the factors that shape the corporate culture, such as organisational practices (e.g. training and communication), are likely to result in positive outcomes to the organisation, such as high levels of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.
However, other factors that shape the organisational culture are likely to lead to negative organisational outcomes. High labour turnover and low pay, for instance, have been identified empirically as critical cultural factors that are likely to result in negative consequences for organisations, particularly in the hospitality industry (Iverson & Deery 1997; Ogbonna & Harris 2002), including low levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. High staff turnover tends to be associated with poor management and organisational support, which can lead to an increase in employee stress and a consequent desire of employees to leave the organisation (Deery & Shaw, 1998). In addition, employment practices in relation to non-standard employment in Australia are usually associated with poor work conditions such as low pay, lack of fringe benefits and low levels of training (Mangan, 1999). This situation is likely to apply to other segments of the tourism industry such as the aquatic theme park segment. Thus, the present study will examine patterns of employment practices existing in the Australian aquatic theme park segment and how these patterns influence employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

An analysis of the dynamics of the values, beliefs and meanings associated with corporate culture may be useful in developing a better understanding of the attitudes, behaviours and work meanings of Australian aquatic theme park employees, and how these factors are related to work-related outcomes. The analysis focuses on work meanings across different groups of employees working in the Australian aquatic theme park segment including both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” groups and the influence of these work meanings on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Further information about these two groups of employee is provided below.
2.4.2.2 Subculture

A number of subcultures are evident in most organisations (Helms & Stern 2001; Van Maanen & Barley 1984), somewhat independent of the prevailing corporate culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Employees’ perceptions about their organisation’s culture are likely to be influenced by hierarchy, divisional identity, the nature of work or task and type of market (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv & Sanders 1990; Sackmann 1992) while subcultures relate to the attributes of a specific group. Even where organisations attempt to standardise their cultures across their unit boundaries, patterns of unique subcultures are still likely to develop, differentiated by distinct clusters of shared values and beliefs (Martin, 1992). So an understanding of the interactions of the dominant culture and subcultures is essential to understanding the dynamics of behaviours and relationships in the organisations (Hofstede, 1998). This understanding is considered a critical issue in the success and even survival of organisations (Wilkins 1984; Wilkins & Patterson 1985). According to Schein (1990), a number of organisational change programs have failed because of a lack of understanding of cultural issues in organisations.

An interesting and important aspect of work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) relates to the particular subcultures existing in a workplace, and especially the potential for a “marine science employees” subculture in relation to the “other theme park employees” subculture. The fundamental distinction may well be related to work meanings and significance. Work meanings vary according to a number of factors, including the nature of the job, demographic and personal characteristics, types of skill and occupational levels, cultural differences, time, places and social stratification (Fox 1976; Gilmer 1975;
The Meaning of Working – Chapter 2

Hall 1994; Schein 2004). Hall (1994), for example, argues that the meanings that individuals assign to work may be dependent, to a certain extent, on their occupational status, because occupation is closely related to social stratification. Individuals of different occupational group possess different cultural assumptions derived from their education level, work experiences, type and length of training and identity from association with their occupational community (Schein 2004; Van Maanen & Barley 1984). This suggests a differentiation in attitudes and behaviours between professional and non-professional groups (subcultures) within an organisation may exist.

A useful construct for subcultures is found in Hofstede (1998) whose research indicated three distinct subcultures existing in and contributing to the dominant organisational culture. These subcultures include professional, administrative and customer interfaces. The ‘professional’ subculture consists of highly educated respondents including top management and managers. The ‘administrative’ subculture consists of administrative support staff, where the majority are often women. The ‘customer interface’ subculture consists of employees who have constant face-to-face contact with customers. Each subculture (as a distinct organisational group) will develop and maintain an specific set of values, beliefs, symbols and behaviours and their interactions will provide the basis for the overall culture of the organisation (Hofstede 1998; Schein 2004). In the Australian aquatic theme park setting it is likely that these subcultures exist in the form of ‘marine science’ (professional and technical experts), ‘administrative’ (managers, supervisors and support staff), and ‘customer service’ (the direct customer service providers). However, the focus of the current study is on a comparative analysis of “marine
science employees” and “other theme park employees” (including administrative and customer services) subcultures, with emphasis given to the former, which is the focus of the discussion below.

Most professionals working in the Australian tourism industry, such as the theme park segment, are likely to start their jobs with non-standard work arrangements (e.g. casual and seasonal), as this industry is characterised by high levels of casual and seasonal jobs associated with poor work conditions, such as low wages, low fringe benefits and high turnover (Hall 1997; Weaver & Oppermann 2000). Even with the low pay rates and lack of good work conditions, employment in some areas of the tourism industry is highly competitive, especially for professional jobs within the marine science areas such as animal trainers and aquarists. Importantly, for professionals within the aquatic theme park segment, both men and women, non-standard employment (e.g. casual, seasonal) provides the avenue for future permanent employment (full-time or part-time) in the employee’s chosen occupation (e.g. marine biologist, animal trainer and veterinarian). Marine science activities are the critical central function of aquatic theme parks. At Disneyland (an American theme park) competition for jobs is intense and all employees, including professionals undertaking marine science activities, start their career as part-timers or seasonal, with low pay and benefits, and only some can be selected as permanent part-time, after the high season, if there are positions available (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989).

In a typical case within an Australian theme park, a marine science employee (animal trainer) took a part-time job as a ride attendant, then, as part of the company multi-hiring policy, accepted a second contract as ‘mucking out the animal enclosures’ until
a permanent position was available in his professional area (Townsend et al., 2003). This situation supports the assumption that professionals tend to be strongly motivated toward their jobs or career because the significance or meaning attached to the work has inherently high value for them (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Work, for professionals, is not just a matter of doing a job or merely receiving the wage (Brien, 1998); work for them is usually interesting, creative and self-rewarding (Osinsky & Mueller, 2004). This may explain why some professionals, such as those working at theme parks, will do such work for relatively small rewards.

It seems clear that an examination of the social constructs associated with the employment relationship of professionals will be useful in developing an understanding of the meanings that aquatic theme park employees, such as professionals, attach to their work roles, and how these meanings influence their commitment, job satisfaction and performance. Thus, understanding the interactions of the dominant organisational culture, and subcultures, and the different values and beliefs associated with them, may facilitate an understanding of the meaning and significance of work for aquatic theme park employees, and how these meanings influence the work-related outcomes mentioned above. These issues will be taken into consideration in the present study.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

The issues covered in this chapter provide valuable insights into the factors underlying the meanings that individuals attach to their work and the apparent impact of these meanings on employees’ attitudes and behaviours. An analysis of the MOW study categories or domains of work will enhance our understanding of the meanings
that aquatic theme park employees attach to their work roles and how these meanings influence their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. However, because individuals assign many meanings to their work roles and also the patterning of these meanings varies (MOWIRT, 1987), a better understanding of the range of factors that influence and shape work meanings may improve our understanding about the nature of employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Such factors will include an analysis of the impact of social changes on the nature of the employment relationships and on work meanings and the influence of organisational culture and subcultures on the dynamics of behaviours, relationships and outcomes in the work environment, including employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. This analysis will be useful in exploring intergroup relations and differing perceptions about work meanings and work-related outcomes for the significant work groups within the Australian aquatic theme park segment, including “marine science employees” and ‘other theme park employees” groups.

This chapter explored a number of variables included in the modified MOW model of Westwood and Lok (2003) relating to ‘organisational level’ (e.g. culture and subculture) and ‘work domains’ (work centrality, important work goals, valued work outcomes and work-role identification). A review of the literature concerned with other variables related to the ‘organisational level’ practices (e.g. training and communication) and the impact of these variables on ‘psycho-social outcomes’ and ‘objectives outcomes of working’ (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) will be undertaken in the next chapter. This chapter will also provide a review of the concept of ‘professionalism’ in relation to “marine science employees”,
with an emphasis on the influence of work meanings on employees’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviours and consequent impact on perception of professionalism and in turn commitment, job satisfaction and job performance.

The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework therefore will broaden the conceptual framework of the present research by assisting in identifying major patterns of meanings and significance that Australian aquatic theme park employees attach to their work; comparing work meanings for “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” and examining the consequences for commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, as well as perceptions of professionalism for “marine science employees”. In the literature review following, the issues associated with work performance in terms of commitment and job satisfaction, and the impact of organisational practices will be surveyed. The review will provide an analysis of the current understanding of the variables associated with work meanings and work performance, so that new insights into the nature of working in Australian aquatic theme parks can be developed.
CHAPTER 3 – LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed literature review of the key concepts used in the present study (training, communication, commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance, role ambiguity regarding customers and professionalism). This review of theory and research will trace the various debates in the literature in order to illuminate the background and to illustrate the approaches of previous research studies in relation to the impact of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). A discussion of the role played by ambiguity regarding customers as a moderator between both training and communication practices and work-related outcomes (job satisfaction and employee performance) is also included in this chapter. This review also addresses the literature on professionalism, with an emphasis on marine science occupations. The rationale for the research hypotheses examined in the present study arises from this literature review.

3.2 Training and Development

Empirical evidence has suggested that effective human resource practices can be critical in developing and maintaining individual and organisational performance and competitive advantage (Arthur 1994; Gerhart & Milkovich 1990; Huselid 1995; MacDuffie 1995) and in fostering a committed workforce (Guest 1987; Ogilvie 1986). Indeed, the concept of commitment is viewed as one of the central goals of HRM (Guest 1995; Storey 1995) and one of the desired outcomes of HRM practices.
Some organisational practices and policies, such as training and development, have been used by organisations in an attempt to communicate the organisation’s expectations (or norms) to employees concerning commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

In line with this direction, it is suggested that aligning strategic HRM policies and practices and organisational goals can contribute to an organisation’s competitive advantage by fostering the commitment of employees to the organisation (Meyer & Smith 2000) and enhancing work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and employee performance (Allen & Meyer 1996; Cascio 1982). The relevant issue in this study is to analyse whether organisational practices, such as training and development, influence the development of employee commitment (to organisation, occupation and customers), and in turn job satisfaction and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.

Meyer and colleagues suggest (Meyer & Allen 1997; Meyer & Smith 2000) that training and development practices may influence affective, normative and continuance commitment. The focus of this study is on affective commitment in terms of commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers. Most empirical studies of the link between training and development practices and employee commitment have focused on affective commitment to the organisation (Gould-Williams 2004; McGunnigle & Jameson 2000; Paul & Anantharaman 2004; Tannebaum, Mathieu, Salas & Cannon-Bowers 1991). For instance, findings from research carried out with US naval military trainees (Tannenbaum et al., 1991) suggest that employees’ perceptions of training were positively associated with
affective commitment to the organisation. Similarly, research conducted by McGunnigle & Jameson (2000), based on the UK hotel industry, identify training and career development as the strongest HRM-type area in encouraging commitment. Findings from a study conducted with Indian software professionals (Paul & Anantharaman, 2004) suggest that training and career development activities improve employees’ skills, enhance job satisfaction and motivate employees to be affectively committed to their organisations.

Although empirical evidence suggests a significant impact of training and development practices on affective organisational commitment, in some studies training practices did not show a strong correlation with commitment (Gaertner & Nollen 1989; Meyer & Smith 2000). For example, findings from a study conducted in a Fortune 100 manufacturing company (Gaertner & Nollen, 1989) indicate that training was the only actual work experience that did not demonstrate a significant relationship with organisational commitment. Gaertner and Nollen (1989, p.986) suggest that this finding should not rule out training as a contributor to commitment, as the cause of the lack of contribution could be related to ‘a function of the measure, a dummy variable that does not account for amount or content of training undertaken’. Findings from Meyer and Smith’s (2000) study demonstrated that employees’ evaluation of training practices correlated significantly with affective commitment but did not have a direct and statistically significant contribution to organisational commitment. Meyer and Smith (2000, p.329) argue that the probable reasons for the lack of evidence for a link between employees’ perception of training practices and organisational commitment may be found in the assumption that ‘training experiences are related to commitment only when the training is relevant to career development
within the organisation’. Such relevance was not strongly evident in Meyer and Smith’s (2000) study.

However, an important issue concerning the effectiveness of training programs is that they seem to be contingent on the relative strength of the education and skills needs of employees, characteristics of the trainers and the type and methods of training (Burke & Day 1986; Gist, Bavetta & Stevens 1990; Schwoerer, May, Hollensbe & Mencl 2005; Spears & Parker 2002). This is supported by findings from a study conducted with business professionals which suggest that employees were satisfied with training systems adopted when there was evidence of support for continuing education (ongoing professional development) (Spears & Parker, 2002). In addition, past research suggests a significant relationship between on-the-job training (McGunnigle & Jameson, 2000) and mentoring (Payne & Huffman, 2005) and affective commitment to the organisation. Among three distinct aspects of training including induction (linked to customer service), on-the-job related (operational) and developmental (career) training, the last is considered in the literature as the most important in influencing commitment (McGunnigle & Jameson, 2000). This is an important consideration in relation to the analysis of the impact of training and development practices on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, because the present study will undertake a comparative analysis of “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. Each group of employees is likely to have different education and skills needs and thus the impact of training on commitment, job satisfaction and job performance of the theme park employees studied may lead to different outcomes and effects in relation to each group of employees.
There is a reasonable consensus that effective training and development practices develop employees by improving their knowledge, skills and abilities which in turn enhance their level of job satisfaction and their commitment to the organisation (Harel & Tzafrir 1999; McEvoy 1997). Extensive research has been undertaken examining the impact of training programs on job satisfaction (Lam & Zhang 2003; Paul & Anantharaman 2004; Spears & Parker 2002). Lam and Zhang (2003), for example, based on a study within the Hong Kong fast food industry, reported a significant relationship between the quality of training and development programs and both organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Similar results were found by Gould-William (2004) in which training practices enhanced both organisational commitment and job satisfaction of public sector workers. In another study conducted by Karia and Asaari (2006), based on a variety of organisation settings, training and education had a significant positive effect on both job and career satisfaction.

These findings suggest that training and development practices not only develop employees and enhance commitment and job satisfaction but also strengthen their satisfaction with their career/occupation. This in turn is likely to have a positive impact on customer satisfaction because satisfied employees are somewhat related to satisfied customers (Rogers, Clow & Kash, 1994). In light of this analysis, training and development practices are likely to have a significant impact on commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers. However, the impact of training on commitment to customers is a particularly important issue for aquatic theme park companies, because providing a high quality service is critical for their effectiveness, or even for their survival.
Given that training programs are intended to influence employees’ skills and behaviours, much of the research examining the impact of training programs and performance has focused on organisational performance (Bartel 1994; Harel & Tzafrir 1999). Interestingly, this focus on organisational performance has taken priority over individual performance, with the latter often overlooked (Burke & Day, 1986). Although limited, findings from a number of studies have suggested a positive relationship between training and development and individual job performance (Burke & Day 1986; Gist et al. 1990; Schwoerer et al. 2005). Research conducted by Burke and Day (1986) suggests that investment in training positively influenced the level of performance of managers. Both Schwoerer et al. (2005) and Gist et al. (1990) reported that training enhanced employees’ efficacy and performance expectancy. Although this research examining the impact of training on job performance is limited, it is well established that the factors that affect job satisfaction also affect employee performance (Goris et al. 2000; Petty et al. 1984). This leads to the suggestion that when training programs improve employees’ skills and capabilities, such programs are also likely to increase employees’ satisfaction with their jobs and in turn their performance levels.

Although empirical evidence suggests a significant relationship between training and development practices and commitment, job satisfaction and job performance, it is important to note that employees’ perceptions about company practices is considered a relevant factor in fostering organisational commitment (Gaertner and Nollen, 1989) and in turn job satisfaction and employee performance. It is argued that employee perceptions about the nature and intent of HRM practices are more likely to have a direct influence on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance than the
actual practices themselves (Meyer & Allen 1997; Meyer et al. 1993; Ogilvie 1986). This is supported by findings from a study conducted with US information processing company (McEvoy, 1997) which suggest that not only the provision of training but also the intent to implement training were closely associated with organisational commitment on the part of employees.

When organisations provide opportunities for development and advancement to their employees through training and development programs, employees’ perceptions about these opportunities and programs are likely to strengthen the psychological contract, encourage employees to acquire new skills, motivate them to be committed to their organisation, and in turn, encourage them to improve their performance (Harel & Tzafrir, 1999). This suggests that the message communicated to employees about organisational practices such as training and development are a clear influence not only on employee commitment but also on job satisfaction and employee performance. By contrast, Vinter et al. (1997) argue that ineffective communication practices may increase the level of ambiguity which in turn may have a negative impact on employee commitment. This suggests that when the message communicated to employees about organisational practices, such as training and development, is ambiguous, the level of ambiguity regarding those practices can influence employee commitment with a consequent impact on job satisfaction and employee performance.

It is clear, therefore, that the quality of communication processes is likely to affect the level of role ambiguity of employees with a consequent impact on job satisfaction and employee performance. Because customer service is a critical issue for service companies such as aquatic theme parks, role ambiguity regarding customers can
influence the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction and employee performance. In other words, the relationship between training and development practices and these work-related outcomes may be stronger when information about training and development opportunities and relevance are effectively communicated to employees. In this case, ambiguity regarding customers may be an important variable that moderates the relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction/employee performance.

These studies have demonstrated a link between HRM practices on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). However, there is no evidence of any research in Australian aquatic theme parks addressing the impact of training and development practices on the three dimensions of affective commitment (organisation, occupation and customers), nor on job satisfaction and employee performance. In addition, there is a lack of research on the moderating effects of ambiguity regarding customers in the prediction of job satisfaction and employee performance. The current study extent the literature by:

a) examining relations between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers;

b) examining relations between training and development practices and job satisfaction and employee performance;

c) examining the moderating role of ambiguity regarding customers on the link between training and development and job satisfaction and employee performance.
These issues are addressed in the following hypotheses arising from the literature review:

3.2.1 Hypothesis 1

H$_1$ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.2.2 Hypothesis 2

H$_2$ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.2.3 Hypothesis 3

H$_3$ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the customers within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.2.4 Hypothesis 4

H$_4$ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.2.5 Hypothesis 5

H$_5$ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.2.6 Hypothesis 6

H$_6$ Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.
3.2.7 Hypothesis 7

H7 Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between training and development practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.3 Communication Processes

Communication is defined by Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel (2001) as the process whereby individuals and/or groups transact in a variety of ways and within different organisational context with the aim of carrying out organisational goals. The effectiveness of organisational communication processes affects the identity and organisational climate within an organisation and, in turn, impacts on the performance of the organisation. Communication is most effective when it is timely and appropriate and enables employees to better understand how to perform their jobs well (Lashley & Lee-Ross, 2003). Any deterioration in communication processes is likely to affect employee satisfaction and customer service quality provision (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002). If employees are not satisfied with information received they are likely to be uncertain about some aspects of organisational issues (e.g. organisational change) and their roles and responsibilities, especially regarding customer service, which may increase role ambiguity and in turn affect job satisfaction and employee performance.

This situation may not be related to lack of information but to the quality of communication processes, because the issues related to uncertainty and ambiguity are usually associated with lack of clarity rather than lack of information (Keller, 1994). On the other hand, if employees are satisfied with communication processes, they are likely to develop positive working relationships and experience higher levels of work
satisfaction (Rubin, 1993), increase their performance (Clampitt & Downs, 1993), and be more loyal and committed to the organisation (Varona, 1996). As organisational communication is considered to be a multidimensional construct, various communication characteristics have been used by researchers to assess employees’ satisfaction with communication within organisations (Downs & Hazen 1977; Johlke & Duhan 2000). Johlke and Duhan (2000) provide a set of four communication dimensions including communication frequency, communication mode, communication content and communication direction.

**Communication Frequency**

Communication frequency refers to the amount of information exchange between individuals in organisations (Patrashkova-Volzdoska, McComb, Green & Compton, 2003). High communication frequency between employees and supervisors is likely to improve employee job satisfaction and job performance (Ancona & Caldwell 1992; Johlke & Duhan 2000). However, it is also argued that high frequency information provision (too much communication) has the potential to disturb and distract employees (Johlke & Duhan 2000), which may overload employee capabilities and affect their performance (Goodman, Ravlin & Argote 1986; Robbins 2005). On the other hand, low frequency communication may be associated with limited information/feedback and perceived lack of attention from supervisors, which may create uncertainty and in turn affect employee performance (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska & Gully, 2003). Johlke and Duhan (2000, p.162) also argue that insufficient communication contact ‘could leave the employee without the necessary guidance and attachment to the organisation’. Previous studies suggest that communication frequency was not associated to either employee job performance (Johlke & Duhan,
2000), job satisfaction (Johlke et al., 2000) or employee role ambiguity (Johlke & Duhan, 2001). These research findings and suggestions indicate that establishing an appropriate frequency for communication/information sharing may be a primary determinant of communication effectiveness.

Communication Mode

Communication mode is another communication dimension that is likely to influence the effectiveness of organisational communication. The two basic communication modes are formal (e.g. newsletter, written memos and letters) and informal (e.g. verbal, face-to-face interactions; see Johlke & Duhan, 2000). Daft and Lengel (1984) argue that informal communication is more appropriate when the message to be given to employees is difficult and ambiguous (as in change episodes) and when there is a difference in background and opinion between sender and receiver. Informal communication (e.g. face-to-face) may be more effective than formal communication (e.g. written communication) because the former usually involves a number of rich communication cues such as verbal and visual (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1988), which may allow clarification between sender and receiver and a better opportunity for a shared understanding (Eby, Freeman, Rush & Lance, 1999; Lashley & Lee-Ross, 2003). Although informal communication is seen as more effective in a number of ways, both informal and formal communication flows exist in all organisations, and are associated with advantages and disadvantages for an effective communication process (see Lashley & Lee-Ross, 2003). Research findings suggest that email and face-to-face communication are both curvilinearly associated with team performance (Patrashkova-Volzdoska et al., 2003). Other findings suggest that informal communication (e.g. face-to-face) is not associated with either job
performance and job satisfaction (Johlke & Duhan, 2000) and employee role ambiguity (Johlke & Duhan, 2001). Daft and Lengel (1986) argue that the communication media used (e.g. face-to-face) and the amount of information processing should be appropriate to the uncertainty and ambiguity associated with employee tasks. This is a particularly important variable to be taken into account during episodes of change, particularly in relation to the maintenance of quality customer service.

**Communication Content**

Communication content is yet another communication characteristic that can be used to assess the effectiveness of communication practices within organisations. Communication content is conditioned by the type of influence strategy used (Fisher, Maltz & Jaworski, 1997). There are two basic influencing strategies in common use. The first is direct where the communication sender provides ‘direct information’, which is a form of communication that does not provide opportunity for input by those affected (see Frazier & Summers, 1984). The second form of communication content is indirect communication where employees are provided with a greater amount of information and the opportunity to be involved in decision-making (Frazier & Summers, 1984). Such a communication mode provides better understood work conditions and is more likely to reduce role ambiguity and foster higher levels of job satisfaction. Perceived role ambiguity may occur when employees lack appropriate communication processes and opportunities to effectively perform their job activities (Singh, 1993). Because employees’ perceptions about role ambiguity are dependent on the quality of communication processes (Johlke & Duhan, 2000), close supervision and participation in decision-making may reduce employees’ perceptions of role
ambiguity. Findings from Johlke et al. (2000) suggest that indirect communication content is negatively associated with employee ambiguity regarding promotion, other managers and ethical situations.

Communication Flow

Communication flow, or direction, refers to the two lines of communication; horizontal (or lateral) and vertical (downward and upward) (Mullins 1992; Timm & Stead 1996). Horizontal or lateral communication takes place among members at similar levels in the organisation who are within the same department/unit or between different organisational areas (Lashley & Lee-Ross, 2003) and more or less of equal status or power (Adler & Elmhorst, 1999). Vertical communication on the other hand consists of messages sent from superiors to subordinates (downward) and from employees to their superior (upward) (Timm & Stead, 1996). Two-way communication is essential for good workplace relationships as it is likely to improve the communication exchange (Fisher et al., 1997). Glover’s (2001) study suggests that the most preferred communication forms for employees are two-way communication (e.g. one-to-one meetings with managers) followed by downward communication forms (communication meetings and team briefs). Findings from Johlke and Duhan’s (2000) study suggest that bi-directional communication is positively associated with employee job performance and negatively associated with employee ambiguity regarding customers, the supervisor, promotion and ethics. Thus, organisations need to use appropriate communication flow patterns to influence employees’ perceptions about organisational practices and policies, and in turn improve commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance outcomes.
Thus, communication is considered to be a vehicle that influences employees’ behaviour because it affects whether trust between employees and management is established and sustained. This in turn, affects whether employees decide to stay or leave a firm (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2000). Open, honest and accurate communication may reduce applicants’ anxiety and shape expectations about the job and company goals and policies, thereby influencing work-related outcomes such as employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997). A number of studies support the proposition that there is a positive and significant relationship between employees’ perceptions about communication practices and their commitment to the organisation (Guzzo & Noonan 1994; Mayfield & Mayfield 2002; Thornhill, Lewis & Saunders 1996; Varona 1996). However, there is a lack of research examining the impact of communication processes on commitment to the occupation and to customers.

Previous studies have established a link between communication processes and job satisfaction (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2004; Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000). Extensive research has also reported a positive relationship between organisational communication practices and employee performance (Clampitt & Downs 1993; London, Larsen & Thisted 1999; Rodwell, Rienzie & Shadur 1998). For instance, a study conducted by Boorom, Goolsby and Ramsey (1998) suggests a significant positive relationship between employee communication and sales performance. The adoption of appropriate communication practices therefore may well be an important strategy in influencing employees’ perceptions about organisational communication practices and policies, and therefore commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.
What has been largely overlooked in the literature is an investigation into the moderating effect of employee role ambiguity regarding customers on the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction/employee performance, particularly in relation to the Australian theme park segment. Effective communication plays an important role in improving organisational effectiveness because the quality of communication practices is likely to affect clarity about job outcomes and role ambiguity and therefore organisational profitability in terms of providing high quality service. This is particularly relevant for service organisations, such as theme park firms, where satisfying customers by providing high quality service is a critical factor in employee and organisational performance (Adsit et al., 1995). This suggests that service companies depend heavily on the ability of their employees, through their attitudes and behaviours, to effectively deliver high quality service. In turn, the delivery of a high quality service by employees depends (at least) on the ability of management to provide clear and relevant communication and information about employees’ roles (Chebat & Kollias, 2000). When the information given to employees regarding customers’ needs and the organisation’s policies in meeting those needs and expectations is ambiguous, it is likely to increase the level of role ambiguity, which in turn negatively affects employee satisfaction with their job. Consequently, this may well have a negative affect on the delivery of a high quality service.

It seems then that the degree of employees’ role ambiguity is dependent on the quality of communication practices (Johlke & Duhan, 2000) because effective communication practices in particular are associated with decreased employee role ambiguity. For example, research carried out by Johlke and colleagues (Johlke &
Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000) report bidirectional communication as negatively related to ambiguity regarding customers. In other words, communication between managers and employees in relation to customer service reduced employee ambiguity regarding customers. Empirical evidence suggests that employee role ambiguity has a negative impact on job performance and job satisfaction (Singh, 1993) with a consequent impact on the delivery of customer service. Because role ambiguity refers to the effect of the clarity of information about employees’ roles (Keller, 1994), employee role ambiguity, particularly regarding customers, may be an important moderator between communication practices and work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance. This suggests that a low level of employee role ambiguity should increase the impact of organisational communication practices on job satisfaction and employee performance.

Similarly to the impact of training and development practices on work-related outcomes, there is no evidence of any research in Australian aquatic theme parks addressing the impact of communication processes on three dimensions of affective commitment (organisation, occupation and customers), nor on job satisfaction and employee performance. In addition, there is a lack of research on the moderating effects of ambiguity regarding customers in the prediction of job satisfaction and employee performance. The hypotheses that emerge from the literature are:

### 3.3.1 Hypothesis 8

H₈ There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the organisation within Australian aquatic theme parks.
3.3.2 Hypothesis 9

H_9 There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.3.3 Hypothesis 10

H_{10} There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the customers within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.3.4 Hypothesis 11

H_{11} There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.3.5 Hypothesis 12

H_{12} There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.3.6 Hypothesis 13

H_{13} Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

3.3.7 Hypothesis 14

H_{14} Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.
3.4 Differences Between Types of Employees

The discussion above covers the first objective of the present study which examines the impact of organisational practices (training and communication) on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) within Australian aquatic theme parks. The second objective of this study is to examine whether the impact of organisational practices on work-related outcomes varies between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework is critical for this analysis, given that the meanings associated with work represent and reflect patterns of individual beliefs, values, expectations and preferences (MOWIRT 1987; Ruiz Quintanilla 1991). Therefore, understanding work meanings is quite a complex process because the meanings that individuals attach to their work have a great deal of variability (England 1988; Stewart 1990).

Chapter 2 covered in detail the major factors underlying the meanings that individuals attach to their work roles (e.g. cultural influences) and the apparent impact of these meanings on employee attitudes and behaviours, with a consequent impact on work-related outcomes. Given that individuals not only assign various meanings to their work roles but the patterning of these meanings also varies (MOWIRT, 1987), this may indicate a differentiation in attitudes and behaviours between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. This suggests that the impact of organisational practices (training and communication) on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) may vary between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The hypothesis that arises from this analysis, based on the discussion of the meaning of working in Chapter 2, is:
3.4.1 Hypothesis 15

H15 The impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance varies between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”.

3.5 Commitment

A number of different conceptualisations and measures of organisational commitment have been proposed (Meyer & Allen 1991; Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982). Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) developed a unidimensional construct, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), reflecting an attitudinal (affective) commitment to the organisation. The OCQ has been extensively used in commitment research and it is found to have acceptable psychometric properties (Allen & Meyer 1990; Mathieu & Zajac 1990). New measures of organisational commitment were subsequently developed, reflecting a multidimensional approach (Meyer & Allen 1991; O'Reilly & Chatman 1986).

Meyer and Allen (1991) developed a multidimensional model of commitment including measures of three forms of commitment, labelled as affective commitment (emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation), continuance commitment (perceived cost associated with leaving the organisation) and normative commitment (obligation to remain in the organisation). Meyer and Allen’s (1991) three component model of commitment has now been widely used and its construct validity has been found to be psychometrically sound (Allen & Meyer 1996; Dunham, Grube, & Castenada 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf 1994; Irving, Coleman, & Cooper 1997). The Meyer and Allen’s (1991) multidimensional
commitment construct will be used in this study, focusing on the affective commitment measure and reflecting multiple commitment foci including commitment to organisation, to occupation and to customers.

While organisational commitment is best understood as a multidimensional construct reflecting affective, continuance and normative commitment (Allen & Grisaffe 2001; Meyer & Allen 1991), affective commitment has been the most widely studied and validated dimension of commitment (Aven, Parker, & McEvory 1993; Steers 1977). Affective commitment is defined as the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement with a particular organisation (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian 1974, p.604). It is expected that employees with strong affective commitment stay in the organisation because they ‘want to’ (Allen & Meyer, 1990), based primarily on emotional attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Thus, affective commitment is likely to increase the likelihood that employees will remain in the organisation. Affective commitment has been more strongly related to a number of variables including labour turnover, absenteeism, job performance and job satisfaction (O'Reilly & Chatman 1986; Porter et al. 1974), compared to continuance and normative commitment. Employees with high affective commitment are likely to be loyal and highly attached to the organisation, thus reducing the likelihood of high labour turnover (Allen & Meyer 1990; Meyer & Allen 1997). It is also expected that employees who express greater affective commitment are likely to work harder than those who do not (Mowday et al., 1982). Findings from Meyer et al. (1993) demonstrate that affective commitment is associated with positive experiences related to satisfaction with the job and also training experience.
Although considerable attention has been given to the study of organisational commitment (see Meyer & Allen 1997; Mowday et al. 1979), a growing number of researchers have recognised other commitment foci. Morrow (1983, 1993) for example, in a review of commitment research, identified five forms of work commitment including commitment to organisation, individual work values, career, job and union. A number of researchers have examined employee commitment to occupation, profession or career (Blau 1985; Lee, Carswell, & Allen 2000; Norris & Niebuhr 1983); and unions (Friedman & Harvey 1986; Fullagar & Barling 1989; Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson & Spiller 1980). Other researchers have extended Morrow’s review to include other commitment foci such as top management, supervisors, co-workers, work groups and customers (Becker 1992; Becker, Billings, Eveleth & Gilbert 1996; Becker & Eveleth 1995; Reichers 1986; Siders, George & Dharwadkar 2001). It is argued that other commitment foci, such as those outlined above, are as relevant as ‘commitment to the organisation’ in influencing on-the-job attitudes and behaviours, and in leading to positive organisational outcomes (Swailes, 2004).

Meyer et al. (1993) extended their 1991 three-component model to reflect other commitment foci such as commitment to the occupation, based on a sample of nurses, and reflecting affective, normative and continuance commitment. Other researchers have also modified the Meyer and Allen 1991 model to include multiple commitment foci such as commitment to supervisor and workgroup (Clugston et al., 2000) and to a variety of occupations within a single organisation (Irving et al., 1997). In a similar way, the present study will modify the Meyer and Allen 1991 model to include commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers, reflecting affective
commitment. These three commitment foci are relevant to most employees, but especially to those working in the service sector, such as theme parks. A description and analysis of the use of these three commitment foci is outlined below.

3.5.1 Commitment to the organisation

The concept of employee commitment has grown in popularity within the organisational behaviour literature over the last three decades, and considerable attention has been devoted to examining employee commitment to the organisation, commonly known as organisational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Meyer & Allen 1991; Mowday et al. 1982; Steers 1977). Allen and Meyer (1996, p.252) defined organisational commitment as ‘a psychological link between the employee and his or her organisation that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organisation’. Committed employees are those who identify with organisational goals and values (Porter et al., 1974) and organisational commitment is associated with loyalty, productivity and affective response to the organisation (Ulrich, Halbrook, Meder, Stuchlik & Thorpe, 1991).

Organisational commitment has been viewed as the dominant paradigm in the commitment literature, both as a desired organisational outcome and as the most commonly used commitment construct (Swailes, 2004). Organisational commitment is considered a major determinant of organisational effectiveness and employee well-being (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001; Steers 1977), as high employee commitment has been related to increased motivation and job satisfaction, lower labour turnover and increased job performance (Pitt, Foreman & Bromfield 1995; Porter et al. 1974; Randall 1990) which in turn can lead to improved overall organisational performance.
According to Porter et al. (1974), organisational commitment involves the following characteristics: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values; willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation; and a desire to remain with the organisation.

As noted above, individuals with strong affective commitment stay in the organisation because they ‘want to’ (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The intention to continue in the organisation for those individuals will be based primarily on emotional attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997) and/or to other commitment foci such as occupation and customers. Research conducted by Allen & Meyer (1990) revealed that individuals expressed greater affective commitment to the organisation when they felt psychologically comfortable in their roles and competent in their jobs. Trice (1993) argues that employees can be committed to both the organisation and other commitment foci such as customers and occupation, but that requires a good employment relationship between employees and employers.

Findings from research carried out by Angle and Perry (1986), based on data from American public sector organisations (bus companies), showed that employees were committed to both their organisation and their union, as they were working in a cooperative labour-management relationship climate. However, environmental changes in the last two decades, such as downsizing and increased redundancy issues, have greatly influenced the work environment, with consequent impact on the psychological contract and in turn on the meanings that employees attach to their work roles (Offerman & Gowing, 1990). As a result, a large number of employees are not willing to display emotional attachment to the organisation (Guest, 2002). It is
likely that employee commitment to the organisation has been shifting to other commitment foci such as commitment to the occupation and customers. This issue will be taken in consideration in the present study, particularly in relation to the comparative analysis between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment.

3.5.2 Commitment to the occupation

Researchers have examined commitment to occupation among lawyers (Gunz & Gunz, 1994), accountants (Norris & Niebuhr, 1983), nurses (Cohen 1995; Meyer et al. 1993), computer specialists (Bartol 1979; Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber 2004), air traffic controllers and radio operators (Irving et al., 1997), and medical librarians (Carson, Carson, Roe, Birkenmeier & Phillips, 1999). Meta-analytic reviews (Lee et al. 2000; Wallace 1993) and a review of the literature (see Reichers, 1985) on occupational commitment showed that the majority of studies included samples of professional occupations related to nurses, accountant, lawyers and scientists. To date, no study has examined occupational commitment for employees working at theme parks.

In a similar way to organisational commitment, occupational commitment is viewed as a multidimensional construct with affective, continuance and normative commitment (see Irving et al. 1997; Lee et al. 2000). However, most studies on occupation commitment have focused on affective commitment, reflecting both organisational and occupational commitment (Blau, Paul & John 1993; Carson & Bedeian 1994; Cohen 1993; Vandenberg & Scarpello 1994). Affective commitment to the occupation is expected to develop as a result of a satisfying experience with the
work that employees, such as professionals, do (Meyer & Smith, 1993). That is, affective commitment to the occupation develops when employees have the opportunity to do satisfying work or to develop valued skills (Allen & Meyer, 1990). According to Hartman and Bambacas’s (2000) study, based on data from an Australian tertiary education organisation, occupational commitment may influence employees’ motivation in their work, which in turn can contribute to improving employees’ performance.

It is argued that the relationship between occupational and organisational commitment, where employees can be committed to both their occupation and to their organisation, is quite compatible and is likely to develop over time (Aranya & Ferris 1984; Aranya & Jacobson 1975). Meta-analysis (Wallace, 1993) suggests a positive relationship between professionals and organisational commitment. Research carried out by Somers and Birnbaum (2000), based on a sample of professional hospital employees, suggests that employees committed to both their occupation and the organisation exhibited more positive work outcomes compared to employees committed to the organisation only. Findings from a study of American medical librarians suggest that employees committed to both their organisation and their careers were associated with higher job satisfaction and lower job and career withdrawal intentions than other groups (Carson et al., 1999). However, the relationship between professionals and organisations is not always positive, as there can be conflict between management and professionals, where some organisational goals may not be compatible with professionals’ values, ethic and beliefs (Rainey, 1991). Mowday et al. (1982, p.30) also highlight a tendency towards a negative relationship between affective commitment to the organisation and education level.
They suggest this may be related to the fact that educated individuals tend to have higher expectations than the organisation may be able to meet (Mowday et al., 1982). This is supported by results of a meta-analysis (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), which showed a small negative correlation between organisational commitment and higher levels of education.

Beside the common conflict between management and professionals (Trice, 1993), employment practices that have been used throughout the tourism industry, particularly concerning casual and temporary employment, may influence employees to be more committed to other commitment foci, such as occupation, rather than to their organisations. This issue is explored in the course of this study in the comparative analysis between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment.

3.5.3 Commitment to Customers

Following the suggestion of Reichers (1985) and Morrow (1983, 1993) a number of researchers have explored the multiple commitment approach, rather than focusing only on commitment to organisation itself or on a dual commitment, such as organisational and occupational commitment (see Becker 1992; Meyer et al. 1993). However, few studies have examined employee commitment to customers (Gregersen 1993; Reichers 1986; Siders et al. 2001). As the present research will be undertaken in the Australian aquatic theme park segment, where the deliver of a high quality service is of fundamental importance, the commitment to customers is a relevant and important focus.
Service organisations, such as tourism companies, increasingly depend on the ability of their workforce to deliver high quality service (Jerome & Kleiner 1995; Kandampully & Connie 2001) because customers have become highly conscious of the quality of service. Thus, employees’ commitment to customers can be considered as a competitive practice with significant strategic significance. High employee commitment is likely to be associated with the delivery of high quality service, as highly committed employees tend to engage in discretionary extra-role behaviour (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1988). Employees who are highly committed to providing high quality service, with a ‘professional outlook’, are likely to influence customer perceptions of service (Ulrich et al. 1991, p.90). Commitment to customers may also provide positive feedback to staff, which support the values and mission of the organisation in providing high quality education and entertainment for customers.

For a better understanding of employee commitment to customers, it is necessary to understand the work environment (organisational culture) in the service sector. It is suggested that human resource practices may play a central role in developing the required quality of service in most sectors of the tourism industry (Baum 1995; Baum et al. 1997). Thus, when organisational management practices (e.g. training and communication) encourage the provision of high quality service, employees are more likely to be committed to their work, which in turn can influence customer perceptions of service (Ulrich et al., 1991). Schneider, Parkington and Buxton (1980), based on research in bank branches, suggest that the quality of service to the customer provided by staff is strongly related to organisational practices, such as human resource management practices (e.g. training and development). Findings from this research suggest that there may be a significant positive correlation between
employee perceptions of the human resource practices of the organisation and customer perceptions of the quality of service they receive (Schneider et al., 1980).

Findings from a meta-analysis (Eby et al., 1999) also suggest that affective commitment is likely to be influenced by how employees perceive they are treated by their employers. In other words, if staff feel satisfied with their work conditions and the way they are treated they are more likely to provide positive service experience for customers (e.g. do the little bit extra that counts). In this case, employee commitment to the organisation is mirrored by their commitment to customers. Jerome and Kleiner (1995, p.23) suggest that ‘if people enjoy the work environment, they are more likely to be in the frame of mind necessary to provide positive customer service’. Gregersen (1993), based on research carried out with American health care employees, suggests that commitment to customers may be developed through frequent and positive interactions between employees and managers, as employees require a certain amount of time to develop a better understanding of their roles in the organisation and to become familiar with the organisation culture, including the values and goals of relevant organisational stakeholders and the needs and expectations of customers.

Findings of Siders et al.’s (2001) multiple commitment study (organisation, supervisor and customers) in several American orthopedic implant companies, revealed that commitment to customers was strongly and positively related to market share and product breadth (although neither may be rewarded by an organisation’s incentive system). These findings suggest a positive relationship between commitment to customers and employee performance that is not necessarily rewarded
by the organisation but is relevant to and rewarded by the customer. The study suggests that providing quality customer service that results in satisfied customers who provide positive feedback and recognition may be a source of significant employee commitment. In other words, employees enjoy the jobs they do and are committed to doing them well because of the intrinsic rewards of customer feedback, regardless of extrinsic organisational rewards.

Research undertaken by Reichers’ (1986) in study of multiple commitments in community mental health agencies showed that commitment to top management was related more strongly to organisational commitment, compared to commitments to profession, external funding agencies and clients. Similarly, Gregersen’s (1993) study of American health care employees, revealed that commitment to top management showed the strongest relationship with organisational commitment compared to commitment to supervisors, co-workers and customers. This research supports the assumption of multiple commitment foci and raises a question about the facets of organisational commitment and their relationship to other commitment foci, such as customers and occupation. A comparative analysis between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme park segment will contribute to the commitment literature in terms of understanding contemporary commitment foci and commitment mechanisms in the service industry.

3.6 Role Ambiguity, Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

One important aspect of role ambiguity occurs when employees lack sufficient and relevant information to effectively complete their tasks (Singh 1993; Walker, Churchill & Ford 1975). There are a number of other aspects of ambiguity that have
been researched including ambiguity regarding customers, other managers, ethical situations and supervisor support (Johlke & Duhan 2000; Rhoads, Sigh & Goodell 1994). While all these aspects are important factors, customer satisfaction is paramount in the service industry and research attention should rightfully be directed towards role ambiguity regarding customers (Singh & Rhoads, 1991). This particular aspect of ambiguity is relevant to service firms, such as theme parks, because it may condition the vital interactions between employees and customers. Indeed, role ambiguity on the part of employees who do not understand or are inadequately informed about customers needs and expectations, may be one significant source of customer dissatisfaction. The consequences of role ambiguity then, may include customer dissatisfaction, employee dissatisfaction and reduced company profitability. It should also be noted that a common theme in relevant research is the consistent negative relationship between role ambiguity and job outcomes such as job satisfaction and employee performance (Hartline & Ferrel 1996; Jackson & Schuler 1986; Johlke & Duhan 2000; Singh 1993).

When employees are unclear about their role expectations (lack of sufficient and relevant information) the consequent role ambiguity is likely to result in low quality service. This suggests that clear and effective communication practices to provide relevant and sufficient information concerning role expectations may reduce employee role ambiguity and improve employee satisfaction. Empirical evidence has suggested that effective communication practices are associated with decreased employee role ambiguity (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2004; Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000). For example, Johlke and colleagues (Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000) suggest a significant relationship between bidirectional
communication and employee ambiguity regarding customers. This suggests that employee ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction/employee performance.

Performance issues for theme park employees, both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, involve the delivery of high quality service because they work within a service environment where quality customer service is a critical factor in employee and organisational performance (Adsit et al., 1995). However, performance issues for the former group also involve, to a major extent, caring for and training of the animals (e.g. dolphins). Given the differing behaviours, needs, roles and values of each group, in terms of customer service, it is likely that employee performance within the Australian aquatic theme park environment may be optimised by the adoption of tailored training and communication programs for each group of employees, rather than a general approach. It must be noted that, in the literature regarding the MOW model, definitional issues concerning performance are problematic, giving the lack of clear definition (see MOWIRT 1987; Westwood & Leung 1996; Westwood & Lok 2003). This difficulty also seems to be apparent in other research examining employee performance (see Jolhke & Duhan 2000; Burke & Day 1986; Zerbe, Dobin & Harel 1998). Therefore, performance issues for aquatic theme park employees are analysed in the present research on the basis of assessed contributions and outcomes for the employees concerned.

Past research suggests that positive perceptions about training and development practices are likely not only to develop employees by improving their skills and knowledge but also enhance job satisfaction (Gould-Williams 2004; Lam & Zhang
2003) and individual performance in terms of providing high quality service (Burke & Day 1986; Zerbe, Dobni & Harel 1998). Much research also suggests that organisational communication processes have a positive and significant impact on job satisfaction (Johlke & Duhan 2000; Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2004) and job performance (Boorom et al. 1998; Clampitt & Downs 1993). However, role ambiguity regarding customers is a potential moderator of the impact of both training and communication practices and communication processes on employee performance and also job satisfaction. Therefore, these positive impacts of both training and communication on both job satisfaction and employee performance are enhanced, particularly regarding customer service, when there is minimum level of role ambiguity. Previous research has indicated that communication processes (e.g. bidirectional communication) was negatively related to ambiguity regarding customers (Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000). So, given that high levels of role ambiguity can affect job satisfaction and performance levels of both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, organisational practices (training and communication) need to be very effective in order to reduce ambiguity regarding customers.

3.7 Professionalism

Professionals possess particular capabilities (knowledge and skills) that the society (customers) need (Boyt, Lusch & Naylor, 2001). Professional jobs are usually associated with higher education requirements, relative autonomy from direct supervision and social/organisational status which is likely to provide higher levels of satisfaction and motivation than non-professional jobs (Emmert & Taher, 1992). Also, distinctive social identities between professionals and non-professionals may be
produced (Friedson, 1994). Professionals are considered distinct from other social categories (non-professionals) not only because they possess specialised knowledge and skills but also because of the assumption that they are highly committed to the work they do, and place a special significance on the nature of that work (Friedson, 1994). In addition, the values, attitudes and character traits supporting professional behaviour are no less important than the knowledge and skills they possess (Brien, 1998). Accordingly, work for professionals has an inherently high value and significance and attracts high level of commitment by its very nature (see Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), because work for professionals is usually interesting, creative and self-rewarding and not just a matter of doing a job or merely receiving a wage (Osinsky & Mueller, 2004). This research supports a view that professionals tend to be strongly motivated about their jobs or career, because the significance or meaning attached to the work they do has inherently high value for them (see Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

Greenwood (1957), an early researcher in the area, developed criteria to distinguish professionals from non-professionals, including the presence of systematic theory, authority on matters of practice, ethical standards of conduct, community sanctions and professional culture. One of the basic characteristics of professionals is their specialised knowledge, based on education and training of exceptional duration and within an academic environment (Emmert & Taher 1992; Larson 1977). Other characteristics associated with professionals include entry and training standards, devotion to a full-time occupation that serves society, monopolised knowledge and expertise, a sense of autonomy, and the ability to self-regulate their jobs, including ethical codes (Boyt et al. 2001; Ferlie et al. 1996; Shafer, Park & Liao 2002).
seems that the concept and definition of ‘professional’ may be determined by the number and extent of professional attributes (Kearley & Sinha, 1988), and the traditional view that professional occupations exhibit a set of required characteristics supports this concept (Greenwood, 1957). Established professions identified in the literature include doctors, lawyers, the clergy and academics (Dent & Whitehead 2002; Klegon 1978; Wallace 1993). More recently recognised professions include accountants, dentistry, architecture and nurses (Brunetto 2002; Kearney & Sinha 1988; Shafer et al. 2002). A real topic of debate within the professionalism literature is whether or not all of the established professions exhibit all the criteria for ‘true professionals’ (Brante 1990; Evetts 2003; Kearley & Sinha 1988). It is interesting that this debate entails a recognition of ‘emerging profession’ and a development of the extent and application of the criteria for professionalism or professional occupations.

3.7.1 Anglo-American Model of Professionalism

There is an argument that the meaning of professionalism cannot be fixed (Evetts, 2003), particularly because a professional continuum exists (Kearley & Sinha, 1988). In other words, the attributes of and perceptions about professionalism may be related to occupational policies and practices on a continuum. According to this view, not all professions strictly fit a priori definitions of ‘profession’ or ‘professionalism’. Strictly applied, most definitions of profession would admit only the established ones such as law and medicine (Kearley & Sinha 1988, p.573). However, because the process of professionalisation is boosted normally through increased structured occupational training and the certification of workers (Evetts, 2003), it may take some time for a profession to grow. According to the Anglo-American model, professional
associations work with universities and the government to control ‘the licensing, accreditation and practice arrangements’ of professionals (Evetts & Buchner-Jeziorska 1997, p.239). The formation of professional associations is considered to be a significant mechanism reinforcing the values, beliefs and identity of professions (Evetts, 2003) and is one of the fundamental stages on the way to becoming an accepted profession.

Therefore, a significant factor involved with the claim of professionalism for any particular occupation, in terms of the Anglo-American model of professionalism, lies in the fact that employees are associated with professional bodies which provide input to the setting of standards in the industry, in terms of controlling the licensing and registration system (accreditation) and practice management within the industry (Evetts & Buchner-Jeziorska, 1997). For professionals, support for professionalism is found not only in their specialised knowledge based on education but also professional accreditation. However, while professional associations and society are important, both historically and in the support of any particular profession, they rarely represent all practitioners in the profession, especially when they are ‘peak’ or ‘umbrella’ associations (Friedson, 2001). In the light of this debate, there is a proposition that professions must be studied in a much broader context (Brante, 1990), especially in the case of emergent professions such as the marine science occupations.

3.7.2 Hall’s Professional Model

Professionalism can be defined in terms of the individuals’ attitudes and behaviours towards their professions (Boyt et al., 2001), which also involves appropriate work identity (Fournier, 1999). This particular sense of ‘professionalism’ is more difficult
to identify than simple possession of a formal qualification (Boyt et al., 2001). Hall (1968), in a classic study of professionalism, developed an instrument (the Hall Professional Scale) to measure professional’s attitudes and behaviours, based on samples of a number of occupations including physician, nurse, accountant, teacher, lawyer, social worker, stock broker, librarian, personnel manager and advertising executive. The Hall Professional Scale has become a model for subsequent studies that have attempted to measure professional attributes of (among many others) accountants (Goetz, Morrow & McElroy 1991; Shafer et al. 2001), internal auditors (Kalbers & Fogarty, 1995), academics and managers (Milward & Brunetto, 2005) and marketing researchers (Boyt et al., 2001).

Hall (1968) suggested that a professional model involves both structural and attitudinal aspects. ‘Structural aspects’ are those attributes of the structure of a particular occupation as characteristics relating to a full-time professional occupation, including establishment of a training school, formation of professional associations, and formation of codes of ethics (Wilensky, 1964). Professional ‘attitudinal aspects’, on the other hand, reflect the manner in which individuals (practitioners) view their work, including the attitudes and behaviours that are inherently important characteristics of their work, such as the sense of calling of the person to the field and the extent to which they use colleagues as a major work reference (Hall, 1968). The items included in the Hall Professional Scale relate to five commonly cited characteristics of professionals, including use of the professional organisation as a major referent; belief in self-regulation; autonomy; a belief in service to the public; and a sense of calling to the field. The present study adopts the Hall Professional Scale, although the first three items (dimensions) only are included in the primary
assessment because they are most relevant. For the purposes of the present study, the three dimensions of Hall’s (1968) professional model are described as ‘referent’, ‘self-regulation’ and ‘autonomy’. Each of these dimensions is discussed below.

3.7.2.1 Referent Dimension

The use of the professional organisations (both formal organisations and informal colleague groupings) as a major referent involves affiliation of practitioners in their specific professional community as their major source of ideas and judgements regarding the work they do (Hall 1968, p.93). One of the main objectives of such professional organisations is to reinforce the values, beliefs, and identity of a profession through a number of activities such as the publication of professional journals and the conduct of profession-strengthening conferences (Snizek, 1972). Such activities assist a profession to develop a specialised knowledge base (Boyt et al., 2001) and also assist individuals (e.g. reading journals and attending conferences) develop consciousness about all aspects of the profession and be more influenced by the standards and norms of their profession (Snizek, 1972). Professional organisations are also used as a major means of managing (or protecting) professional knowledge and also to build and maintain barriers of entry into a profession, as a mean of protecting their markets (Boyt et al. 2001, p. 322).

3.7.2.2 Self-Regulation Dimension

The fundamental rationale for believing in self-regulation is the belief in colleague control which means that a fellow professional (not an outsider) is best qualified to judge the quality of a professional’s work (Hall, 1968), given the highly specialised
knowledge or expertise required in their occupation (Snizek, 1972). The power that such highly specialised knowledge provides to professionals is also another factor that reinforces belief in self-regulation (Boyt et al., 2001).

3.7.2.3 Autonomy Dimension

Autonomy is the only professional attribute that has both structural and attitudinal attributes (Hall, 1968) and is considered one of the most important characteristics possessed by ‘professionals’ (Friedson, 1994). Autonomy involves a desire and ability of professionals to make their own decisions without the threat of external pressures such as clients, the State and employing organisations (Hall 1968; Snizek 1972). Professionals wish to be free of such external pressures which represent the antithesis of their autonomy (Snizek, 1972) and are therefore less likely to influence their decisions and behaviours (Boyt et al., 2001). According to Shafer et al. (2002), certifications and self-regulation, as examples of institutional characteristics of professions, are likely to reinforce demands for autonomy. However, the autonomy that is enjoyed by professionals (e.g. influencing policies, setting standards and maintaining control of their own remuneration) is under threat by increasing government controls and regulations (Friedson, 1994).

The descriptive analysis above has highlighted some characteristics possessed by professionals and, indirectly, how these characteristics distinguish professionals from non-professionals. It also provides an overview of the dimensions of Hall’s (1968) professional model of professionalism adopted in the present study (referent, self-regulation and autonomy). An aspect missing from the literature is an examination of marine science-related professions such as marine biologists, aquarists and animal
trainers within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. The meanings that marine science employees attach to their work roles, their attitudes and behaviours and consequently the process of professionalisation in the industry have not yet been explored. The current study is the first to apply a multidimensional concept of professionalism to marine science occupations and to explore the impact of these dimensions on commitment (to the organisation and to the occupation), job satisfaction and employee performance. As such, one of the objectives of this study is to analyse the behavioural and attitudinal components for individuals within the marine science occupations in order to better understand the level of professionalisation of those occupations and the relationship with organisational work outcomes including commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

As mentioned above, one of the basic characteristics of professionals is their highly specialised knowledge, based on education and training of exceptional duration and within an academic environment (Emmert & Taher 1992; Ferlie et al. 1996; Greenwood 1957). Because professionalism is harder to identify than the simple possession of a degree (Boyt et al., 2001), this study attempts to identify whether education level is a relevant factor influencing perceptions of professionalism of employees undertaking marine science activities within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. Because professionalism is defined in terms of the individuals’ attitudes and behaviours towards their professions (Boyt et al., 2001), an interesting question is whether the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and sense of identification about the occupational role for marine science employees is likely to provides support for a sense of ‘professionalism’ among these employees. The hypotheses that emerge from a review of the literature are:
3.7.3 Hypothesis 16

H_{16} \quad \text{Education levels determine professionalism for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.}

3.7.4 Hypothesis 17

H_{17} \quad \text{Perceptions of professionalism determine professionalism for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.}

The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework will be used in the present research to analyse the meanings and significance of work for marine science employees, and how these meanings influence their perception of their own professionalism, and in turn affect the work related outcomes mentioned above. The meanings that individuals attach to their work represent and reflect patterns of beliefs, values, expectations and preferences (MOWIRT 1987; Ruiz Quintanilla 1991). Given the apparent impact on employee attitudes and behaviours and ultimately on organisations and societies (MOWIRT, 1987), understanding the meanings that individuals attach to their work roles is important therefore in better understanding the factors underlying perceptions of their professionalism of marine science employees. In an increasingly competitive environment, service firms, such as aquatic theme parks, are finding that an emphasis on achieving defined occupational parameters outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance and reduction of role ambiguity is a key to organisational effectiveness (Kelley 1992; Reynolds & Beatty 1999; Varona 1996). Enhancing professionalism should also result in desirable work related outcomes such as those mentioned above. An analysis of the relationship between
Dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance is provided below.

**Dimensions of Professionalism and Affective Commitment to the Organisation**

An issue raised within the professionalism literature is the potential conflict between professional and organisational norms and values. However, the empirical evidence for such conflict is inconsistent. Findings from a number of studies reported the existence of conflict between professionals and various levels of organisational bureaucracy (Schroeder & Imdieke 1977; Shafer et al. 2002; Sorensen & Sorensen 1974). However, Kearney and Sinha (1988) suggest that levels of professionalism and levels of bureaucratisation are not necessarily in conflict. Empirical evidence has supported this argument (Aranya & Ferris 1984; Bartol 1979; Norris & Niebuhr 1983). Hall (1968) suggests an inverse relationship between professionalism and levels of bureaucratisation and Jauch, Glueck and Osborn (1978) indicate that professional commitment and organisational loyalty are independent. The inconsistency among these results suggests that the relationship between professional and organisational norms and values may be contingent on the type of professional, type of occupation or type of organisation (Aranya & Ferris 1984; Norris & Niebuhr 1983). Assuming this relationship above, a number of studies have examined professionals’ attitudes and behaviours towards their professions, using a number of the dimensions of professionalism included in Hall’s model, and their effect on organisational commitment in an attempt to identify whether or not any of these dimensions conflict with organisational norms and values. For example, Norris and Neibuhr (1983), studying accountants, found that four of the five dimensions of professionalism were significantly correlated with organisational commitment, except the dimension of
professional autonomy. In a study with internal auditors, Kalbers and Fogarty (1995) reported that one dimension of professionalism (dedication to the profession) was positively associated with organisational commitment. In another study with computer specialists, Bartol (1979) found that autonomy, professional commitment and ethics were positively and significantly related to organisational commitment, and collegial maintenance of standards was negatively related. However, no empirical studies have been conducted to examine the impact of dimensions of professionalism and organisational commitment for marine science-related occupations.

**Dimensions of Professionalism and Affective Commitment to the Occupation**

A number of studies have found a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism and job satisfaction as discussed below. As mentioned above, work for professionals has an inherently high value and significance and attracts high level of commitment by its very nature (see Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Consequently, commitment to the occupation is a critical dimension for professionals. For example, the underlying factor associated with the decision to undertake marine science activities lies in the fact that marine science employees feel committed to marine animals in general and in particular. Therefore, the values and meanings attached to the sense of professionalism for marine science employees reinforce their ‘passion’ for the animals, which is in turn reflected in their commitment to their occupation. Extant research have examined commitment to occupation among lawyers (Gunz & Gunz, 1994), nurses (Cohen 1995; Meyer et al. 1993), air traffic controllers and radio operators (Irving et al., 1997), and medical librarians (Carson et al., 1999). However, studies examining the impact of dimensions of professionalism on employee commitment have focused on organisational commitment rather than on commitment
to other foci such as commitment to the organisation (e.g. Kalbers & Fogarty 1995; Norris & Neibuhr 1983). In addition, there has been no systematic attempt in the professionalism literature to understand perceptions of professionalism in respect to occupational commitment for marine science occupations within the Australian aquatic theme parks.

**Dimensions of Professionalism and Job Satisfaction**

A number of studies have found a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism and job satisfaction as discussed below. As mentioned above, work, for professionals, has an inherently high value and significance and attracts a high level of commitment by its very nature (see Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), because the content/subject of the work is central to professional values. This is reflected in professionals’ satisfaction with their jobs, compared to non-professionals. The occupational status associated with professional jobs underlies professionals’ expectations for high satisfaction with their jobs. Boyt et al. (2001), studying marketing researchers, found a significant relationship between professionalism (autonomy) and job satisfaction. Similarly, in a study of internal auditors, Kalbers and Fogarty (1995) reported a positive and significant association between occupation affiliation (referent) and job satisfaction. Norris and Niebuhr (1983), studying accountants, found that the ‘referent’ dimension of professionalism was highly correlated with overall job satisfaction. However, Price and Mueller (1981), studying nurses, were unable to detect a relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction. Although these findings show inconsistency, these studies provide preliminary data on the relationship of the dimensions of professionalism and job satisfaction. However, there is an apparent paucity of research data within the professionalism literature.
Dimensions of Professionalism and Employee Performance

Performing well, for professionals, is more than just executing particular tasks (Van Emmerik & Sanders, 2004), because professionals tend to attach high value to the work they do (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). Furthermore, professional performance is likely to be more associated with intrinsic than extrinsic rewards (Brien, 1998). This in turn may influence employees’ effort to raise their own performance level, which is reflected in the delivery of high quality service. According to Kalbers and Fogarty (1995, p.4), the sense of professionalism may motivate individuals to achieve high performance, ‘as well as the self-concept of a highly competent individual’. Professional employees need to continuously update their professional qualifications and skills in order to be more effective and continue to succeed as professionals. Professionals need to perform well in their jobs because their reputation may be at risk if they perform poorly. Based on a study on professional accountability in an American public service environment, Deleon (1998) suggests that professionals may be subject to severe legal punishment when they are involved with malpractice or negligence as compared to mere failure to achieve required results.

This situation may well apply to professionals in the private sector. In relation to the aquatic theme park environment, if an injury or death of an animal (e.g. a shark or a dolphin) is shown to be related to negligence or malpractice, this may result in severe punishment for the professional involved, including destruction of personal professional reputation. There is limited empirical evidence testing the dimensions of
professionalism in terms of effects on employee performance. Research conducted by Kalbers and Fogarty (1983) involving internal auditors indicates a positive and significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (autonomy and belief in self-regulation) and auditor performance. However, there is no similar research for marine science employees. The hypotheses that emerge from a review of the literature are:

3.7.5 Hypothesis 18

H₁₈ There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the organisation for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

3.7.6 Hypothesis 19

H₁₉ There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the occupation for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

3.7.7 Hypothesis 20

H₂₀ There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and job satisfaction for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

3.7.8 Hypothesis 21

H₂₁ There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and employee performance for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.
The next chapter provides a detailed research methodology, providing a justification of the methodology, the selection of various research strategies and the rationale for the sample selection process.
CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the theoretical issues that underpin the research processes of the present study. It begins with a discussion of research paradigms and their underlying philosophical assumptions including the pragmatist approach underpinning this study methodology. This is followed by an examination of research design issues including a discussion of the mixed methods design adopted in this study. Issues relating to the sampling plan are then explored followed by a discussion of the quantitative (survey) and qualitative (in-depth interviews and focus groups) data collection approaches. The final section addresses issues related to the overall data analysis which was undertaken using a triangulation technique.

4.2 Research Framework

This section examines three major research paradigms (e.g. positivism, constructivism and pragmatism) and the philosophical assumptions associated with each paradigm. This is followed by a justification for the research paradigm adopted in the present study.

4.2.1 Research Paradigms

A paradigm is defined as a set of basic beliefs that guides the investigator (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Because the paradigm guides the researchers’ work, the researcher’s beliefs or assumptions will influence his/her thinking and arguments regarding any scientific or forensic issue. Thus, paradigms and accompanying assumptions adopted
by any researcher will influence the research design of his/her study. Kumar (1996, p.12) argues that it does not matter what kind of paradigm researchers work with but researchers should ‘adhere to certain values regarding the control of bias, and the maintenance of objectivity in terms of both the research process itself and the conclusions drawn’. According to Babbie (2004), each paradigm or philosophy is associated with a number of assumptions about the nature of social reality and offer different ways of looking at human social life. Hence, understanding a paradigm will help researchers to select an appropriate research design, with the aim of providing a good quality research study (Creswell 2003; Neuman 2006).

In establishing the methodological basis for the present study, three major research paradigms were explored, including positivism, constructivism and pragmatism. They were compared using ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions. The discussion of these three research paradigms is outlined below followed by a discussion of the paradigm assumptions.

4.2.1.1 Positivism

The positivist paradigm has been labelled as the scientific, the traditional, the experimental or the empirical paradigm (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). This approach is rooted in the physical sciences and usually involves deductive logic, testing of hypotheses and precise and rigorous quantitative methods such as experiments, surveys and statistics (Neuman, 2006). Positivist researchers believe that an apprehensible reality exist, and the purpose of science for them is based on what they can observe and measure (Gilmore & Carson 1996; Tsoukas 1989). As stated by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.1), ‘values and biases are prevented from influencing
outcomes, so long as the prescribed procedures are rigorously followed’. Based on these observations it is often suggested that a positivist view is more appropriate in a natural science setting than in a social science such as networks, including humans and their real-life experiences (Perry, Riege & Brown, 1999).

4.2.1.2 Constructivism

One of the main goals of constructivist researchers is to understand a particular phenomenon within its social context (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Perez-Prado, 2003a), usually based on participants’ views of the research problem being studied (Creswell, 2003). This paradigm is also associated with other related terms such as interpretivist and phenomenological (Creswell 2003; Hussey & Hussey 1997; Neuman, 2006). Constructivist researchers consider ‘knowledge or truth’ by reporting what they have discovered, based on their research findings and the meanings of their findings (Rocco et al., 2003a). In contrast with the positivist paradigm, “reality” for constructivist researchers is not objective and exterior but socially constructed (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002). In this sense, “meanings” are constructed by human beings and are usually generated from data collected in the field (Crotty, 1998), rather than on rigorous quantitative methods, as in the positivism paradigm. The constructivist paradigm usually underlies inductive logic and qualitative research processes such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Perry 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998).
4.2.1.3 Pragmatism

Under the pragmatist approach, knowledge or truth is considered to be ‘what works’, rather than searching for metaphysical truths (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Within this paradigm, the research question under study is considered to be more important than either the methodological approach or the philosophical paradigm that underlies the research methods. Researchers use whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach is available to understand and derive knowledge about the research problem (Rossman & Wilson, 1985). The pragmatist paradigm is associated with mixed methods of research because it supports the adoption of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, either simultaneously or sequentially, in the same study (Creswell 2003; Patton 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). The assumptions associated with each of these paradigms are discussed as follows.

4.2.2 Paradigm Assumptions

Each paradigm is associated with a number of assumptions (e.g. ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological) and diverse research techniques. A discussion of these assumptions is provided below.

4.2.2.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology is concerned with researchers understanding of ‘reality’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, ontological assumptions are philosophical beliefs that researchers hold about the nature of reality. The basic ontological question is whether the “reality” to be investigated is external to the individual, of an objective nature or else is ‘socially constructed and only understood by examining the perceptions of the
human actors’ (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.49). Positivists view reality as objective, 
external, independent of the researcher, or what Guba and Lincoln (1994) consider as 
‘naive realism’. Constructivist researchers, on the other hand, believe that there are 
multiple local and specific ‘constructed’ social realities resulting in ontological 
‘relativism’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For pragmatist researchers, philosophical 
assumptions and beliefs about the nature of the reality consist of two main points 
(Cherryholmes, 1992): (1) as for the positivists, pragmatists believe that there is an 
external reality, independent of them; (2) pragmatist researchers however, deny that 
‘truth’ can be determined once and for all.

For pragmatist researchers, ontological reality is relative to social construct. 
Therefore, the ‘truth is what works at the time; it is not based on a strict dualism 
between the mind and a reality completely independent of the mind’ (Creswell 2003, 
p.12). Hence, whilst pragmatist and positivist researchers believe that reality is 
objective, pragmatists take a further step and suggest that the objectivity of reality is 
not set in concrete.

4.2.2.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemological assumptions are general sets of assumptions about the grounds of 
knowledge (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The basic epistemological question involves 
the relationship between the ‘reality’ and the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and 
whether researchers consider knowledge as being valid or invalid (Hussey & Hussey, 
1997). In other words, those epistemological assumptions are concerned with how a 
researcher understands the world and how he/she communicates this to the person 
being researched (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Positivists believe that knowledge about
a phenomenon can be regarded as valid when it can be observed and measured (Hussey & Hussey, 1997) and can stand up to replication (Neuman, 2006). This can be achieved by maintaining an independent and objective distance between the researcher and the researched (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Constructivist researchers, on the other hand, accept knowledge as valid if the individuals being researched understand it as reality and if the resultant theory can be translated and comprehended by other individuals (Neuman, 2006). This ‘understanding’ is possible because constructivists attempt to maintain a close relationship between themselves and the individuals being researched (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Within the pragmatist paradigm, the epistemological orientation that guides a research study is based on the view that it is appropriate to embrace both objective and subjective points of view in finding an answer to the phenomena under investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

4.2.2.3 Axiological Assumptions

Axiological assumptions are concerned with values (Hussey & Hussey, 1997), for instance, what values shape our knowledge (Creswell, 2003). This involves understanding the relationship between the researcher’s values and social research (Rocco et al., 2003a). Positivist researchers believe that the relationship between science and the process of research is values-free and unbiased as they consider themselves as detached from their research subjects (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

In contrast to positivists, constructivists do not attempt to be value free, but recognised that they are value-bound and in turn, adopt the role being of ‘passionate
participant’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) which means that the researcher needs to interact with the individuals being researched. This attachment to the individuals being studied may be associated with bias, but because constructivists believe that those individuals being studied have values, those values are useful in determining ‘what are recognised as facts and the interpretations which are drawn from them’ (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Pragmatist researchers acknowledge that values play an important role in the way research is conducted and in drawing conclusions from their studies and they believe that there are no reasons to be particularly concerned about that influence (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998, p.26). For pragmatists then, the ‘values’ that inform knowledge are guided by what they believe is important to their study.

4.2.2.4 Methodological Assumptions

Methodological assumptions are concerned with the techniques used by researchers to discover the ‘reality’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), based on the type of paradigm adopted (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Positivist researchers wish to ensure that any concept used can be measured; hence, the use of large samples focusing on objective facts and formulation of hypotheses and analysis are usually related to association or causality (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.50). For constructivists, the research process usually includes small samples, possibly taken over a period of time; adoption of different research techniques to obtain various perceptions of the phenomena, and an analysis based on understanding the situation and looking for patterns which may be repeated in similar situations (Hussey & Hussey 1997, p.50). Pragmatist researchers believe that both inductive and deductive processes are appropriately used in answering their research question. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p.23), ‘decisions regarding the use of either qualitative or qualitative methods depend upon the research
question’. Table 4.1 below outlines the distinctions between these three major paradigms.

Table 4.1: Scientific paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Pragmatism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Naïve realism; reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher</td>
<td>Relativism; multiple local and specific ‘constructed’ realities.</td>
<td>Accept external reality; choose explanations that best produce desired outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?</td>
<td>Objective point of view; researcher and the one being researched are independent.</td>
<td>Subjective point of view; researcher and the one being researched are inseparable.</td>
<td>Both objective and subjective points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiological</td>
<td>What is the role of values?</td>
<td>Inquiry is value free and unbiased</td>
<td>Inquiry is value-bound and biased</td>
<td>Values play a large role in interpreting results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>What is the process of Research?</td>
<td>Deductive process; quantitative: experiments, surveys, hypotheses testing</td>
<td>Inductive process; qualitative: In-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation</td>
<td>Both inductive and deductive; quantitative + qualitative: (Mixed methods)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.2.3 Research paradigm for the present study

The current research study requires the adoption of both quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed methods methodology) and so, the pragmatist paradigm is most appropriate for this study. The present study is undertaken with Australian aquatic theme park employees, including “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, with a particular emphasis on the former group of employees. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a lack of research in the literature regarding
the level of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance of Australian aquatic theme park employees. Thus, quantitative methods (e.g. survey) are necessary in order to develop a level of generalisation that will not only add knowledge to the theory but also enable prediction in understanding levels of commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance of Australian theme park employees. Qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions are also necessary in order to provide in-depth information and insights into the link between organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) and work-related outcomes, and perceptions of professionalism for marine science employees. The new knowledge emerging from this research contributes to an understanding of the nature and dynamics of aquatic theme park segment employment, which in turn contributes to the future development of the Australian tourism industry. These observations indicate that the current research is clearly located within the pragmatist paradigm.

In relation to ontological assumptions, pragmatist researchers believe that the choice of explanations, or ‘truth’, is based on what best explanations produce the most likely outcomes. In this case, the choice of the mixed methods methodology is appropriate for achieving the desirable outcomes associated with the present study. Epistemologically, the current research is guided by the pragmatist approach so that the choice of combining objective and subjective points of view may not only lead to a better understanding about the ‘reality’ but also the relationship between the researcher and the individuals under study. The way that the current study is conducted is congruent with the researcher’s value systems. Consequently, it is congruent with pragmatist axiological assumptions. In terms of the methodological
assumptions, the adoption of the pragmatist approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, is appropriate in answering the research question of the present study. This is supported by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) who claims that the choice of appropriate research methods, either qualitative or quantitative, depends upon the research question.

4.3 Research Design

This section explores relevant issues associated with the research design adopted in the present study. Three broad approaches to research are discusses including ‘qualitative’, ‘quantitative’ and ‘mixed methods’. The last-named is adopted in this study and thus the emphasis of this section is on issues related to the mixed methods design, including the purposes and strategies associated with this approach and the research process for the present study. Each of these issues is discussed as follows.

4.3.1 Understanding Research Design

Research design is defined as the framework or the basic plan for a study that guides the collection and analysis of data (Churchill 1999; Kinnear, Taylor, Johnson & Armstrong 1993) to answer a particular research question (Davis & Consenna, 1988). In other words, the research design should act as a guideline for the researcher in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data (Yin, 2003). Malhotra (1996) concludes that the research design is a framework or blueprint for conducting a research project, specifying the essential procedures for acquiring the required data. It is argued that the main purpose of a research design is to demonstrate how researchers can find answers for their research questions (Kumar, 1996). The research design involves two major decisions: the kind of research to be managed and the source of
the information (Crask, Fox & Stout, 1995). The selection of an appropriate approach to research is critical to the effectiveness of a research project. Three of these approaches are discussed in the following section.

### 4.3.2 Approaches to Research

Three approaches to research have been proposed in the literature including ‘qualitative’, ‘quantitative’ and ‘mixed methods design’ (Creswell 2003; Patton 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). Qualitative research collects data in form of words, pictures and observations in an attempt to better understand and express the nature of reality (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar & Newton 2002; Neuman 2006). In this way, qualitative data may assist researchers to better understand social and human activities in a natural situation (Hussey & Hussey, 1997) because it provides access to in-depth information (Jennings, 2001). Additionally, qualitative data is useful for evaluating key issues or themes emerging from the research, which may lead to hypothesis building and testing and also explanations (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002) to support theory building and exploring concepts (Patton, 1990). It is argued that qualitative methods are more appropriate when the objective and nature of the research requires in-depth information about a specific phenomenon (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002).

In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative research usually collects data in the form of numbers (Neuman, 2006). Quantitative researchers place a considerable emphasis on these numbers, which are considered as representative of opinions and concepts (Amaratunga et al., 2002). While qualitative research is subjective in nature, quantitative research is said to be more objective in nature and is more concerned with
measuring phenomena (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Based on this argument, the major goal of quantitative researchers is the development of hypotheses, their testing and the development of theory in an attempt to generalize the findings across diverse settings (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

Although the discussion about quantitative and qualitative approaches is usually carried out in such a way as to make them distinctive, it is important to note that they may not be incompatible and competing. A number of scholars have supported the view that both quantitative and qualitative approaches are compatible and should therefore be combined within a particular research study (Creswell 2003; Greene, Caracelli & Graham 1989; Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton 1990). The approach of combining quantitative and qualitative methods is commonly known as ‘mixed methods design’. As mentioned above, the mixed methods design is the most appropriate approach to answer the research questions of the present study. Further information on mixed methods design is provided below.

4.3.3 Mixed Methods Design

Mixed methods research is characterized as a research approach that combines aspects of both qualitative and quantitative research, in terms of both theoretical and/or technical aspects, within a particular study (Rocco et al., 2003a). Because both quantitative and qualitative approaches have strengths and limitations, it is argued that the combination of the relevant features (strengths) of each approach may result in a better research outcome (Amaratunga et al. 2002; Neuman, 2006). For instance, while qualitative data (e.g. interviews) allow greater depth, quantitative data (e.g. surveys) give greater breath (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Mixed methods design
allows better (stronger) inferences and the possibility for presenting a greater diversity of views (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) and generating a better understanding of a particular research question (Greene & Caracelli, 2003). Strategies of inquiry employed by the mixed methods approach regarding data collection can be undertaken simultaneously or sequentially in order to assist researchers to improve their understanding of the research phenomena (Creswell, 2003). Alternatively, enquiry processes may be sequential, with the qualitative approach informing the design of the quantitative approach. The qualitative approach may also be used to further explicate the data and conclusions of the quantitative enquiry.

Based on these observations, the adoption of a mixed method research seems to offset the limitations of a research study using a single method. However, methodological decisions need to consider what approach works better to answer a specific research question. Rocco et al. (2003b, p.598) suggest that one of the purposes of adopting a mixed methods approach ‘is to respond in a pragmatic way to the research question by using what works’. Thus, the nature of the present study requires the adoption of a mixed methods methodology.

4.3.3.1 Purposes for mixed methods design

Greene et al. (1989) have suggested five purposes for combining methods in a single study, based on a review of 57 evaluation studies. A summary of these five purposes is provided in table 4.2 below and a discussion of each of these purposes follows.
Table 4.2 Five Purposes for Mixed Methods Designs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Design Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>seeking convergence of results</td>
<td>Methods: should be different from one another; assess the same phenomenon, within the same paradigm; have equal status; should be conceptualised, designed and implemented independently, simultaneously and within a single study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity</td>
<td>examining not only overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon</td>
<td>Methods: should be different from one another; examine a single phenomenon with different perspectives, within the same paradigm; have equal status; should be conceptualised, designed and implemented interactively, simultaneously an within a single study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>using the results from the first method, sequentially, to help develop or inform the second method</td>
<td>Methods: should be different from one another; assess the same or similar phenomena, within the same paradigm; have equal status; should be conceptualised, designed and implemented interactively, sequentially and within a single study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>discovering contradictions and fresh perspectives to add depth and breadth to inquiry results and interpretations</td>
<td>Methods: should be different from one another; phenomena investigated could cover a broad range; adoption of different paradigms for each method is acceptable; should have equal status; implementation is interactive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>using mixed methods design to add scope and breadth to a study</td>
<td>The phenomena investigated would be distinct and empirical work would be encompassed within a single study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Greene et al. (1989)

Based on the five purposes for mixed methods design identified above, the present study used mixed methods according to the ‘development’ purpose, although the study does encompass some characteristics of ‘triangulation’ and ‘complementarity’ designs. The main difference lies in the criteria for implementation. In both triangulation and complementarity designs, the methods are conceptualised, designed and implemented simultaneously, rather than sequentially as in the development design. The ‘development’ design adopted involves the following characteristics identified in table 4.2 above: methods should be different from one another and
should assess the same or similar phenomena, within the same paradigm and have equal status; methods should be conceptualised, designed and implemented interactively, sequentially and within a single study (Greene et al., 1989). A justification for this choice is provided below.

The ‘methods’ selected for this study include qualitative methods (using data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) and a quantitative method (using data from surveys). Those qualitative and quantitative methods differ in terms of form, assumptions, strengths and limitations or biases. In terms of the ‘phenomena’ characteristic, the qualitative and quantitative methods in this research assessed similar phenomena in that both methods assessed the factors that may influence commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks studied. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative methods were implemented within the same paradigm, because this study adopted the pragmatist paradigm in terms of the philosophical assumptions that were involved in both qualitative and quantitative methods. In terms of the relative ‘status’ of the methods, the qualitative and quantitative methods were equally important, in terms of their frequency and their centrality to the objectives of the present study.

Based on the characteristics related to the criteria of implementation, qualitative and quantitative methods in this study were conceptualized, designed and implemented interactively (not independently) and within a single study. Those methods were also conceptualized, designed and implemented sequentially. The quantitative method (survey) was conducted first, followed by qualitative methods (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions). Based on these observations, the research design of the
present study can be considered as an example of a mixed methods design with a development purpose. Further information about implementation procedures are examined below.

4.3.3.2 Strategies Associated with the Mixed Methods Design

In addition to the evaluative study conducted by Greene et al. (1989), a number of mixed method designs have been proposed in the literature (Creswell 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) have organised different types of mixed methods designs into three main types including: ‘equivalent status designs’ (sequential and parallel/simultaneous), ‘dominant-less dominant designs’, and ‘designs with multilevel use of approaches’. Sequential mixed method designs and Parallel/Simultaneous mixed method designs are considered as common designs while designs with multilevel approaches are more complex, because the methods are combined within, as well as between the stages of a study (Rocco et al. 2003a; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). In a simplified but similar way, Creswell (2003) has suggested three strategies associated with the mixed method approach, including ‘sequential’, ‘concurrent’ and ‘transformative’.

The sequential design, where the qualitative enquiry is conducted before the quantitative data is collected, or vice versa (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), is the mixed method design of interest in the present study. As mentioned above, quantitative and qualitative methods in the present study were conceptualized, designed and implemented sequentially, where quantitative data collection and analysis was conducted first in which the concepts used in this thesis were tested, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis, involving in-depth information
and insights from a small sample of participants, which was used to support the quantitative findings. The sequential design is considered to be relatively easy to implement because it involves clear procedures implemented in separate stages, making it easy to describe and report the findings (Creswell, 2003). The following discussion examines validity issues in relation to the mixed methods design.

4.3.3.3 Validity and reliability issues

Validity is defined as ‘the extent to which the information collected by the researcher truly reflects the phenomena being studied’ (Veal 1997, p.35). So, a research measure can be considered valid if it demonstrates what the researcher intends to measure (Burns 2000; Zikmund 2003). Validity, in practice, is applied quite differently within the context of different research paradigms. Quantitative researchers (e.g. positivists) tend to define validity in terms of the precision of measurement (Hussey & Hussey, 1997), emphasising statistical relationships between variables. Qualitative researchers (e.g. constructivists), on the other hand, define validity in terms of the phenomena through the development of rich and deep knowledge about those phenomena (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Babbie (2004) argues that qualitative methods (e.g. field research) seem to be more able to achieve higher validity than survey and experimental measurements (quantitative methods). However, other writers advocate that an interactive research strategy, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, leads to better results compared to a single methodology approach because together they can provide a more complete picture of phenomena (Zeller, 1997).

Reliability, on the other hand, relates to the extent to which research findings can be replicated with similar results (Bouma & Ling 2004; Guba & Lincoln 1994; Veal,
By minimising the errors and biases in a study, assuming that procedures are consistent, researchers should be able to replicate their research results (Yin, 1994). As with validity, reliability assumes different perspectives according on the type of paradigm adopted. Reliability is usually very high for positivist studies, because positivist researchers place a high emphasis on their ability to replicate their research findings reliably and so develop and refine particular scales for large populations (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Constructivist studies, on the other hand, may be associated with lower reliability, because qualitative researchers are more concerned with rigorous and very detailed analytical data regarding people’s attitudes and behaviours with smaller numbers (Veal, 1997) rather than on rigorous quantitative measures. In relation to pragmatist studies, the adoption of mixed methods methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, is likely to achieve both high validity and reliability. According to Denzin (1989), the use of multiple research methods, within the same study and assuming the same conditions, is likely to result in greater reliability and validity compared to a single methodology approach.

The current study, using a pragmatist approach, adopted the mixed method methodology to overcome the inherent limitations on validity and reliability in using quantitative or qualitative measurement methodology. The research methods used, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and a survey instrument, lead to multiple inferences that complement each other and illuminate different facets of the phenomena under investigation (Neuman 2003, p.138). The adoption of a mixed method methodology, therefore, may be more appropriate to achieve high levels of validity and reliability for the present research.
However, regardless of the paradigm/research method adopted, a number of factors can undermine the validity and reliability of a research study including errors in research procedures, poor sampling and inaccurate or misleading measurements (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Even though the current study adopts a mixed method methodology, a number of techniques have been employed to ensure that the research findings are reliable and valid. Because the concept of reliability is dependent, in part, on its connection to theory (Yin, 1994), a research paradigm and its philosophical assumptions needs to be clearly specified in the research design phase. Other techniques identified in the literature have been used in this research to increase its reliability (Yin 1994; Riege 2003; Patton 1990): the data was tape-recorded; there was an assurance of meaningful parallelism of findings across multiple data sources; and research questions were clear and congruent with the features of the study design. Other issues related to reliability are addressed in Chapter 5 – Quantitative analysis.

The present study also adopted a number of techniques, based on the literature (Guba & Lincoln 1985; Miles and Huberman 1994; Yin 1994) to assure validity including: use of a pattern-matching logic; display of illustrations and diagrams in the data analysis phase to assist explanation building; use of triangulation techniques such as multiple sources of evidence and methods during the data collection and data analysis phase of the research, all of which enhance validity and credibility. These techniques are further discussed in section 4.8 (Overall data analysis – Triangulation) of this chapter. The following discussion explores the procedures included in the research processes undertaken in the present study.
4.3.3.4 Research Process and Conceptual Research Model for this study

The mixed methods research process for the present study is presented in Figure 1 below, followed by detailed information about the procedures undertaken within the three companies involved in this research project. The stages of the research processes for this study are based on the work of Greene et al. (1989), Creswell (2003) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998).

Figure 4.1: Research process map

As shown in the Figure 4.1 above, three aquatic theme park companies were part of this research, company A, company B and company C. These companies are key
players in the Australian tourism industry within New South Wales and Queensland States. An analysis of the research undertaken in each company is provided below.

Following the guidelines of sequential mixed methods design, a survey was conducted in companies A, B and C. Data from the surveys was analysed followed by the qualitative methods which were used to examine the quantitative findings in more detail. Two in-depth interviews were conducted in company A. Findings from these in-depth interviews were used to design the two focus group discussions. The first focus group discussion was conducted with managers and supervisors and the second was conducted with employees, involving both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Data from these qualitative methods was transcribed and analysed using a pattern-matching approach (Yin, 1994), where findings from these focus group discussions were compared to findings from the in-depth interviews in company A.

Themes that emerged from the analysis of this qualitative data were used to design the in-depth interviews in companies B and C. Focus group discussions were not conducted in companies B and C because these companies were not prepared to conduct these discussions. Therefore, two in-depth interviews only were conducted in each of these two companies. Following the conduct of the interviews, data was transcribed and analysed using a pattern-matching approach (Yin, 1994) and were compared to the themes emerged from the qualitative data in company A. A triangulation technique was then adopted to check the consistency of findings from the multiple sources of data collection used in this study (quantitative and qualitative), in order to improve validity and reliability. Further information on these issues
regarding data analysis is provided below within the detailed discussion regarding the 
quantitative and qualitative phases.

This technique of ‘mixed methods’ was useful to enhance understanding of the impact 
of organisational practices (training and communication) on commitment, job 
satisfaction and employee performance. The commitment concept, in terms of 
commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers, and also the concepts of 
job satisfaction, employee performance and professionalism have never been 
addressed with Australian aquatic theme park employees (including both “marine 
science employees” and “other theme park employees”). In phase 1, the survey 
instrument was used to test statistical relationships between organisational practices 
(and also dimensions of professionalism) and work-related outcomes. A conceptual 
research model was developed for the present study (see Figure 4.2 below) to 
illustrate the relationship between these variables. In phase 2, the findings from the 
qualitative data were valuable in providing more extensive insights and information 
on the factors that may influence commitment, job satisfaction, employee 
performance, and perceptions of professionalism for employees undertaking marine 
science activities.
Thus, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and data analysis techniques allowed the researcher to approach the nature and level of commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance and professionalism from
several different perspectives, which was essential in answering the research questions of the present study. The adoption of a mixed methods methodology also strengthened the research design by enhancing reliability and validity because the advantages of each method were combined and their limitations were minimised. In addition to the adoption of an appropriate research paradigm and the research design associated with that paradigm, there are other relevant issues that need to be considered when undertaking a research project, such as those related to a sampling plan. These issues are examined as follows.

### 4.4 Sampling Plan

In designing a sample, a number of issues need to be considered such as unit of analysis, target population, sampling frame, sampling procedures and sample size (Kinnear et al. 1993; Zikmund 2003). The following discussion addresses each of these issues.

#### 4.4.1 Unit of analysis, target population and sample frame

‘Unit of analysis’ is associated with the requirement for measuring the organisation, social institution and society (Neuman, 2003). This study was undertaken in the Australian tourism industry, in the Queensland and New South Wales aquatic theme park segment. This defines the study’s unit of analysis to encompass theme park employees. Zikmund (2000, p.342) defines target population as ‘the complete group of specific population elements relevant to the research project’. Thus, the ‘target population’ of this study included both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”.

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
‘Sampling frame’ is defined as the list of elements from which a probability sample may be selected (Zikmund, 2003). Seven Queensland companies were invited to participate in this research. These companies were selected from the Queensland Holidays website (www.queenslandholidays.com), a site sponsored by Tourism Queensland, a statutory authority of the Queensland government. Three of these companies accepted the invitation. Because this study required an in-depth understanding of the factors that may affect commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance in the aquatic theme park segment of the tourism industry, the entire population of theme park employees in companies A, B and C became the sample frame for this study. However, the researcher was unable to specifically survey “other theme park employees” in company B because this company was not prepared to conduct a survey of such employees. Therefore, the survey in Company B was conducted with “marine science employees” only.

4.4.2 Sampling procedures

The two basic types of sampling strategies include probability or random sampling and nonprobability sampling (Zikmund, 2003). In a probability sample, each individual in the population has an equal and known probability of being included in the sample (Hoyle, Harris & Judd. 2002; Zikmund 2003). Quantitative researchers tend to use probability samples, as their main focus is on the sample’s representativeness in an attempt to produce accurate generalization (Neuman, 2006). In a nonprobability sample, on the other hand, individuals are usually selected based on convenience or availability and not by probability and randomness (Babbie, 2004). As qualitative researchers usually focus on small-scale, in-depth research projects, they tend to use nonprobability samples (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this case, the
choice of a sample procedure is based on collecting particular cases, events, or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding about the phenomena (Neuman, 2006) rather than a large number of cases in an attempt to achieve a statistical significance (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Major forms of nonprobability samples are accidental or convenience, quota, purposive or judgmental and snowball sampling (Babbie 2004; Hoyle et al. 2002; Neuman 2006).

Although the discussion of sampling procedures (probability and nonprobability) is usually associated with reliability and validity in both qualitative and quantitative studies, it is argued that most sampling procedures can by used in both types of research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Convenience sampling, for example, is one type of nonprobability sampling that has been used in both qualitative and quantitative research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In the end, the appropriate sampling procedures should give emphasis to the nature of the research problem, rather than to the type of method used. However, convenience sampling is not considered a desirable sampling strategy in the view of a number of authors because it may produce ineffective, highly unrepresentative samples (see Creswell 2003; Neuman 2006). Convenience sampling, however, is becoming popular as researchers very often face situations where they must take whatever sample is available in an attempt to meet the research context and purpose (Punch 2005, p.101). Based on the rationale of convenience sampling, aquatic theme park companies were selected for convenience in this present examination of the process of professionalisation for marine science employees undertaking marine science activities (e.g. dolphin trainers).
4.4.3 Sample size

Sample size is usually defined using both statistical and non-statistical techniques (Sarantakos, 2005). The appropriate sample size depends on a number of factors including, the type of methodology/data analysis employed, the characteristics of the target population, the purpose of the research, the level of accuracy required to meet the research objectives, and paradigm that underlies a particular research study (Neuman 2006; Patton 1990; Sarantakos 2005). It should be noted that a large sample size without random sampling or a poor sampling frame is less representative than a smaller one with random sampling and excellent sampling frame (Neuman, 2006). Sample size is only one of a number of factors that affect the quality of research results (Neuman, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005).

According to Patton (1990, p.185), ‘the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observation/analytical capabilities of the researchers than with sample size’. Simple rules of thumb for required sample size are \( N \geq 50 + 8m \) (where \( m \) is the number of independent variables) for testing the \( R^2 \) of a regression model (Green, 1991). In this case, 114 cases would be required to do the regression analysis to test the hypotheses of this study. With 93 respondents and eight predictors (training, communication frequency, informal communication, indirect communication, bidirectional communication, referent, autonomy and self-regulation), the number of cases is below the minimum requirement of 114 cases. However, this study adopted the ‘pragmatism paradigm’ which is associated with mixed methods of research in the same study (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie,
1998). Thus, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in the present study minimised the limitation in relation to sample size.

4.5 Quantitative method - Survey

This section addresses the main issues associated with survey methodology and the survey instrument. The discussion first involves definition and types of surveys, advantages and limitations, following by a justification for the methodology in this research. Then, questionnaire issues for questionnaire design, procedures to increase response rate and pretest are explored, followed by a discussion of data collection and follow up.

4.5.1 Understanding surveys

Surveying is a widely used method of quantitative data collection in the form of a questionnaire for identifying characteristics, attitudes or opinions of a representative sample of individuals (Creswell, 2003) in an attempt to generalise from a sample to a population (Babbie, 2004). Surveys are usually used in descriptive or explanatory studies (Neuman, 2006; Zikmund, 2003) for measuring variables and testing multiple hypotheses. Common types of surveys include face-to-face, telephone interviewing, self-administered questionnaire and web-based survey (Creswell, 2003; Zikmund, 2003). Some benefits associated with surveys include provision of quick, inexpensive, efficient, and accurate means of assessing information about the population (Zikmund, 2003). However, survey research can also be used poorly and its major limitation is associated with poor response rate or non-response bias (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Other relevant issues associated with a survey instrument are discussed below.
4.5.2 Justification for the methodology

A self-administered questionnaire was utilised in this study. Self-administered questionnaire is the most common method used in descriptive research for collection of quantitative data, with support from one or more techniques used in exploratory research design (Neuman. 2006; Zikmund, 2003). The objective of the survey instrument in the present study was to test the conceptual model by testing the relationships between the constructs. The possibility of electronic survey distribution and data collection was canvassed but few employees in the three companies studied have access to computers so a paper-based survey was used.

4.5.3 Questionnaire Design

The survey instrument comprised 109 items distributed among five sections such as background information, training and development, communication, commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance and professional inventory, in this sequence. The ‘professional inventory’ section was specific for “marine science employees”. For this reason, two distinct questionnaires were developed: one for “marine science employees” including the five sections (Survey 1) and another for “other theme park employees” with the first four sections (Survey 2). The questionnaire for “marine science employees” comprised five pages and four pages for “other theme park employees”. The survey instruments are provided in Appendices 1 and 2. All variables included in this study were measured using multiple-item scales drawn from previous research. Multiple item measures may be more representative and related to the constructs than single item measures can be (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).
Several techniques were utilised in this study to ensure good questionnaire design in an attempt to assist respondents to understand the questionnaire as well as possible (Babbie, 2004). The survey was presented in a booklet format and a short statement was written under each section in order to explain its objective and content and also to give respondents basic instructions on how to answer the questions. Most of the scales used continuous measures ranging from ‘strongly disagree to strongly agree’ and were measured on a seven-point Likert scale. The Likert scale is widely used and very popular in survey-based research (Neuman, 2006), as it has been shown to be simple in construction (Tull & Hawkins, 1987), has good reliability and is easy for respondents to understand (Chisnall, 1986).

4.5.4 Measures

To address the research questions, the following measures were incorporated in this study. All measures used in the present research are from validated studies. Details of the operationalisation of the measures and also demographic variables are described below.

4.5.4.1 Demographic variables

Demographic variables included in the ‘background information’ section were respondents’ gender, age, education level and length of service, qualifications, department in which respondents work, type of occupation and the nature of employment. Age and length of service were measured using five-option and four-option scales, respectively. ‘Education’ was assessed using an eight-option scale and nature of employment a four-option scale. ‘Qualification and work department’ were
both assessed using five-option scales including one option for ‘other – please specify’. ‘Occupation’ was measured using a nine-option scale including one option for ‘other – please specify’. The options for occupation were different in relation to the questionnaire for “marine science employees” and for “other theme park employees”.

4.5.4.2 Training and development

The training and career development measure was based on Meyer and Smith’s (2000) instrument. This instrument included items addressing sufficiency of training received (2), satisfaction with training (4) and training as part of a plan to get ahead (2). One additional item was included addressing post-induction training regarding customer service. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha for the training instrument was 0.91.

4.5.4.4 Organisational Communication

Johlke and Duhan’s (2000) validated instrument was used to measure service employees’ perceptions of communication practices and sources of employee ambiguity, using 19 items. The instrument included items addressing: “Communication frequency” (3), “Informal communication mode” (3), “Indirect communication content” (4), “Bi-directional communication flows” (4) and “Ambiguity regarding customers” (5), each rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to strongly agree”. The overall Cronbach’s coefficient alpha acceptability ranges from 0.80 to 0.86.
4.5.4.5 Commitment

Meyer et al.’s (1993) validated instrument was used in this study to measure affective commitment to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers. Six items was used to measure the affective dimension, using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Overall, 18 items were used to measure affective commitment to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers. The Cronbach’s coefficient alpha acceptability for affective commitment was 0.87.

4.5.4.6 Job performance

Employees' performance data were obtained using a self-rating system. Johlke and Duhan’s (2000) validated instrument was used to measure service employee job performance on five performance items using a seven-point Likert format ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The overall Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was found to be 0.85.

4.5.4.7 Professionalisation

Hall’s (1968) validated instrument (The Hall Professional Scale) was used in this study to measure structural and attitudinal aspects of professionalisation of marine science professionals. The scale was developed using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. This measure included items addressing organisation as a major referent (3), belief in self-regulation (3) and autonomy (5).
4.5.5 Procedures to increase response rate

Some procedures were adopted in this study to increase the response rate (Aaker, Kumar & Day 1998; Churchill 1999; Neuman 2006; Zikmund 2003). The questionnaire was easy to understand and was attractively designed with professional layout and clear instructions. Replies were guaranteed to be held anonymous and confidential. The questionnaire was printed in a booklet format in an attempt to make it neater, easy to use and more compact. A cover letter with the university letter head was provided, emphasising the value and the purpose of the research and the importance of the respondent’s participation. The letter also emphasised that the research study was approved by the university ethics committee (see Appendices 1 and 2). A small gift (chocolate) was offered to participants in an attempt to encourage them to complete the questionnaire. Follow ups via company management were undertaken to increase the response rate and a summary of the main findings of the research was offered to respondents upon completion of the analysis.

4.5.6 Pretest

According to Churchill (1999), a pretest should be conducted in order to detect problems in the questionnaire instructions or design. The basic ways to pretest a questionnaire involve checking the items with other research professionals and conducting a trial run with a small number of participants in an attempt to detect any problems relating to question wording, leading questions and bias due to order (Zikmund, 2003). In this study, pretesting the questionnaire with a small number of participants was not undertaken because all items included in the questionnaire are from validated instruments. The final draft was sent to companies A, B and C involved in this research to screen out any problems in the questionnaire design. The
issues related to quantitative data analysis are addressed in Chapter 5 – Quantitative data analysis.

4.6 Qualitative method – In-Depth Interviews

This section explores the relevant issues regarding in-depth interviews conducted at companies A, B and C and describes the in-depth interviewing technique, followed by an analysis of its advantages and limitations. A justification for the use of this methodology in this research is provided. The section concludes by discussing the framework for in-depth interviews, including planning, conduct and analysis processes.

4.6.1 Understanding in-depth interviews

In-depth interviews can be described as informal conversations between informant and interviewer in which the latter aims to probe for and elicit detailed, in-depth information related to experiences, opinions and beliefs of the informant (Burns, 2000). Although in-depth interviews take the form of an informal or natural conversation, Rubin and Rubin (1995) emphasise that this type of interview is more like “guided conversation”, as the flow of the conversation is usually slightly controlled ‘to ensure the focus stays relevant to the problem’ (Burns 2000, p.424). In-depth interviews usually follow an open-ended approach, and are apparently unstructured. However, the interviewer usually has a list of questions to assist in guiding the conversation. In-depth interviews are typically tape-recorded to provide a record of responses that can be checked and re-checked. They usually last between 45 minutes to two hours (McGivern 2003; Zikmund 2003).
It is acknowledged that in-depth interviews should be used when the objective of the research is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the interviewees’ opinions, beliefs and experiences (Chrzanowska 2002; McGivern 2003; Morgan 1997) that cannot be directly observed and discovered by the researcher (Burns 2000; Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhang 2001). In-depth interviews should also be employed when informants have a great deal of specialised knowledge that needs to be processed in depth for better understanding and also when the researcher’s topic involves sensitive issues (Chrzanowska 2002; McGivern 2003).

4.6.1.2 Advantages and limitations of in-depth interviews

The primary advantages of in-depth interviews, identified by Carson et al. (2001) are that they cover a wide area of interest; allow the researcher become familiar with the research topic as the research progresses; help the researcher identify and explore key issues; and allow further probing and examining until mutual understanding is reached. A significant limitation of in-depth interviews is associated with validity, because ‘the research is open to the vagaries of the informant’s interpretation and presentation of reality’ (Burns 2000, p.426). Other disadvantages of in-depth interviews include: the requirement of a skilled interviewer; the difficulty in finding good informants; and potentially high levels of subjectivity related to the analysis and interpretation of data (Zikmund, 2003).

4.6.2 Justification for the methodology

Six in-depth interviews were conducted in this study in the three companies studied, two in each company. These in-depth interviews provided rich and detailed information and key insights for the study and helped the researcher to recognise
some key factors that were affecting commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance such as customer service issues (see Appendix 9). These in-depth interviews also provided in-depth information regarding the meanings that aquatic theme parks employees attach to their work roles and how these meanings influenced their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance, as well as perceptions of professionalism for marine science employees. Thus, the decision to conduct these in-depth interviews was based on the need to explore in-depth whether or not and how employees’ perceptions about organisational practices (training and communication) influence commitment, job satisfaction and performance of aquatic theme park employees. Because there is little substantial reference to these issues in the literature regarding aquatic theme park employees, particularly marine science employees, the findings from these in-depth interviews were important in relation to the research questions of the present study.

4.6.3 Framework for in-depth interviews

Carson et al. (2001) postulate that the structure of qualitative research interviews includes three phrases, namely; planning the interview, starting the interview, and managing the interview. Similarly, McGivern (2003) argues that the interview structure should include three phases such as a clear introduction and ‘warm up”; the main body of the interview; and a clearly signalled ending or “wind down”. The structure of the in-depth interviews developed for this study drew on the work of these two authors and included: planning, conducting and concluding the interview.
4.6.3.1 Planning and designing the interviews

The planning and design phase of this study in regard to the in-depth interviews involved a number of relevant research decisions including objectives of the interviews, number of interviews, and design of the interview guide. These issues are discussed as follows.

4.6.3.1.1 Objectives, number of interviews and interview guide

McGiven (2003, p.110) postulated that the ideal number of interviews is dependent on the research objectives, the complexity of the sample requirements and the practicalities of time and cost. As mentioned above, six in-depth interviews were conducted in this study. The in-depth interviews in company A were conducted with the Training Coordinator and the General Manager, prior to the conduct of the two focus group discussions. The main objective of the in-depth interviews in company A was to obtain a good grasp of the HRM practices currently in use and to explore other people issues in order to obtain relevant information to help the design of the focus group questions. The Training Coordinator has been working in the company for about 12 years, and at the time of the interview, she was responsible for many HR activities, including recruiting, selection and training. The General Manager has held this position for a short time, less than two years, following a long career in the company.

In relation to company B, the first interview was conducted with the HR Assistant Manager and the second interview was conducted with the Education Coordinator. In company C, the interviews were conducted with the CEO and a senior marine animal trainer staff member. The in-depth interviews with the HR Assistant Manager
(company B) and with the CEO (company C) were useful to explore in detail the factors that may influence commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance and other people related issues for aquatic theme park employees in general. The interviews with the Education Coordinator (Company B) and the senior marine animal trainer staff covered similar issues but were more focused on the issues relating to marine science employees, because these two interviewees work closely with such employees.

These six interviews were appropriate to the present study because all interviewees were key informants concerning the objectives of the study. The number of interviews was also appropriate because the information collected was rich, relevant, and sufficient to understand the key issues related to organisational practices, work-related outcomes included in this study, other people issues, and professionalism. A written interview guide was used during the interviews as a memory jogger for the researcher, including some general and open-ended topics related to the research objectives (Carson et al., 2001). The list of questions for the interviews in companies A, B and C is provided in appendices 3, 4 and 5.

### 4.6.3.2 Context, conduct and conclusion of interviews - Company A

The following discussion addresses the process of the conduct of the two in-depth interviews conducted at company A.

#### 4.6.3.2.1 First interview – Training Coordinator

Prior to the interview the researcher met the company’s Training Coordinator to discuss the research project and to invite her to be interviewed. The researcher
Methodology – Chapter 4

outlined the objectives of the research and the purpose and importance of the interview to the research. The researcher then explained that the main aim of the interview was to collect the interviewee’s opinions, beliefs and experiences related to HR practices and other people issues. It was agreed that the length of the interview would be around one hour; that the information would be kept confidential and that the interview would be tape-recorded. The strategy of meeting the Training Coordinator prior to the interview provided a good opportunity for the researcher to interact with the interviewee, to build rapport and enhance the level of trust before the conduct of the interview.

The ‘formality’ of the introduction phase was minimised, because the purpose of the interview and other ethical issues, such as the assurance of confidentiality, had been canvassed with the interviewee prior to the conduct of the interview. The researcher and the Training Coordinator engaged in a free-flowing conversation about the latter’s experience, opinions and beliefs about the HRM practices adopted in the company. This informal but guided conversation generated many rich and relevant insights on HRM practices, the company’s history and other people issues, which were useful to design the focus group questions and also useful in the analysis of the data.

4.6.3.2.2 Second interview – General Manager

The researcher tried to follow the same interview guide used to interview the training coordinator. However, the General Manager was not able to answer some questions directly related to HRM practices. The researcher then shifted the sequence of questions and asked general and operational questions related to other people issues. This situation is acceptable because researchers need to be flexible in managing
unpredictable situations by changing the questions or shifting the sequence of questions during interviews (Patton 1990; Yin 1994). Although the General Manager had claimed that he honestly did not know much about HRM issues, his answers addressed a number of HRM practices (e.g. training and recruitment) which were rich and relevant to the research study. The information collected in the interview with the General Manager was not lengthy (about one hour) but it was extremely relevant to some cultural issues involving HRM practices. The General Manager was the key person with whom to discuss those issues.

4.6.3.3 Context, conduct and conclusion of interviews - Companies B and C

The process of the two in-depth interviews conducted at companies B and C is summarised as follows.

4.6.3.3.1 First Interviews

Before the first interview in Company B, the researcher spent around 6 hours in the company, as a customer, to become familiar with the company’s work environment. The researcher also took this opportunity to observe the behaviours of some employees, in regard to the customer service provided and in relation to the work with animals. Prior to the interview, the researcher explained in more detail the main objectives of the research and the previous research undertaken at company A. The researcher gave an assurance that the information would remain strictly confidential and asked permission to tape-record the conversation. The researcher then talked about her experience of the tour she did of the company, as a customer. Arising from this, the interviewee and the researcher engaged in a free-flowing conversation about many aspects of day-to-day operations in the company. This was important to build
rapport and create a relaxed environment. The same procedure was done in Company C.

Following this introduction, the interviews in companies B and C followed the guidelines of the researcher’s interview written guide. The interview lasted about one and a half hours and involved issues related to factors that may affect commitment, job satisfaction and performance, including an exploration of experiences and opinions regarding the commitment of casual and permanent employees, including marine science employees.

4.6.3.3.2 Second Interviews

Findings from the first interviews in Companies B and C were useful to refine/clarify the questions to be included in the interviews with the Education Coordinator (Company B) and the senior marine animal trainer (Company C). Most of the questions and issues included in the second interviews were similar to the first interviews but the second interviews had a more specific focus on marine science employees. The interviews lasted one and a half hours and provided in-depth and rich information about the main issues regarding marine science employees including a detailed description of the types of occupations within the marine science department. The interviewees provided the researcher with copies of relevant documents such as the employee handbook, training calendar for the month, among others. These sources of information became useful during the overall data analysis.
4.7 Qualitative Method - Focus Group Discussions

This section examines the main issues associated with the structure and processes of focus group discussions. First, some definitions of ‘focus group discussion’ are provided, followed by a discussion of advantages and disadvantages. Second, a justification for the focus group methodology is outlined, and the framework for focus group research is explored, including planning, design and conduct processes.

4.7.1 Understanding Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions have long been acknowledged as an effective research method for obtaining qualitative data (Carson et al. 2001; Churchill 1999; Krueger 1994; Morgan 1997). Focus group research is essentially a group interview where a facilitator and a small number of people gather together in a relatively informal, but structured discussion about a particular issue of interest (Bruseberg & McDonagh 2003; Keown 1983). Gilmore and Carson (1996) acknowledge that qualitative research methods, such as focus group discussion, are well-suited to a service context, where the delivery of service usually involves human interaction. Focus groups can also be used to explore concepts and generate new ideas for hypotheses, in the interpretation of survey findings (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson 2001; Neuman 2006); and to access employees’ attitudes toward their organisation (Greenbaum, 1998).

4.7.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages

A primary advantage of focus group methodology is that it provides in-depth information on the topic being explored (Edmunds, 1999), as a result of synergies created by moderator-participant interaction and group dynamics (Mitchell &
Branigan, 2000). These interactions are likely to provide better quality data than individual interviews (Keown, 1983). Other advantages include speedy results, high face validity, and relatively low cost (Krueger, 1994). A primary limitation of focus groups is that their outputs are based on small sample sizes and the results cannot be generalised (Alreck & Settle 1995; Keown 1983; Mitchell & Branigan 2000). Other limitations include: data is difficult to analyse; groups are difficult to assemble and usually rely on volunteer participants; and the validity and quality of the information is heavily dependent on a skilled facilitator (Edmunds 1999; Krueger 1994). Even though the saving of time and money is usually postulated as a positive point of the focus group methodology, Healy and Perry (1998) argue that a researcher should not engage in focus group work where the choice of research methods is based primarily on this ‘savings approach’.

4.7.2 Justification for the methodology

This study was designed to contribute to an understanding of employees’ perceptions of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) and their impact on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) within the Australian aquatic theme park segment, as well as exploring perceptions of professionalism for marine science employees. Given the lack of research on these issues in this segment, it is appropriate that a well-developed focus group methodology be central to the research, particularly in exploring, in depth, the values and meanings that employees attach to their work roles. Accordingly, the focus group approach was invaluable in accessing the experiences, insights and feelings of key people in the segment, including management and employees, and focusing on “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”.

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
4.7.3 Framework for Focus Group Research

The framework developed for the focus group methodology for this study (see table 4.3 below) comprised two stages namely: planning and design and conduct of the discussion. This two stage schema is based on the work of Morgan (1997) and Krueger (1994). The guidelines required for each of these two stages are discussed below.

Table 4.3 - Framework for Focus Group Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning and design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of focus groups and size of groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of groups and length of sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wording of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing and site selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting the facilitator and the assistant moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussion guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-testing or piloting the focus group questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conduct of the discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7.3.1 Planning and design

In this study, the planning and design stage involved a number of critical research decisions including: definition of the problem; establishment of the number of focus groups, size of groups and length of sessions; wording of questions; timing and site selection; recruitment of participants; selecting the facilitator and the assistant...
moderator and pre-testing or piloting the focus groups questions. Each of these decisions will be discussed as follows.

4.7.3.1.2 Establishment of the number of Focus Groups

The typical number of focus groups in a qualitative study in an organisation is about three to four groups. The standard rule is to keep conducting focus groups until little additional information is gained (Krueger, 1994) and the facilitator can largely predict what would be said in the next group (Carson et al., 2001). However, the literature does not provide a general guideline concerning the ideal number of focus groups. As noted by Healy and Perry (1998), if the participants are homogeneous enough, fewer focus groups are required. They also emphasise that better accuracy is not directly related to a larger number of focus groups. Homogeneous participants share similar background and perspectives, which acts to reduce conflict in the focus group discussion (Neuman, 2006).

Three focus groups were planned for Company A, including a middle manager and supervisor group, a “marine science employee” group, and an “other theme park employee” group. However, it was not possible to hold both employee focus groups because of practical constraints (time and work requirements). Also, the number of employees who were willing to participate in the focus group discussion was insufficient for an effective discussion in two separate groups. So, it was decided to conduct one focus group only with employees including both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The first focus group of managers and supervisors was conducted as planned. Two focus group discussions were appropriate for this research because the discussions provided in-depth information.
about the major issues that are likely to affect commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance such as training, communication and customer service for the whole range of employees.

4.7.3.1.3 Size of groups and length of sessions

Commentators’ views of maximum and minimum sizes of focus groups vary, with a range of four to twelve participants. However, there is a lack of consensus in the literature on an ideal size for a focus group. There is some evidence that a preference for a smaller focus group size is growing (Carson et al. 2001; Fern 2001). Small groups of participants, with a range of four to six people, are preferable when the interest of the researcher focuses on unique expectations of specific segments (Fern, 2001); when the participants have intense experience with the issues under discussion (Krueger, 1994); or where small groups allow the facilitator to get in-depth responses from group participants (McGivern, 2003). Morgan (1997) argues that the variability of participants is probably the most important determinant of the size of focus groups. In relation to length of sessions, the literature suggests that focus groups should be of sufficient length to establish rapport (Carson et al., 2001) and generate discussion and good quality information (Edmunds, 1999).

In the present research, the first focus group discussion was conducted with seven people, including managers and supervisors from a variety of departments/areas of expertise (HR, accounting, marketing, marine science, reception, education). In the second focus group discussion, five employees participated in the discussion, including three “marine science employees” and two “other theme park employees”. Appendix 8 presents a summary description of participants. These sizes were
appropriate and provided excellent group interactions with constructive and information-rich discussion, which generated good insights into organisational practices and their relationship to commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance, customer service and other people issues. The length of time of each focus group was between one and one half and two hours, which was sufficient to establish rapport with participants and adequately explore the discussion topics.

**4.7.3.1.4 Wording of questions**

Alreck and Settle (1995) argue that focus group questions might be called “trigger” questions as they are ‘designed to draw out various opinions and stimulate a conversation about some issue’. These trigger questions are open-ended questions which enable participants to establish the direction of the responses, provide a stimulus to discussants to base their responses on their particular situations (Krueger & Casey, 2000), and allow freedom to participants to provide the amount of information they want to give (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

The focus group questions were based on the information obtained from the familiarisation phase (site visits, in-situ observations and document analysis) and the in-depth interviews. The focus group with managers and supervisors was conducted first and explored 17 ‘trigger’ questions developed by the facilitator (see appendix 6). The questions for the focus group with employees were further refined and elaborated upon to adapt to some issues raised in the first focus group. 17 open-ended questions were then used in the focus groups with employees (see appendix 7).
4.7.3.1.5 Timing and Site selection

Conducting focus groups after working hours is considered appropriate, because it minimises disruption to the operations of the company (Carson et al., 2001). Focus groups can be held in a variety of locations, but an important consideration is whether the location is convenient and easily accessible and whether the participants feel comfortable and relaxed (Chrzanowska 2002; Morgan 1997; Krueger 1994). The study focus groups were conducted in the early evening, starting from 5:30 pm, in the employees’ common room. The time and venue were very appropriate. The venue was convenient, and a relaxed environment encouraged a good informal discussion.

4.7.3.1.6 Recruitment of participants:

Meeting employees prior to the focus group discussion is considered to be a good practice because it increases the chances of attendance of participants (Krueger, 1994), as the researcher becomes a familiar person and it also presents an immediate opportunity for participants to ask questions related to the issues and processes of the focus group (Bloor et al., 2001). The researcher utilised a ‘note to staff’ as a recruiting method for the focus groups. The note, which was placed in the employees’ common room, invited staff to participate in a group discussion on human resource issues such as training and motivating factors in the workplace. This procedure was successful for the managers/supervisors group but it did not work as well for the employees, primarily because of work and time constraints. However, the researcher spent two days on site and had an opportunity to talk to many employees in their break times. After explaining in more detail the importance of the focus group discussion, a number of employees were happy to participate. These conversations with employees over a cup of coffee were really useful because they generated many
insightful comments concerning employees’ feelings and perceptions about current organisational practices and other people issues. Recruiting employees was time consuming, especially in relation to casual staff due to their time limitations. However, the benefits gained from the conversations with employees outweighed the difficulties posed by work constraints and allowed the formation of a focus group.

4.7.3.1.7 Selecting the facilitator and assistant moderator

It is argued that the abilities of a skilled facilitator are essential to ensure the quality of focus groups (Greenbaum 1998; Krueger 1994). This preference in selecting professional facilitators has been acknowledged by a number of authors (Edmunds 1999; Zikmund 2003), because the professional facilitator is trained and adept at detecting and following nuances in participants’ responses. Edmunds (1999) advocates that professional facilitators are more appropriate to conduct focus group discussions than university professors, because many professors do not have the required practical business experience to be able to relate to certain participants and analyse the focus group results. However, Carson et al. (2001) acknowledge that academic researchers can act effectively as focus group facilitators if they possess the appropriate skills and knowledge for the topic of discussion, which facilitates follow up on comments in critical areas. According to Fern (2001), different research objectives require different facilitators and no single set of facilitator capabilities is appropriate for all focus groups. Krueger (1994) emphasises that previous experience in working with groups or training in group dynamics is useful.

The focus group discussions were conducted with the researcher as facilitator, and with an assistant moderator. The researcher has limited experience in focus group
facilitation but is developing skills in teaching, training and facilitation and holds a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. The assistant moderator has experience in facilitation and training and has conducted focus groups for customer research, market research and employee-organisational change initiatives in a wide variety of Australian public and private sector contexts. Although the researcher has limited experience in the conduct of focus groups, the experience of designing and conducting the research focus group as a team with her research supervisors and the assistant moderator has been invaluable. It also kept the cost down, because the assistant moderator’s professional services were free. At each focus group session, the researcher facilitator outlined the purpose and process for the focus groups, initiated trigger questions and prompted discussion to cover all the required issues. The facilitator was also concerned to follow through on issues raised. The assistant moderator was primarily concerned with recording the main points of the discussion on butcher paper and to then consolidate and verify the record.

4.7.3.1.8 Focus group discussion guide

The main purpose of the focus group discussion process guide is to ensure that the discussion thoroughly incorporates all the necessary issues (Edmunds, 1999). In this research, the flow of the discussion followed the guidelines included in the ‘facilitator guide’, also called the focus group discussion guide. This guide was used by the facilitator to shape the environment, encourage discussion and explore the key issues with participants.
4.7.3.1.9 Pre-testing or piloting the focus group questions

Pilot testing the focus group questions can be accomplished by reviewing the questions with experts who have experience in conducting focus groups and are familiar with the objectives of the study; and/or by inviting selected people of the target audience to provide feedback on the questions and other issues related to the study; and/or by conducting a pilot focus group (Krueger, 1994). The focus group questions for this study were discussed with the researcher’s supervisors in order to validate the questions and to ensure that they were clear and covered the main issues for the research. Assembling focus groups proved to be difficult, given demands on time and work assignments (e.g. casual employees) and it was decided, in discussion with the training coordinator at the research site and with the researcher’s supervisors, not to attempt a pilot focus group to test the questions.

4.7.3.2 Conduct and conclusion of the discussions

Prior to the commencement of each focus group session, the research facilitator welcomed the participants and some refreshments were provided. Following this, a brief self-introduction served to ‘locate’ focus group participants and act as an icebreaker to establish rapport. As part of this process, the researcher introduced herself and then asked the assistant moderator to introduce himself. The facilitator then provided a brief overview of the topic of the research and explained its importance to the company, to employees and to the literature. Following this, the facilitator explained the ground rules for the focus group including the facilitator and the assistant moderator roles and an assurance that all information would remain confidential. She then sought participants’ permission to tape-record the focus group session. The facilitator also mentioned her accent and undertook to speak slowly as
well as asking participants to feel free to clarify any issues or questions where there might be a misunderstanding.

Following this introduction, the facilitator opened up the main discussion and introduced the first question to participants, following the facilitator guide. Each group provided varying and insightful comments on the issues raised and developed interesting and valuable lines of discussion. The participants knew each other well and this assisted group dynamics because interactions were more open and this improved the flow of ideas and information. Towards the end of the focus group session, the assistant moderator briefly summarised the main points of the discussion, based on the notes on the butcher paper. This technique was useful to clarify the issues and gain more detailed information about specific points on occasions.

4.8 Overall data analysis - Triangulation

The major issues related to quantitative and qualitative data analysis are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. The issues covered in this section relates to the triangulation technique which was used in the present study to improve the verification and validation of data analysis by checking the consistency of findings generated by the different data-collection methods used in this study, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and the survey instrument. A discussion of the triangulation technique follows.

Triangulation is a particular method of examining the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives. This permits an enriching of our understanding by allowing
new and deeper dimensions to emerge (Jick, 1979). Because the main issues in this research relate to values, meanings, attitude and behaviours of employees, findings from various sources may be influenced by particular biases, which may complement each other and in turn ‘may help elaborate findings, or even initiate a whole new line of thinking’ (Rossman & Wilson, 1985). The triangulation process in the present study used a combination of sources of evidence including documentation collected from the companies, in-situ observations, findings from the survey analysis and qualitative data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The triangulation approach to data analysis in the present research proceeded along the lines suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). They recommend three concurrent flows of activity involved in analysing qualitative data: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. These three streams are illustrated in figure 4.3 below.

**Figure 4.3: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model**

![Figure removed, please consult print copy of the thesis held in Griffith University Library](image-url)

Source: Miles & Huberman (1994)
According to the Miles and Huberman method, these three phases of analysis and also the data collection activity comprise an interactive cyclical process, because ‘issues of data reduction, of display, and of conclusion drawing/verification come into figure successively as analysis episodes follow each other’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.12). ‘Data reduction’ (the coding of data) in the present study involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, discarding, transforming and organising data. This data reduction/transforming activity was continuous throughout the entire research process, even after field work, until a final report was completed. In this phase, the researcher had some analytical choices including which data chunks to code and which to withdraw, and which patterns best outline a number of data chunks (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The second phase of analyse activity is ‘data display’, which is defined as ‘an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and actions’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11). Some forms of display for qualitative data include matrices, graphs, charts and networks, which are designed to group and organise information into a compact form in order to help the analyst/researcher to either analyse further or take action by drawing justified conclusions. In this research, data display processes included tables, charts and graphics which assisted in organising the ideas and making connections between the concepts, which in turn assisted the analysis process and conclusion drawing that followed. Data display processes also support ‘Conclusion drawing/verification’ in the third phase of the analysis activity. This phase refers to the process of understanding the meanings emerging from the data by identifying the factors including patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions. These meanings need to be
tested for their validity as the analysis proceeds and before final conclusions are reached (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are defined as ‘moral principles and values that influence the way a researcher or a group of researchers conduct their research activities’ (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2002, p.18). Ethical issues usually apply to any research activity that may expose research participants to actual or potential harm (Churchill, 1999). Thus, the primary concern of research ethics is to protect research participants from harm or adverse consequences from research activities (Emory & Cooper, 1991). In order to appropriately address ethical conduct in research, a number of issues have been identified in the literature including privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, deception, accuracy, no harm to participants and voluntary participation (Babbie 2004; Miles & Huberman 1994; Neuman 2006). Additionally, a number of associated ethical practices need attention in assuring that the research is conducted in an ethical fashion (Churchill 1999; Ghauri & Gronhaug 2002; Sarantakos 2005) including: researcher records must be securely kept for future reference and evidence; respondents must be fully informed about research details that may affect them; research proposal must obtain approval from relevant research committees; use of special equipment and techniques such as tape-recorder and video must be agreed; and a trustworthy and credible relationship with the participants must be established.

In the present research, ethical issues were addressed by adopting the following processes and procedures based on the guidelines mentioned above: the present research was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee; all research
records are securely kept for future reference and evidence; prior to the conduct of the in-depth interviews and focus groups, the researcher provided a brief overview of the topic of the research and explained its importance to the company, to employees and to the University. Participants were also assured that all information would remain anonymous and confidential. In order to ensure ethical norms, the researcher also sought participants’ permission to tape-record the focus group sessions; in relation to the survey, the cover letter also includes relevant information regarding ethical issues including confidentiality, privacy, research approval and contact details of the researcher and the researcher supervisors for possible enquiries regarding the conduct of the research (see Appendices 1 and 2). In addition, research findings were reported objectively and honestly in order to protect the integrity and reputation of the organisations and research participants. The next chapter provides the results of the analysis of the quantitative data.
CHAPTER 5 – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results of the empirical analysis performed in this study are presented. The chapter is organised as follows: research questions and hypotheses are presented first followed by characteristics of the sample (demographics) and descriptive statistics. Next, reliability issues are addressed followed by hypothesis testing, related issues and a summary of findings.

5.2 Research questions and hypotheses

This study sought to address the following primary research questions:

RQ\textsubscript{1} What is the impact of organisational practices (in relation to training and development and communication) on work-related outcomes (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) within Australian aquatic theme parks?

RQ\textsubscript{2} How does the impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance levels of theme park employees vary between those designated to undertake marine science related activities and other theme park employees (salespersons, food and beverage, administrative, etc.)?

RQ\textsubscript{3} How do those employees designated to undertake marine science related activities perceive themselves as professionals?

In order to answer RQ\textsubscript{3} three secondary research questions were developed.
SRQ₁ How do education levels determine professionalism?
SRQ₂ How do perceptions of professionalism determine professionalism?
SRQ₃ What is the impact of dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities?

In examining these research questions a number of hypotheses were developed, as follows:

**Research Question 1**

**Training and Development:**

H₁ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

H₂ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

H₃ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to customers within Australian aquatic theme parks.

H₄ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

H₅ There is a significant relationship between training and development practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.
$H_6$ Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

$H_7$ Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between training and development practices and employee within Australian aquatic theme parks.

**Communication:**

$H_8$ There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the organisation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

$H_9$ There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks.

$H_{10}$ There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to customers within Australian aquatic theme parks.

$H_{11}$ There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

$H_{12}$ There is a significant relationship between communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect
communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.

H\textsubscript{13} Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.

H\textsubscript{14} Employee role ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks.

**Research Question 2**

H\textsubscript{15} The impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance levels of theme park employees vary between those designated to undertake marine science related activities and other theme park employees (salespersons, food and beverage, administrative, etc.).

**Research Question 3**

H\textsubscript{16} Education levels determine professionalism for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

H\textsubscript{17} Perceptions of professionalism determine professionalism for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

H\textsubscript{18} There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the organisation for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

H\textsubscript{19} There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the
occupation for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

H20 There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and job satisfaction for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

H21 There is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and employee performance for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities.

5.3 Demographics

In total, 159 surveys were distributed. The number of useable questionnaires returned by theme park employees was 93 representing a response rate of 59%. In relation to the types of profession, 66 were “marine science employees” and 27 were “other theme park employees”. Of the respondents, 42 per cent were male (N = 39) and 58 per cent were female (N = 54). Thirty-one per cent of employees were between the ages of 18 and 25 years; 34 per cent were between 26-35 years; 19 per cent were between 36-45 years; and 15 per cent were over 46 years. In terms of nature of employment, 54 % were full-time employees (N =50), 19% were part-time employees (N = 18), and 19% were casual employees (N = 24). Further information is detailed in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1 Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marine Science Employees (N = 66)</th>
<th>Other theme park employees (N = 27)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up to 25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 35</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>36 - 45</td>
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<td>46+</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Up to 1 years</td>
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<td>2 – 5 years</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>Education Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y10</td>
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<td>Y12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Certificate-TAFE</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Degree</td>
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<td>Nature of Employment</td>
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<td>Full-time</td>
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<td>Part-time</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Descriptive Statistics

The means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas and inter-correlations for all variables included in this study are presented in Table 5.2.
Table 5.2 Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Training</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.23</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. Communication frequency</td>
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<td>.48**</td>
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<td>3. Informal communication</td>
<td>5.50</td>
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<td>.04</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. Indirect communication</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
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<td>5. Bidirectional communication</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.20*</td>
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<td>6. Customer Ambiguity</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.92</td>
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<td>-.49**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
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<td>-.40**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Professionalism: Referent</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Professionalism: Self-regulation</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Professionalism: Autonomy</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>.86**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Affective Commitment:</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.58**</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>-.51**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.48**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Affective Commitment:</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.48**</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Affective Commitment:</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>-.52**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Employee performance</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 93. Numbers in parentheses on the diagonal are the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of the composite scales.

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
5.5 Reliability Analysis Issues

As mentioned in chapter four, the scales adopted in this study were based on validated instruments. Alpha coefficients were computed to examine the internal consistency of the scales adopted including training and development, communication, ambiguity regarding customers, professionalism, affective commitment, job satisfaction and job performance. Criteria for retention of a scale item included item-to-total correlation of at least 0.35, at least three items present in the scale, and a coefficient alpha for the scale of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). A summary of the reliability estimates for the variables included in this study is presented in table 5.3. Reliability estimates for each variable included in this study is presented in Appendices 12 and 13.

Training and Career Development

The training and development scale was measured using an 8-item set. The coefficient alpha value of .90 for the estimates exceeded the 0.7 requirement. One item failed to meet the item-to-total correlation criteria. Elimination of this item would have improved the reliability of the scale (0.90 to 0.92). However, because of the strong reliability value and because this is a validated scale, the full set of scale items was used in the analysis. The internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) for training and development scale in this study is comparable with the reliability of .91 reported by Meyer and Smith (2000). Appendix 12 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for the training and development variable.

Communication

Communication was measured using a 14-item set, consisting of four subscales including communication frequency (3 items), informal communication mode (3
items), *indirect communication* content (4 items) and *bidirectional communication* flow (4 items). Alpha coefficients obtained when examining the internal consistency of these four subscales were: *communication frequency* = .66, *informal communication mode* = .67, *indirect communication content* = .78 and *bidirectional communication flow* = .87. Therefore, two coefficient alphas met the .7 requirement, and two, *communication frequency* and *informal communication mode*, did not. However, because these alpha values (.66 and .67) are very close to .7 and because these items are from a validated instrument (Johlke & Duhan, 2000), these four communication subscales were used in this research. The alpha values reported by Johlke and Duhan (2000) in relation to these subscales were: .82, .86, .80, and .80, respectively. Appendix 12 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for communication variables.

**Ambiguity regarding Customers**

*Ambiguity regarding customers* was measured using a 5-item set. The coefficient alpha value of .92 for the estimates exceeded the 0.7 requirement. All five items meet the item-to-total correlation criteria and therefore all items were used in the analysis. The internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) for *ambiguity regarding customers* reported by Johlke and Duhan (2000) is .83. Appendix 12 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for the ‘ambiguity regarding customers’ variable.

**Affective Commitment**

Affective commitment was measured using an 18-item set, consisting of three subscales (6 items each) including affective commitment to the organisation, to the
occupation and to customers. Alpha coefficients obtained when examining the internal consistency of these three subscales were: affective commitment to the organisation = .83, affective commitment to the occupation = .71 and affective commitment to customers = .76. These coefficient alphas met the .7 requirement. Thus, the full set of scale items was used in the analysis. The alpha values reported by Meyer et al. (1993) were: .82 related to both affective commitment to the organisation and to the occupation. The affective commitment to customers scale was adapted from Meyer, Allen and Smith’s (1993) scale. The present study is the first that has attempted to adapt and utilise Meyer et al.’s (1993) scale to measure affective commitment to customers. One item failed to meet the item-to-total correlation criteria but the difference was very small and the elimination of this item would have improved the reliability of the scale very little (0.76 to 0.77). Appendix 13 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for the affective commitment subscales.

**Job Satisfaction**

The job satisfaction scale was measured using 5 items. The coefficient alpha value of .92 for the estimates exceeded the 0.7 requirement. All five items meet the item-to-total correlation criteria and therefore all items were used in the analysis. The internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) reported by Johlke and Duhan (2000) regarding this scale is .81. Appendix 13 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for the job satisfaction scale.
Employee Performance

The *job performance* scale was measured using 5 items. The coefficient alpha value of .79 for the estimates exceeded the 0.7 requirement. All five items meet the item-to-total correlation criteria and therefore all items were used in the analysis. The internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) reported by Johlke and Duhan (2000) is .85. Appendix 13 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for the *job performance* scale.

Professionalism

Professionalism was measured using a 15-item set, consisting of three subscales including *reference*, *self-regulation* and *autonomy*. Alpha coefficients obtained when examining the internal consistency of these three subscales were: referent = .63, self-regulation = .47 and autonomy = .70. Only the coefficient alpha related to autonomy met the .07 requirement although one item failed to meet the item-to-total correlation. The alpha values reported by Hall (1978) in relation to these subscales were: ‘.80 and higher’ (specific values were not reported). Two items failed to meet the item-to-item correlation criteria in relation to the first of these subscales (referent and self-regulation). These items were eliminated in order to improve the reliability of these scales to .71 and .70 respectively. Even though these items are from a validated scale, the reliability of the scales was low, particularly regarding *self-regulation*. Thus, referent and self-regulation scales were measured using a 3-item set each and the autonomy scale was measured using a 5-item set. Appendix 12 presents reliability and item-to-total correlation estimates for the professionalism subscales. Table 5.3 on the next page presents the summary of the reliability analysis for the variables included in the present study.
Table 5.3 Summary of Reliability Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha: This study</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha: Validated studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency: .66</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal: .67</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect: .78</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bidirectional: .87</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity Regarding Customers</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Referent: .71</td>
<td>&gt;.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-regulation: .70</td>
<td>Specific values not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomy: .70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>Organisation: .83</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation: .71</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customers: .76</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Performance</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Hypothesis testing

The issues related to procedures, assumptions and results are discussed below.

5.5.1 Procedures

Prior to the calculation of the mean scale scores for each variable negatively worded items were reverse coded using the SPSS compute command. Simple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses 1 to 3 (regarding training). Multiple regression analysis was used to test hypothesis 8 to 10 (regarding communication practices); and 18 to 21 (professionalism). Moderated hierarchical regression analysis was used to test hypotheses 4 to 7 and 11 to 14 (ambiguity regarding customers as a moderator). An independent t-test was used to test hypothesis 15. In relation to hypothesis 16, demographic results about education levels were used to test this hypothesis.
In relation to hypotheses 4 to 7, moderated hierarchical regression was conducted with job satisfaction (hypotheses 4 and 5) and employee performance (hypotheses 6 and 7) as the dependent variables. At Step 1, ‘training and development’ was entered into the regression equation to test its main effect on job satisfaction/employee performance. In step 2, the interaction term was entered to test the hypothesis that ‘ambiguity regarding customers’ moderates the relationship between training and development and job satisfaction/employee performance (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Moderated regression was undertaken in this study by including multiplicative terms representing the interaction of ‘training and development’ and ‘ambiguity regarding customers’ in the prediction of job satisfaction. Prior to calculating the multiplicative terms the variables were transformed by centring the component variables (subtracting the mean value of each variable from each participant’s score). This procedure of centring a variable around its mean is used to reduce multicollinearity (Miles & Shevlin, 2001; Jaccard, Turrisi & Wan, 1990).

In relation to hypotheses 11 to 14, moderated hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with job satisfaction (hypotheses 11 and 12) and employee performance (hypotheses 13 and 14) as dependent variables. At Step 1, communication variables were entered into the regression equation to test its main effect on job satisfaction/employee performance. In step 2, the interaction term was entered to test the hypothesis that ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction/employee performance. The interaction term followed the same procedure above.
5.5.2 Assumptions

The assumptions related to multiple regressions involving both simple and multiple regression are outlined below.

**Linearity, homoscedasticity of residuals and normality**

An analysis of residuals scatterplots, histograms and normal probability plots produced by the SPSS software was undertaken to test the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. All independent variables were linearly related to the dependent variables. In relation to the homoscedasticity of residuals assumption, an analysis of the scatterplots suggests that variances of the residuals related to all predicted values of the dependent variables in this study are not approximately equal which indicates a slight violation of this assumption. However, failure of the homoscedasticity assumption tends to weaken the data rather than invalidate it (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2001). The histograms and the normal probability plots showed some deviations from normality in some of the variables in this study. Many of the variables are negatively skewed and a few are positively skewed. However, most of the variables did not show gross violations of the normality assumption. It is recommended that transformations (e.g. logarithmic and square root) should be applied to variables with a clear deviation from normality (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Miles & Shevlin, 2001). However, because all variables used in the present study have already been published and are in use, no transformation of any of them was undertaken (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2001). Moreover, the regression analysis is robust to moderate violations of the normality, equal variances and linearity assumptions (Francis, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidel, 2001).
**Ratio of cases**  Simple rules of thumb for required sample size are \( N \geq 50 + 8m \) (where \( m \) is the number of independent variables) for testing the \( R^2 \) of a regression model and \( N \geq 104 > + m \) for testing individual independent predictors (Green, 1991). Because it is necessary to test both overall correlation and the individual predictors in relation to the hypotheses mentioned above, Green (1991) suggests calculating the minimum sample size in both ways and use the largest number of cases. In this case, 114 cases are required to do this regression analysis to test the above hypotheses. With 93 respondents and eight predictors (training, communication frequency, informal communication, indirect communication, bidirectional communication, referent, self-regulation and autonomy), the number of cases is below the minimum requirement of 114 cases. However, the difference between the required sample size (114) and the sample size of the current study (93) is not too large and thus the sample size may be enough to detect associations that are present in the population. In addition, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in the present study minimised the limitation in relation to sample size (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

**Outliers** The Mahalanobis distance measure was used to check for multivariate outliers by using the SPSS Regression procedure. Criteria for the Mahalanobis distance is based on the alpha level. At \( \alpha = .001 \), as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidel (2001), the critical Mahalanobis distances for 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 variables are 13.8, 16.3, 18.5, 20.5 and 22.5, respectively. The maximum value of the Mahalanobis distance obtained for the regressions in this study (18.6 for four independent variables) was below the critical value. Thus outliers were no a concern in this study.
**Multicollinearity** Variation Inflation Factor (VIF) statistical test was used to check for multicollinearity by using the SPSS Regression procedure. The largest VIF related to the independent variables in this study was 2.51 which was well below the problematic level of 4 (Fox, 1991). Thus, collinearity diagnostics indicated no cause of concern for VIF of any of the predictors in this study.

### 5.5.3 Hypothesis results:

The hypotheses included in this study are discussed below.

**Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis received full support because findings from the linear regression analysis indicate that training and development practices are significantly and positively associated with affective commitment to the organisation for all theme park employees \( F = 48.08, R^2 = 35\%, p < .001 \). Overall, the \( R^2 \) value suggests that training contributes to 35 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to the organisation. This result was further explored by examining whether training and development practices would significantly affect affective commitment to the organisation for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Two regression analyses were conducted and findings suggest there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation for both “marine science employees” \( F = 49.63, R^2 = 44\%, p < .001 \) and “other theme park employees” \( F = 5.43, R^2 = 18\%, p < .05 \). These results suggest that the contribution of training and
development practices to the variance in affective commitment to the organisation is higher for “marine science employees” (44 per cent) than for “other theme park employees” (18 per cent). Results are shown in Table 5.4 on the next page.

**Hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis received full support because findings from the linear regression analysis indicate that training and development practices are significantly and positively associated with affective commitment to the occupation for all theme park employees \((F = 14.52, R^2 = 14\%, p < .001)\). Overall, the \(R^2\) value suggests that training contributes to 14 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to the occupation. This result was further explored by examining whether training and development practices would significantly affect affective commitment to the occupation for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Two regression analyses were conducted and findings suggest there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the occupation for both “marine science employees” \((F = 7.18, R^2 = 10\%, p < .01)\) and “other theme park employees” \((F = 8.20, R^2 = 25\%, p < .01)\). These results suggest that the contribution of training and development practices to the variance in affective commitment to the occupation is higher for “other theme park employees” (25 per cent) than for “marine science employees” (10 per cent). Results are shown in Table 5.4 on the next page.
Table 5.4: Regression analysis detailing relationship between Training and Development and Affective Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Organisation</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Occupation</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td>F = 48.08</td>
<td>R² = 35%</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β = .58***</td>
<td>F = 49.63</td>
<td>R² = 44%</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Science Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td>F = 5.43</td>
<td>R² = 17.9%</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td>F = 4.59</td>
<td>R² = 5%</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β = .21*</td>
<td>β = .34**</td>
<td>F = 8.45</td>
<td>R² = 12%</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All employees: N = 93; Marine science employees: N = 66; Other theme park employees: N = 27
* statistically significant at .05 level
** statistically significant at .01 level
*** statistically significant at .001 level

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to customers within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis received full support because findings from the linear regression analysis indicate that training and development practices are significantly and positively associated with affective commitment to customers for all theme park employees (F = 4.59, R² = 5%, p < .05). Overall, the R² value suggests that training contributes to 5 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to...
customers. This result was further explored by examining whether training and
development practices would significantly affect affective commitment to customers
for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Two
regression analyses were conducted and findings suggest a significant relationship
between training and development practices and affective commitment to customers
for “marine science employees” ($F = 8.45, R^2 = 12\%, p < .01$) but not for “other
theme park employees”. In other words, training and development practices
contribute to 12 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to customers for
“marine science employees”. Results are shown in Table 5.4 above.

**Hypothesis 4**

Hypothesis 4 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and
development practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks.
This hypothesis received full support because findings from the moderated
hierarchical regression analysis indicate that training and development practices are
significantly associated with job satisfaction for all theme park employees ($F = 35.67,$
$R^2 = 28\%, p < .001$). Overall, the $R^2$ value suggests that training and development
practices on their own contributes to 28 per cent of the variance in job satisfaction.
This result was further explored by examining whether training and development
practices would significantly affect job satisfaction for both “marine science
employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings from the regression
analyses suggest a significant relationship between training and development practices
and job satisfaction for both “marine science employees” ($F = 24.63, R^2 = 28\%,$
$p < .001$) and “other theme park employees” ($F = 17.27, R^2 = 41\%, p < .001$). These
results suggest that the contribution of training and development practices to the
variance in job satisfaction is higher for “other theme park employees” (41 per cent) than for “marine science employees” (28 per cent). Results are shown in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis Regressing Training and Development, Job Satisfaction and Ambiguity Regarding Customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees (N=93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1: Main Effect</strong></td>
<td>Training and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>.53**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>35.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2: Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Training x Customer Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>25.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note  * statistically significant at .01 level  
** statistically significant at .001 level

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis is not supported in this study because findings from the hierarchical moderated regression analysis indicate that training and development practices are not significantly associated with employee performance for all theme park employees. This result was further explored by examining whether training and development practices would significantly affect employee performance for both
“marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Similarly, findings from the regressions do not suggest a significant relationship between training and development practices and employee performance for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”. Results are shown in Table 5.6 below.

**Table 5.6 Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis Regressing Training and Development, Employee Performance and Ambiguity Regarding Customers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Employee Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees (N=93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1: Main Effect</strong></td>
<td>Training and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2: Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Training x Customer Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * statistically significant at .001 level

**Hypothesis 6**

Hypothesis 6 predicted that the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks is moderated by employee ambiguity regarding customers. Findings from the moderated hierarchical regression analysis demonstrate that the training-customer ambiguity interaction term accounted for significant incremental variance of 8% in job satisfaction (F = 25.20, R² Change = 8%, p < .001), and the coefficient for the interaction term was significant and negative (β = -.27, p < .01). These findings indicate that customer ambiguity does in fact moderate the training-job satisfaction relationship for all theme park employees.
employees, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 6. This result was further explored by examining whether customer ambiguity moderates the relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings suggest that the training-customer ambiguity interaction terms accounted for a significant additional variance of 12% in job satisfaction for “marine science employees” (F = 20.94, $R^2$ Change = 12%, p < .001) and 7% for “other theme park employees” (F = 10.84, $R^2$ Change = 7%, p < .001). However, the findings indicated that the coefficient for the interaction term was significant, and negative, for “marine science employees” only ($\beta = -.35, p < .001$). These findings suggest that customer ambiguity moderates the training-job satisfaction relationship for “marine science employees” but not for “other theme park employees”. The results are detailed in Table 5.5 above.

**Hypothesis 7**

Hypothesis 7 predicted that the impact of training and development practices on employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks is moderated by employee ambiguity regarding customers. Findings from the hierarchical moderated regression analysis demonstrate that the training-customer ambiguity interaction term accounted for significant incremental variance (15%) in employee performance (F = 8.57, $R^2$ Change = 15%, p < .001), and the coefficient for the interaction term was significant and negative ($\beta = -.38, p < .001$). These findings indicate that customer ambiguity does in fact moderate the training-employee performance relationship for all theme park employees, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 7. This result was further explored by examining whether customer ambiguity moderates the training and development practices-job satisfaction relationship for
both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings suggest that the training-customer ambiguity interaction terms accounted for a significant additional of the variance (28%) in employee performance for “marine science employees” \((F = 13.48, R^2 \text{ Change} = 28\%, p < .001)\) but not for “other theme park employees”. The findings indicate that customer ambiguity moderates the training-employee performance relationship for “marine science employees” only \((\beta = -.53, p < .001)\). The results are detailed in Table 5.6 above.

**Hypothesis 8**

Hypothesis 8 predicted that there is a significant relationship communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the organisation within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis should be accepted because findings from the multiple regression analysis indicate that the combination of communication practices are significantly associated with affective commitment to the organisation for all theme park employees \((F = 6.65, R^2 = 23\%, p < .001)\). These results suggest that the four communication processes accounted, as a group, for 23 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to the organisation. Specifically, bidirectional communication flow had a significant effect on affective commitment to the organisation \((\beta = .34, p < .05)\). This result was further explored by examining whether communication practices would significantly impact on affective commitment to the organisation for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings from the regressions suggest a significant relationship between communication practices and affective commitment to the organisation for both “marine science employees” \((F = 6.01, R^2 = 28\%, p < .001)\) and
“other theme park employees” (F = 3.29, R² = 38%, p < .05). This suggests that the contribution of communication practices to the variance in affective commitment to the organisation is lower for “marine science employees” (28 per cent) compared to “other theme park employees” (38 per cent). However, none of the communication variables had a significant impact on affective commitment to the organisation for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”. Results are shown in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7: Regression analysis detailing relationship between Communication processes and Affective Commitment to the organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication variables</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Organisation</th>
<th>Statistically significant beta scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees</td>
<td>Marine Science Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F = 6.65**</td>
<td>F = 6.01**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R² = 23%</td>
<td>R² = 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Frequency</td>
<td>β = .05</td>
<td>β = .25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal communication mode</td>
<td>β = -.13</td>
<td>β = -.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect communication mode</td>
<td>β = .15</td>
<td>β = .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidirectional communication</td>
<td>β = .34*</td>
<td>β = .29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All employees: N = 93; Marine science employees: N = 66; Other theme park employees: N = 27
* statistically significant at .05 level
** statistically significant at .001 level

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 predicted that there is a significant relationship communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis should be accepted because findings from the multiple regression analysis indicate that the
A combination of communication practices are significantly associated with affective commitment to the occupation for all theme park employees ($F = 3.32$, $R^2 = 13\%$, $p < .05$). These results suggest that the four communication processes accounted, as a group, for 13 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to the occupation. Specifically, bidirectional communication flow had a significant effect on affective commitment to the organisation ($\beta = .37$, $p < .05$). This result was further explored by examining whether communication practices would significantly impact on affective commitment to the occupation for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings from the regressions suggest a significant relationship between communication practices and affective commitment to the occupation for “marine science employees” ($F = 4.52$, $R^2 = 23\%$, $p < .01$) but not for “other theme park employees”. This suggests that the contribution of communication practices to the variance in affective commitment to the occupation is 23 per cent for “marine science employees” and two communication variables had a significant impact on affective commitment to the occupation such as informal communication mode ($b = .29$, $p < .05$) and bidirectional communication flow ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$). Results are shown in Table 5.8 on the next page.
Table 5.8: Regression analysis detailing relationship between Communication processes and Affective Commitment to the Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication variables</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Occupation</th>
<th>Statistically significant beta scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees</td>
<td>Marine Science Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F = 3.32*</td>
<td>F = 4.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R² = 13%</td>
<td>R² = 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Frequency</td>
<td>$\beta = -.03$</td>
<td>$\beta = -.04$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal communication mode</td>
<td>$\beta = .02$</td>
<td>$\beta = .29*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect communication mode</td>
<td>$\beta = .01$</td>
<td>$\beta = -.04$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidirectional communication</td>
<td>$\beta = .37*$</td>
<td>$\beta = .34*$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All employees: N = 93; Marine science employees: N = 66; Other theme park employees: N = 27

* statistically significant at .05 level
** statistically significant at .01 level

Hypothesis 10

Hypothesis 10 predicted that there is a significant relationship communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to customers within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis is not supported in this study because findings from the multiple regression analysis indicate that the combination of communication practices are not significantly associated with affective commitment to customers for all theme park employees. This result was further explored by examining whether communication practices would significantly impact on affective commitment to customers for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings from the regressions do not suggest a significant relationship between communication practices and affective commitment to customers for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”.

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11 stated that communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) are significantly associated with job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis received full support because findings from the moderated hierarchical regression analysis indicate that communication practices are significantly associated with job satisfaction for all theme park employees ($F = 8.80, R^2 = 29\%, p < .001$). Overall, the $R^2$ value suggests that the four communication practices accounted, as a group, for 29 per cent of the variance in job satisfaction. Specifically, bidirectional communication had a significant main effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = .44, p < .01$). This result was further explored by examining whether communication practices would significantly affect job satisfaction for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings from the regressions suggest a significant relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction for “marine science professionals” ($F = 11.64, R^2 = 43\%, p < .001$) but not for “other theme park employees”. This suggests that the contribution of communication practices to the variance in job satisfaction is 43 per cent for “marine science professionals”. Results are shown in Table 5.9 on the next page.
### Table 5.9 Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis Regressing Communication Processes, Job Satisfaction and Ambiguity Regarding Customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees (N=93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β = .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication frequency</td>
<td>β = .00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal communication</td>
<td>β = .10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect communication</td>
<td>β = .44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidirectional communication</td>
<td>β = .53***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.80***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2: Interaction**

| Communication x Customer Ambiguity | β = -.29* | β = -.27** | β = -.39** |
| F                                | 9.91*** | 12.09*** | 3.50** |
| R²                               | 36% | 50% | 46% |
| R² Change                        | 8% | 7% | 12% |

**Note**

* statistically significant at .01 level
** statistically significant at .05 level
*** statistically significant at .001 level

**Hypothesis 12**

Hypothesis 12 stated that communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) are significantly associated with employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks. Findings from the hierarchical regression analysis indicate there is not a significant relationship between communication practices and employee performance for all theme park employees. This result was further explored by examining whether communication practices would significantly affect employee performance for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings from the regressions do not suggest a significant relationship.
between communication practices and employee performance for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”. Overall, these findings do not provide support for Hypothesis 12. Results are shown in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10 Results of Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analysis Regressing Communication Processes, Employee Performance and Ambiguity Regarding Customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Employee Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees (N=93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Science Employees (N=66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other employees (N=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Main Effect</td>
<td>Communication frequency (Not Significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal communication (Not Significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bidirectional communication (Not Significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Interaction</td>
<td>Communication x Customer Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β = -.46***</td>
<td>β = -.44***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4.78* 4.89***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>22% 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td>20% 19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  * statistically significant at .01 level
**statistically significant at .05 level
*** statistically significant at .001 level

Hypothesis 13

Hypothesis 13 predicted that the impact of communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) on job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks is moderated by employee ambiguity regarding customers. Findings from the moderated hierarchical regression analysis demonstrate that the communication-customer ambiguity interaction term accounted for significant incremental variance of
8% in job satisfaction ($F = 9.91, R^2 \text{Change} = 8\%, \ p < .001$), and the coefficient for the interaction term was significant and negative ($\beta = -.29, \ p < .01$). These findings indicate that customer ambiguity does in fact moderate the communication-job satisfaction relationship for all theme park employees, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 13. This result was further explored by examining whether customer ambiguity moderates the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”.

Findings suggest that the communication-customer ambiguity interaction terms accounted for a significant additional of the variance in job satisfaction for “marine science employees” ($F = 12.09, R^2 \text{Change} = 7\%, \ p < .001$) and for “other theme park employees” ($F = 3.50, R^2 \text{Change} = 12\%, \ p < .05$). The findings also indicated that the coefficient for the interaction term was significant, and negative, for both “marine science employees” ($\beta = -.27, \ p < .01$) and “other theme park employees” ($\beta = -.39, \ p < .01$). Thus, the findings suggest that customer ambiguity moderates the communication-job satisfaction relationship for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The results are detailed in Table 5.9 above.

**Hypothesis 14**

Hypothesis 14 predicted that the impact of communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) on employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks is moderated by employee ambiguity regarding customers. Findings from the moderated hierarchical regression analysis demonstrate that the communication-customer ambiguity interaction term accounted for significant incremental variance of 20% in employee performance ($F = 4.78, R^2 \text{Change} = 20\%$, 

*Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks*
p < .01), and the coefficient for the interaction term was significant and negative ($\beta = -.46$, p < .001). These findings indicate that customer ambiguity does in fact moderate the communication-employee performance relationship for all theme park employees, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 14. This result was further explored by examining whether customer ambiguity moderates the relationship between communication practices and employee performance for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Findings suggest that the communication-customer ambiguity interaction terms accounted for a significant additional (19%) of the variance in employee performance for “marine science employees” ($F = 4.89$, $R^2$ Change = 19%, p < .001) but not for “other theme park employees”. Thus, the findings suggest that customer ambiguity moderates the communication-employee performance relationship for “marine science employees” only ($\beta = -.44$, p < .001). The results are detailed in Table 5.10 above.

**Hypothesis 15**

Hypothesis 15 predicted that the impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance varies between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. An independent $t$-test suggests that there were significant differences of affective commitment to customers ($t = -3.046$, p < 0.013; means for marine science employees $m = 4.39$; and other theme park employees $m = 5.12$), and employee performance ($t = -2.702$, p < 0.008; means for marine science employees $m = 5.17$; and other theme park employees $m = 5.69$). However, Levene’s test for equality of variances were not significant, and the compared variances were substantially equal, except in relation to informal communication mode ($F = 9.42$, p < .001).
p < .01) and job satisfaction (F =12.48, p <.001). These findings suggest that the hypothesis 15 should be accepted in part. The results are detailed in Table 5.11 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means and Standard Deviations</th>
<th>Levene’s test for equality of variance</th>
<th>t-test for equality of means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Science Employees</td>
<td>Other Employees</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development</td>
<td>5.11 (1.23)</td>
<td>5.22 (1.25)</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>5.51 (1.27)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.31)</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>5.68 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.66)</td>
<td>9.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>5.23 (1.06)</td>
<td>5.35 (1.39)</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidirectional</td>
<td>5.49 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.54 (1.31)</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity: Customers</td>
<td>1.93 (.85)</td>
<td>1.71 (1.06)</td>
<td>.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>4.98 (2.17)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.38)</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>6.00 (.84)</td>
<td>5.90 (.95)</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>4.39 (1.04)</td>
<td>5.12 (1.04)</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>6.12 (.93)</td>
<td>5.53 (1.65)</td>
<td>9.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Performance</td>
<td>5.17 (.78)</td>
<td>5.69 (.95)</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: a Equal variances not assumed; b Equal variances assumed.

**Hypothesis 16**

Hypothesis 16 stated that education level determine professionalism for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities within Australian aquatic theme parks. This hypothesis should not be accepted because demographic results suggest that the majority of employees designated to undertake marine science related activities do not have degrees. Of the 66 respondents who undertake marine activities, only 21 have degrees, 20 have tertiary qualifications and 23 have no formal qualifications (Year 10 and Year 12). The results are detailed in Table 5.12 below.
Hypothesis 17

Hypothesis 17 stated that perceptions of professionalism determine professionalism for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities. This hypothesis will be analysed in the next chapter, chapter 6, based on the qualitative data.
Hypothesis 18

Hypothesis 18 predicted that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the organisation for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities. This hypothesis should be accepted because findings from the multiple regression analysis suggest a significant relationship ($F = 3.12, R^2 = 13\%, p < 0.05$). Together the three dimensions of professionalism accounted for 13 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to the organisation. Of these three dimensions, only ‘autonomy’ had a significant effect on affective commitment to the organisation ($\beta = .32, p < .05$). These results are shown in Table 5.13 on the next page.

Hypothesis 19

Hypothesis 19 predicts that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the occupation for employees designated to undertake science marine related activities. This hypothesis should be accepted because findings from the multiple regression analysis suggest a significant relationship ($F = 5.47, R^2 = 21\%, p < 0.05$). Together the three dimensions of professionalism accounted for about 21 per cent of the variance in affective commitment to the occupation. Of these three dimensions, only ‘autonomy’ had a significant effect on affective commitment to the occupation ($\beta = .30, p < .05$). These results are shown in Table 5.13 on the next page.

Hypothesis 20

Hypothesis 20 predicts that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and job satisfaction for
employees designated to undertake marine science related activities. This hypothesis should be accepted because findings from the multiple regression analysis suggest a significant relationship ($F = 5.30$, $R^2 = 20\%$, $p < .05$). Together the three dimensions of professionalism accounted for about 20 per cent of the variance in job satisfaction. Of these three dimensions, only ‘autonomy’ had a significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$). These results are shown in Table 5.13 below.

**Table 5.13 Results of multiple regression analysis detailing the relationship between dimensions of professionalism, affective commitment (organisation and occupation), job satisfaction and employee performance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Organisation</th>
<th>Affective Commitment: Occupation</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Employee Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F = 3.12$</td>
<td>$F = 5.47$</td>
<td>$F = 5.30$</td>
<td>$F = 4.20$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2 = 13%$</td>
<td>$R^2 = 21%$</td>
<td>$R^2 = 20%$</td>
<td>$R^2 = 17%$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p &lt; .05$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>$\beta = .02$</td>
<td>$\beta = .20$</td>
<td>$\beta = .04$</td>
<td>$\beta = .16$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>$\beta = .06$</td>
<td>$\beta = -.02$</td>
<td>$\beta = .19$</td>
<td>$\beta = .34$ $p &lt; .01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>$\beta = .32$ $p &lt; .05$</td>
<td>$\beta = .30$ $p &lt; .05$</td>
<td>$\beta = .34$ $p &lt; .05$</td>
<td>$\beta = .08$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 21**

Hypothesis 21 predicts that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and employee performance for employees designated to undertake marine science related activities. This hypothesis should be accepted because findings from the multiple regression analysis suggest a significant relationship ($F = 4.20$, $R^2 = 17\%$, $p < .01$). Together the three dimensions of professionalism accounted for about 17 per cent of the variance in employee performance. Of these three dimensions, only ‘self-regulation’ had a
significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$). These results are shown in Table 5.13 above. The next chapter summarises the hypotheses tested in this study (supported and not supported) and the results will be compared to the qualitative data.
CHAPTER 6 – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings from qualitative data gathered in the three Australian aquatic theme park companies involved in this study. The qualitative analysis provides a rationale for the trends identified in the quantitative findings. The focus will be on the similarities and differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” regarding their perceptions of their impact of organisational practices (e.g. training and development and communication) on work-related outcomes (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance).

This chapter is organised as follows: qualitative data collection is discussed followed by the qualitative data analysis process. The qualitative outcomes related to Companies A, B and C are analysed, based on the 21 hypotheses tested in this study, followed by the chapter summary.

6.2 Qualitative data collection

As mentioned in chapter four (methodology), qualitative data used in this research included in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The main objective of the qualitative data was to gather in-depth information to supplement the quantitative data and to advance the understanding of relevant organisational factors (e.g. training and development and communication) affecting work-related outcomes (e.g. commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) for aquatic theme park employees. Two focus group discussions and two in-depth interviews were conducted in Company A. Four in-depth interviews were conducted in Companies B and C, two in each.
company. Major themes identified in Companies A, B and C are presented in Appendix 9.

These qualitative methods focused on major issues related to training and development practices and communication processes and their impact on employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, with emphasis on the similarities and differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The focus of these qualitative methods was also on professionalism issues related to marine science employees. Within the category of marine science employees, there is a very diverse group of occupations, including aquarists, animal trainers, veterinarian and divers. Further information on the types of occupation for marine science employees is outlined in appendix 10.

6.3 Qualitative data analysis process

Qualitative data analysis usually involves interpreting the data to identify related issues and patterns, and exploring and explaining the relationships between the perceived themes and patterns (Walsh, 2003). The overall qualitative data analysis process adopted in this research follows. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were recorded so that the researcher could review the session output. The data was transcribed and the transcripts were organised, categorised and analysed following the guidelines suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The transcriptions of the data were then further examined, based on these themes, which were coded into categories. A computer software program (NVivo) was then used as a support tool to assist the researcher in managing the data and to facilitate data analysis. The NVivo software computer program is a useful tool for coding
categories, for displaying the codes, and accessing the data records accurately and integrating the themes (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). It is considered that the computerised coding process using NVivo benefited this research by saving time, effort and also improving the overall quality of the data analysis, because it most likely improved the categorisation process by making it more consistent, which resulted in a more systematic and hence rigorous analysis (Bowling 1997; Ulin, Robinson & Tolley 2005). Findings from this analysis regarding companies A, B and C are discussed as follows.

6.4 Qualitative outcomes related to companies A, B and C

An analysis of the findings from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions is provided below. This analysis covers issues related to training and development practices, communication processes, difference between types of employees and professionalism.

6.4.1 Training and Development Practices

Seven hypotheses (hypotheses 1 to 7) are discussed in this section involving the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

6.4.1.1 Hypotheses 1 and 2

Hypotheses 1 and 2 stated that there is a positive relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation (hypothesis 1) and also to the occupation (hypothesis 2) within Australian aquatic theme parks.
Findings from the qualitative data provide support for both these hypotheses. An analysis of these findings is outlined below.

Findings from the qualitative data indicate that on-the-job training is the most widely practiced mode for staff development in companies A, B and C and is generally regarded as the most effective method. Most employees’ specific skills are developed on the job. For example, a marine science supervisor in a focus group discussion at Company A stated: ‘mentoring on the job is the major means of up-skilling after induction’. This is supported by a comment from a senior marine animal trainer at Company C:

Most of the training is on-the-job training; observing (animal) trainers at work; being shown techniques, and then learning, allowing the trainee to be with the animals so the animals get to know the new person and vice versa so both get to know each other on a more personal level.

Employees within the three companies are encouraged to develop a variety of skills, using on-the-job resources and programs. For instance, an employee in a focus group discussion in Company A stated:

Basically, if you want some training in one area you make a written request and the company usually finds a way to meet it. They encourage it!

Companies B and C, for example, offer marine science staff a Certificate IV involving animal care or animal training, where the main objective is to provide them with some professional qualifications. Some marine science employees have accepted this offer. For example, a senior marine science staff member of Company B has undertaken a Veterinarian Nursing Certificate and a Zoo Keeper Certificate and is now a qualified vet nurse and a qualified zoo keeper. Six senior marine science employees at
Company C are currently undertaking a Certificate IV in animal training. As stated by a senior staff member of Company C:

… we have offered to all our employees who are in the (animal) training area a certificate IV to undertake to give them some professional qualifications.

Company B also provides external studies support for permanent employees through universities or external institutes, in terms of financial support and some time release to support professional development. A comment from a senior staff member of Company B highlights this issue:

We find that it actually gives us a pay-back on two sides. Firstly, they are studying and learning something relevant to their jobs and their future jobs, and secondly, we have a high level of commitment. People feel good about their workplace that gives some support in their studies.

These findings suggest that on-the-job training and also external studies may influence employee commitment to the occupation and in turn to the organisation. This evidence supports findings from the linear regression analysis (chapter 5) suggesting that training and development practices are significantly and positively associated with affective commitment to the organisation and to the occupation for employees within Australia aquatic theme parks, thus providing support for hypotheses 1 and 2.

This result was further explored by examining whether or not training and development practices would significantly affect affective commitment to the organisation and to the occupation for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The findings from the qualitative data suggest that the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to the
organisation and also to the occupation may be more significant for “marine science employees” than for “other theme park employees”. An analysis of these findings is provided below.

On-the-job training does seem to be more relevant for “marine science employees” compared to “other theme park employees”. A number of factors emerging from an analysis of the qualitative data support this position. First, information from all three companies reveals that staff turnover is much higher for “other theme park employees” compared to “marine science employees”, particularly because most (but not all) “other theme park employees” regard employment on a temporary/casual basis as a means of generating cash, rather than as a career. As stated by a senior staff member of Company B:

If you take some of the more high turnover areas like food and beverage, we don’t expect that to be a career job for a lot of people. We don’t necessarily take on selling hot dogs and popcorn as what you want to do as a career. Some people do and that is great. So we get higher turnover of staff in those sorts of areas. But a lot of that is planned turnover; they will come and tell you that they are going to work for three months and then move on. We have no problems with that.

Furthermore, the on-the-job skills development for “marine science employees” is more specific to the company than for “other theme park employees”. The skills for this latter group, although company-related, are more generalised and more related to the tourism industry in general, particularly in relation to hospitality and retail areas. A comment by a casual employee (non-marine science) in Company A suggests that the opportunity to learn a variety of skills (e.g. food/beverage and retail) through the multi-skilling program enhances the chances of employment outside the company. As stated by employee of Company A:
Multi-skilling has its limitation for ‘company people’ who have specialist skills, such as aquarists, whose jobs are what they want to do. But for other employees who do not want to stay long-term in the company, multi-skilling increases the chances of employment outside the company. I, for example, do not want to work here in the long term but multi-skilling gives you a lot of opportunities. For instance, learning how to use the coffee machine and so on – it makes it easier to go outside to get bar work and work at night.

The discussion above provides evidence that the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to the organisation and also to the occupation is more relevant for “marine science employees” compared to “other theme park employees”. Findings from the quantitative data provide support for the proposition that the contribution of training and development practices to the variance in affective commitment to the organisation is higher for “marine science employees” than for “other theme park employees”. However, an unexpected result from the quantitative data suggests that the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to the occupation is higher for “other theme park employees” than for “marine science employees”. These issues will be further analysed in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.1.2 Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to customers within Australian aquatic theme parks. Data from the qualitative study provides support for this hypothesis. Evidence from the qualitative data also suggests that the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to customers is more relevant for “marine science employees” than for “other theme park employees”. An analysis of the findings follows.
The qualitative information gathered from Companies A, B and C indicates that training for customer service differs between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. All supervisors and managers from Companies A, B and C indicated that their companies have provided some on-the-job training in customer service for “other theme park employees”, giving them basic skills in delivering customer service. However, evidence from a focus group discussion with employees in Company A indicate that there was no real training about quality customer service, just basic information, including the right language to use and how to deal with customers with special needs. As stated by a casual non-marine science employee:

The training is more focused on the job itself. I think that supervisors expect us to know how to treat customers and to learn from watching others (supervisors/other employees) do it well.

Likewise, findings from all three companies suggest that no formal training has been given to “marine science employees” in customer service, apart from the basic information given in the induction program. A comment from a marine science supervisor of Company A was that the on-the-job training provided to “marine science employees” is focused on the technical skills of working with, and caring for animals. However, this supervisor commented that marine science staff also need to be customer-oriented and to display professional customer service skills. Because customer service is part of the job for marine science staff, information about customer service appears to be given along with on-the-job technical training. As stated by the senior marine animal trainer of Company C:

The customer service comes with the animal training side of it and working with animals with the customers and slowly as you develop the younger trainer, giving them a chance to work an animal that is easy to work in a show. You work them through and explain to them
how to deal with different situations and then with people. So it’s basically on the job training.

Despite the lack of formal emphasis on training related to customer service for “marine science employees”, employees’ responses from a focus group discussion in Company A suggest that most of them enjoy customer contact; ‘having a chat, interaction and education’. When asked if all marine science staff enjoy customer service, a senior marine animal trainer at Company C responded:

Yes, we do because we are so interactive with our audiences here. We spend quite a bit of time talking with our customers, explaining things to them about the animals and telling them about the animals, showing them how they can interact with the animals.

Therefore, in relation to customer service training, the information gathered indicates that although the emphasis is more related to the technical skills than to customer service, marine science employees seem to have more information about customers’ needs and expectations than “other theme park employees”. While no formal training in customer service is generally given to “marine science employees”, on-the-job training in interacting with customers provided to these employees seems to have significant impact because it is done on a continuous basis compared to that provided for “other theme park employees”. Thus, training and development practices, particularly on-the-job, appear to influence affective commitment to customers within Australian aquatic theme parks, especially in relation to “marine science employees”.

This discussion provides support for the findings from the quantitative data. Results from the regression analyses suggest a significant relationship between training and development practices and affective commitment to customers for “marine science
employees” but not for “other theme park employees”. These issues will be further analysed in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.1.3 Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks. Conclusions from the qualitative data provide support for this hypothesis. An analysis of the findings is provided below.

The discussion above suggests that training and development practices, particularly related to on-the-job training, appear to have a significant impact on affective commitment to organisation, occupation and customers. This evidence suggests that theme park employees have positive perceptions about the training and development opportunities provided by Companies A, B and C. These positive perceptions seem likely to motivate employees and in turn improve their levels of job satisfaction. Findings from a focus group discussion with employees in Company A regarding the best aspects of working in the company provide support for this argument. For “other theme park employees”, for example, the best aspects included continuous change and variety in relation to the multi-skilling program and the work environment. For “marine science employees”, on the other hand, the best aspects for them included: ‘work with amazing animals’; ‘learning heaps’; ‘opportunities for personal achievement’; and ‘social activities arising from the work environment’, as identified in the focus group discussion.
These findings suggest that the opportunity for skills development through on-the-job training seems to be one of the motivating factors for all theme park staff, in particular for “marine science employees”. As stated by a senior marine science staff member of Company A:

Job satisfaction is the major motivator for the majority of employees. Employees want to use their knowledge and have the opportunity to work in their specific areas, and to further themselves in their chosen careers, such as aquarists. Our business offers a fantastic environment for people with science or marine biology background.

These findings support the proposition that training and development practices are likely to have a significant impact on job satisfaction within Australian aquatic theme parks, particularly in relation to “marine science employees”. Findings from the quantitative data, reported in Chapter 5, also support the proposition of hypothesis 4. However, an unexpected finding from the quantitative data suggests that the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction is more relevant for “other theme park employees” than for “marine science employees”. This proposition is further analysed in the discussion section (Chapter 7).

6.4.1.4 Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that there is a significant relationship between training and development practices and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks. Findings from the qualitative analysis do not provide support for this hypothesis. An analysis of these findings follows.

Although theme park employees perceive that their satisfaction with their jobs is influenced, at least partially, by the opportunity to develop their skills, particularly
through on-the-job training, there are some limitations to the effect on employee performance of the training and development practices adopted by Companies A, B and C. As mentioned previously, no formal training is given to “marine science employees” regarding customer service. In addition, the on-the-job training provided is more focused on the job itself rather than on customer service skills. Although findings suggest that some “marine science employees” enjoy customer service there is also evidence that customer service demands may limit the performance of some “marine science employees”. For example, in a focus group discussion with employees in Company A, a number of marine science employees indicated that it is sometimes difficult to be well focused on customer service, especially during high-season times such as holiday periods, where there is an overload of customer contact. One marine science employee emphasised that the contextual issue for quality service is seen in terms of talking with the public while trying to feed the fish or doing other specialised jobs. This was supported by another marine science employee who stated that:

We need to concentrate on what we are doing but we cannot be rude to customers. We would love to have a chat but sometimes it is difficult to stop what we are doing to have a chat or answer customer questions such as “yes, the fish is alive”; “yes, it is hard to catch a fish”. I guess that this interferes a bit... But that is job related.

Findings also suggest that some marine science employees have difficulty in providing face-to-face contact with customers. A comment by a senior marine science staff of Company B highlights this issue:

One of the hardest things about that (marine science) profession is finding a person that has the social skills to deal with people. ... in a role like a dolphin trainer, which is one of the highest profile roles in our parks, we need people who can actually talk to the public. For example, in our swimming programs animal trainers are in charge of both the animals and
the customer. Thus, they need to understand the animals’ needs and the
guests’ needs to be able not only to answer the guest’s questions but also
to be happy with the guests, dealing with them and informing them.

This analysis suggests that current training and development practices are unlikely to
influence employee performance for “marine science employees”. The situation may
be similar for “other theme park employees”. The on-the-job training provided to
“other theme park employees” is associated with basic roles and findings suggest that
supervisors assume that these employees already have a sound knowledge of how to
serve customers better. As mentioned previously, the “other theme park employees”
group is associated with high turnover and low commitment, which may be one of the
reasons for the low investment in training for such employees. These factors may
inhibit their performance, especially in regard to quality customer service.

The discussion above provides some evidence that training and development practices
are unlikely to influence performance for both “marine science employees” and “other
theme park employees”. The findings from the quantitative data also do not provide
support for hypothesis 5. This issue will be further explored in the discussion section
(Chapter 7).

6.4.1.5 Hypotheses 6 and 7

Hypotheses 6 and 7 predicted that the impact of training and development practices on
job satisfaction (hypothesis 6) and employee performance (hypothesis 7) within
Australian aquatic theme parks is moderated by employee ambiguity regarding
customers. An analysis of the findings is provided below.
The discussion above suggests that one of the main limitations of training and development practices is in relation to customer service. Because employee ambiguity regarding customers is a relevant issue for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, low levels of ambiguity regarding customers should improve the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction and employee performance. The qualitative data suggests that “marine science employees” have a lower level of role ambiguity regarding customers compared to “other theme park employees”.

Animals are the main attractions at aquatic theme parks; therefore most of customers’ questions are related to the animals. For “marine science employees”, answering questions about the animals may not involve a high level of ambiguity, despite the lack of formal training in customer service and the fact that some of those employees are not comfortable in providing customer service. One of the main reasons for this is that marine science employees are very attached to the animals and thus answering questions about them is a source of pride and a way to ‘show off’ their knowledge. The comment below given by a senior staff member of Company B provides support for this argument.

People who work with animals give their free time, freely, and we have to stop them doing that. They are very passionate and very connected to those animals to the point where if you have an animal that passes away, that dies, we actually engage grief counselors for our animal care staff because they take that so personally. It is like dealing with a family member.

Another comment on this issue is given by a senior staff member of Company C:

I think they (marine science employees) like showing the people what these animals can do. I think they enjoy showing these people how clever the animals are. I think they like to see the people with smiles on their faces.
On the other hand, “other theme park employees” may face higher levels of ambiguity and uncertainty when answering questions about animals, particularly because most of them have only a basic knowledge about the animals in question. Even if they had appropriate training on animal issues, evidence suggests that their commitment level is low and most of them do not stay in the company for the long term (high turnover) to enable them to be more familiar with issues regarding animals. A comment by a senior marine science staff member of Company B goes to the heart of the issue of training:

The guy who sells the dagwood dogs near the polar bears is getting attacked by people who ask questions about the polar bears. We need to empower these staff to have the right information. So I get my education staff to give a training session to them on polar bears and seals so that person can deal with the customer's need at that point.

This basic level of training/information may not be sufficient to reduce ambiguity and enhance job satisfaction and performance for “other theme park employees”, especially given the turnover intentions of many such staff. The discussion above provides evidence that ambiguity regarding customers is likely to moderate the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks. Because “marine science employees” seem to have lower role ambiguity regarding customers compared to “other theme park employees”, the impact of ‘ambiguity regarding customers’ as a moderator is more relevant for the former than for the latter group of employees. Thus, these findings provide support for hypotheses 6 and 7. This conclusion also supports findings from the quantitative data suggesting that customer ambiguity moderates the training-job satisfaction and training-employee performance relationships for “marine science employees.”
professionals” but not for “other theme park employees”. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section (Chapter 7).

6.4.2 Communication Processes

In this section, a discussion of the findings in relation to each of the communication processes (communication frequency, communication mode, communication content and communication flow) is provided, followed by an analysis of the seven hypotheses regarding the impact of communication processes on organisational outcomes (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance).

Communication Frequency

In relation to Company B, findings from the two in-depth interviews suggest that management (managers/supervisors) meetings happen daily, weekly or monthly according to the needs of each manager/department. As stated by a senior staff member in Company B:

Meetings are going all the way through the organisation. Our group managers and executives meet every week, on the Wednesday. Our middle management team meets once every three weeks. Most of the supervisors groups would meet weekly and some of the outlets meetings are as frequently as daily but they would be pretty brief, just to let them know what is happening on the day.

In relation to the marine science department in Company B, supervisors and employees meet once a month. In Company C, managers and supervisors meet weekly and there are staff meetings between trainers and marine science employees every fortnight. Findings from the focus group discussion with employees in Company A suggest that the amount of contact between managers/supervisors and
employees is low. For one marine science employee in Company A, the worst aspect of work relates to the limited number of general staff meetings. This employee explained that there are not enough meetings for effective communication, as general staff meetings are usually only held every three or four months and the meeting process do not help communication because it is usually one-way communication.

These results indicate that there are varying frequencies for meetings of both specific groups (i.e. marine science employees) and managerial meetings but in general, managerial meetings (managers/supervisors) occur often enough. Only Company A provided some evidence of employees’ views about staff meetings which is that they are perceived as not effective. Because it was not possible to conduct focus group discussions with employees in Companies B and C, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about employees’ views on the frequency and effectiveness of staff meetings in these companies. Based on this information, findings from the qualitative data do not provide support for the notion that communication frequency is likely to influence organisational outcomes examined in this study (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”.

**Communication Mode (Formal and Informal)**

In relation to formal communication mode, all three companies have a range of formal communication processes in place including notice boards and emails. In relation to notice boards, information collected from the three companies suggests that this type of formal communication is not very effective. For example, both interviewees in Company B suggest that notice boards are not effective because not many employees
read notes posted on the notice boards. In a similar way, a comment from a marine science employee in the focus group discussion in Company A suggests that management is not communicating effectively down the line because of a high emphasis on the use of notice boards. Findings from both interviewees in Company B suggest that a good deal of formal communication in the company is done by e-mail which is printed and placed in the notice boards in an attempt to ‘get the message out to everybody’. As stated by one of the interviewees: ‘We use emails too much but it is a good way’. Although most supervisors in Company B tend to rely heavily on emails, both interviewees agreed that the majority of employees do not have access to computers. This situation is similar in both Companies A and C.

In relation to the effectiveness of communication processes, findings from Company B and C suggest that the most effective means is direct, face-to-face communication. As stated by a senior marine animal trainer of Company C:

The meetings are mostly effective as we can all discuss any problems about animals, ideas with the other trainers and deal with any issues that staff have with each other – can also be taken to a higher level, of course.

Findings from a focus group discussion with employees at Company A suggest that employees also rely on informal conversations with their colleagues as a way to share their experience, and build informal communication links and processes. As stated by a marine science employee:

All staff have fun and bounce off each other all day. Extrovert people do well here and it is like a big family. So ‘reluctant recruits’ join the family and get caught up in the culture and start to enjoy it and stay. For instance, a new employee is here for a couple of weeks and although we do not know her very well personally, we have a joke around – that’s just what we do to make people feel welcome.
However, it was also suggested in an interview in Company B that it is very difficult to get regular face-to-face contact between supervisors and staff in the company, which may be one of the reasons supervisors rely on formal channels of communication such as emails. When asked about the most effective means of communication, the interviewee stated that:

Face-to-face is the most effective means of communication but sometimes it is difficult here because the person you may want to see is over in another park. The phone is very difficult because quite often someone is on the phone and so you use the voice mail but they actually get the voice mail through in the afternoon. And I think that is why a lot of people have returned to the e-mail because it is hard to get face-to-face contact as we are dealing with people at four properties. I prefer face-to-face but in this company I think the most probable way to get some response is by e-mail...

However, verbal communications at Company C seem to be effective, particularly for “marine science employees”. Theme park employees also rely on other informal means of communication such as conversation with peers and also with supervisors regarding work-related issues and other personal issues. For both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” this type of informal communication may be on a continuous basis because they all need to share their day-to-day experience and also because it is part of their learning experience.

These findings suggest that informal staff interactions are likely to be more effective than formal processes such as notice boards and emails. This discussion provides some evidence that informal communication mode is likely to influence organisational outcomes (employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) within Australian aquatic theme parks.
Communication Content

Findings from Company B about consultation over the best way to do the job suggest that supervisors use non-coercive methods (indirect communication content). As stated by a senior staff member in Company B:

… in relation to consultation about the right way to do the job, we probably don’t do much as we heavily try to push on-the-job training. And the way we try to deliver on-the-job training is not like telling people to do something in a particular way. It is more about asking them for their inputs.

However, findings from another interview with a senior marine science staff member in Company B suggest that the effectiveness of consultation between supervisors and employees depends on each department and the management style and preferences of the supervisor with whom employees work. The following comment highlights this issue:

It depends on where you work and it is very supervisor specific because people are people. Some supervisors are quite authoritarian like “this is the way that you do it”. Some supervisors leave you to do what you do and if there is a problem you deal with that. Other supervisors have very good two-way communication, constantly talking to their staff members. … So it really depends on the specific person (supervisor).

This senior marine science staff member in Company B gave another example in relation to the communication process within the marine science department:

We all communicate and most of the time the best decision is made by the group, and unless I feel that the decision contravenes any procedures or policies, then I would say ‘no’.

The data suggests that in Company B (at least) some supervisors prefer to be directive (direct communication content) while others prefer to be consultative (indirect communication content). The latter appears to be more culturally accepted and
The findings, based on this data, suggest that indirect communication content is more likely than directive communication to have a significant positive impact on work related outcomes.

Communication Flow

The data above, in relation to indirect communication content, also indicates that both one-way and two-way communication exists in companies A, B and C. Although the effectiveness of the communication process is influenced by supervisors’ style and preferences, the major communication channel for “marine science employees” in relation to on-the-job training is their interaction with one another in a two-way communication flow that builds knowledge, skills and confidence. This on-the-job communication flow is therefore fundamental for training and development purposes, particularly for “marine science employees”. Therefore, it would seem that consultation about the best way to do the job involves two-way communication flow.

As stated by a senior marine animal trainer in Company C:

> If they have an issue that crops up we can have a meeting and discuss that particular issue or meetings can be called for future planning for different things, like preparing for Christmas.

Another example provided in this same interview about consultation over the best way to do a job is given below:

> Those sorts of things can be suggested from staff to a manager. The manager will put the issue on the agenda to bring up at a staff meeting so it is discussed among all staff and whether they will try it or not.

In relation to Company A, findings suggest that the feedback given to employees by supervisors involves two-way communication flow. However, these findings also
suggest that this feedback is perceived by employees as limited, given the relative inattention from supervisors. When supervisors were asked in the focus group discussion about how employees approach them about problems, responses from supervisors from various areas of the company operation were similar. All of them agreed that employees usually did not approach them when they faced problems. For instance, a supervisor stated that:

Some employees try to address their problem by speaking with their colleagues, with the result that problems don’t get properly dealt with and don’t get followed up.

However, findings from the focus group discussion with employees suggest that employees do approach supervisors in the first place but find that it can be difficult to get a response. For example, a marine science employee stated that:

We go to the supervisor first - that’s your first port of call. You can’t go over their heads… and they pass it on. You might ask them the next day what’s going on and they will say ‘oh, I’ll get onto that’…

Another marine science employee stated that:

At the end of the day, you can get very frustrated and upset but the problem does not become that much of an issue. It’s such an issue to get the problem fixed that the problem is diminished.

An analysis of the data from the supervisor focus group at Company A suggests that communication problems may be related to major changes faced by the organisation. When supervisors were asked about the major issues affecting employees, all supervisors agreed that organisational changes are among the main factors. The organisation has undergone major change in recent years. This information supports the findings from the focus group discussion with employees which suggested that the
organisational changes were having a great impact on them, particularly in regard to lack of clear and effective communication about these changes. As emphasised by a marine science employee, ‘there is not enough communication about plans for the next three to five years, which creates insecurity’.

Findings from Company C also suggest that organisational changes in the last twelve months, particularly in relation to new management, have affected the organisation and employees. As stated by a senior staff member of Company C:

The company in the last twelve months has gone through a major, major change in the management style… Our communication is not good. We are working on it. But it’s a thousand times better than it was a year ago. So all these changes are causing a little angst but we will get there.

Although Company B had not faced major changes when the interviews were conducted, the views of a senior staff member also suggest that the communication process is a concern taken seriously by management:

How well we communicate is a major concern to us. We are very aware that whatever we do, it is not good enough. We do it fairly well in some ways but we need to do it better.

In summary, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of communication flow (one-way and two-way communication) depend on the attitudes and practices of supervisors. Findings also suggest that organisational changes affect the quality of communication processes with a likely consequent impact on organisational outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). While these issues circumscribe the quality of the communication processes, the findings suggest that supervisors, particularly in the marine science area, tend to use two-way communication, particularly in relation to on-the-job training. This suggests that...
bidirectional (two-way) communication flow is likely to have a positive influence on organisational outcomes examined in this study (employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance), particularly in relation to "marine science employees”.

6.4.2.1 Hypotheses 8, 9 and 10

Hypotheses 8, 9 and 10 predicted that there is a significant relationship between communication processes (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) and affective commitment to the organisation (Hypothesis 8), affective commitment to the occupation (Hypothesis 9) and affective commitment to customers (Hypothesis 10) within Australian aquatic theme parks. The findings above suggest that communication processes including informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bi-directional communication flow are likely to influence affective commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers, particularly in relation to “marine science employees”. Thus, the findings from the qualitative data provide support for hypotheses 8, 9 and 10.

However, unexpected results were found in the analysis of the quantitative data. Results of the regression analysis in relation to hypothesis 9 suggest that only bidirectional communication had a significant impact on affective commitment to the organisation. In addition, this results was in relation to all employees in general not to either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”. In relation to hypothesis 10, only bidirectional communication had a significant impact on affective commitment to the occupation within Australian aquatic theme parks. Further
analysis of this finding suggests that informal communication was also a significant predictor of affective commitment to the occupation for “marine science employees” but not for “other theme park employees”. In relation to hypothesis 10, unexpected results suggest that any of the communication practices had a significant impact on affective commitment to customers for employees working in the aquatic theme park studied, including both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.2.2 Hypotheses 11 and 12

Hypotheses 11 and 12 stated that communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) are significantly associated with job satisfaction (hypothesis 11) and employee performance (hypothesis 12) within the Australian aquatic theme parks. The discussion above suggests that communication processes including informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bi-directional communication flow are likely to influence job satisfaction and employee performance, particularly in relation to “marine science employees”. Thus, the findings from the qualitative data provide support for hypotheses 11 and 12. However, findings from the quantitative analysis in relation to hypothesis 11 suggest that only bidirectional communication flow had a significant impact on job satisfaction for all aquatic theme park employees. Further analysis of this finding suggests that bidirectional and also informal communication had a significant impact on job satisfaction for “marine science employees” but not for “other theme park employees”. Unexpected findings from the quantitative data suggest that communication practices
do not have a significant impact on employee performance for employees working within Australian aquatic theme parks, including both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.2.4 Hypotheses 13 and 14

Hypotheses 13 and 14 predicted that the impact of communication practices (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) on job satisfaction (hypothesis 13) and employee performance (hypothesis 14) within Australian aquatic theme parks is moderated by employee ambiguity regarding customers.

The findings above suggest that these communication processes, except communication frequency, are likely to have a significant impact on job satisfaction and employee performance within Australian aquatic theme parks, particularly in relation to “marine science employees”. As mentioned previously, ‘work’ for theme park employees usually involves high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty, particularly in relation to customer service. Although findings from the qualitative data suggest a relationship between communication processes on job satisfaction and employee performance, this relationship can be substantially improved when employee ambiguity is lower.

Although the findings suggest that there are some limitations in the communication processes adopted by Companies A, B and C (e.g. communication frequency, high emphasis on formal communication, etc), the evidence also suggests that these
limitations are more related to “other theme park employees” than to “marine science employees”. As mentioned before, “other theme park employees” lack adequate information about animals to effectively complete their tasks, particularly in terms of answering customers’ questions about specific animals. In a similar way to training and development practices, employee ambiguity regarding customers moderates the relationship between communication processes and job satisfaction and also communication processes and employee performance, which provides support for both hypotheses 13 and 14. However, it is noted that this moderating effect seems to be more significant for “marine science employees” than for “other theme park employees”. This supports the findings from the quantitative data. In relation to hypothesis 13, findings from the hierarchical regression analysis indicate that customer ambiguity moderates the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction but this impact is higher for “marine science employees” compared to “other theme park employees”. In relation to hypothesis 14, findings suggest that customer ambiguity moderates the relationship between communication and employee performance but only for “marine science employees” and not for “other theme park employees”. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.3 Differences between types of employees

For the purpose of this study, two basic groups of employees in Australian aquatic theme parks are identified: employees working in marine science related activities and employees working in other theme park functions.
6.4.3.1 Hypothesis 15

Hypothesis 15 predicts that the impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on affective commitment, job satisfaction and performance levels of theme park employees varies between those designated to undertake marine science related activities and other theme park employees (salespersons, food and beverage, administrative, etc.). Findings from the qualitative data provide support for this hypothesis. An analysis of the findings follows.

In relation to the impact of organisational practices (training and development and communication) on work-related outcomes examined in this study (employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance), the discussion of hypotheses 1 to 14 above indicates clearly that this impact differs between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. These findings therefore strongly support the proposition of hypothesis 15. In addition, the evidence also indicates that the nature and extent of employee commitment differs between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The level of commitment for “marine science employees” appears to be very high compared to that for “other theme park employees”, particularly in relation to their commitment to their occupation. Both interviewees in Company B agreed that the level of commitment for employees working in some of the high turnover areas such as food and beverage is not very high. For instance, a senior marine science staff member of Company B stated that:

I think that in relation to retail, food and beverage, cleaning and rides, the level of commitment is not that high. The front line jobs are difficult because you are always in the presence of the public. And also it is not a huge paying job.
Similarly, a senior staff member of Company C stated that:

The shop staff, because they can get another job anywhere else doing what they do, I think their level of commitment is lower. I think that they feel that the services can be replaced quite easily. They can get a job somewhere else quite easily.

In relation to the marine science area, a response from a senior staff member of Company B indicated that:

If you take the marine science area, people dealing with animals, I would say that the level of commitment is phenomenal. … People who work with animals give their free time, freely, and we have to stop them doing that. They are very passionate and very connected to those animals to the point where if you have an animal that passes away, that dies, we actually engage grief counselors for our animal care staff because they take that so personally. It is like dealing with a family member.

The senior marine science staff member of Company B also stated:

I think there is a difference for marine staff, particularly because it is a sort of area that a lot of people are keen to get in there to work with marine mammals and other animals. In the commitment side we have a high level of commitment. We have volunteers that work there for nothing. They come and work in that area. We see a high level of passion, real genuine passion for the welfare of the animals and training of the animals.

These findings indicate that “marine science employees” seem to be favourably oriented towards their occupations, placing high value to the work they do, compared to “other theme park employees”. The findings also suggest that work for “marine science employees” is self-rewarding, irrespective of economic benefits. As stated by a senior marine science staff member of Company B:

The ‘animal people’ don’t do it for the money. They do it because they want to work with the animals, and give the animals the best facilities possible. If any sick animal comes in from the wild, they want to make sure they get the animal back to the wild as soon as possible. So their level of commitment is beyond anything across the company.
This situation is similar in Company C, based on the response of a senior marine animal trainer, who when asked about the main reasons for the high commitment of “marine science employees” said:

Certainly it is not pay. It certainly is not what they do get paid. I think it is the relationship they have with the animals.

In summary, there appears to be a differentiation in attitudes and behaviours between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, which is influenced by training and development practices as well as the communication processes within the organisation. However, the over-riding factor that impacts on affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance differentials between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” is the marine science employees’ commitment to their occupation in the shape of their attachment to the animals. This affective commitment to the occupation on the part of “marine science employees” is directly related to their higher levels of job satisfaction compared to many members of the “other theme park employee” group. This analysis then provides support for hypothesis 15. This supports the results from the quantitative data. The only variables that showed significant difference were informal communication and job satisfaction. These findings suggest a partial support for hypotheses 15. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.4 Professionalism Issues

Two hypotheses (hypotheses 16 and 17) involving professionalism issues are discussed in this section.
6.4.4.1 Hypothesis 16

Hypothesis 16 states that education levels determine professionalism for employees undertaking marine science related activities. Findings from the qualitative data do not support this hypothesis, as outlined below.

In relation to the level of education, findings from Companies A, B and C indicate that the majority of “marine science employees” do not have degrees. As stated by a senior marine science staff member of Company B:

In the beginning, in the early days, about 30 years ago, none of the marine mammal trainers had degrees. They all had on-the-job training. Some of the staff have 30 years of working with animals and you can’t buy that kind of professional expertise.

However, the evidence also demonstrates that many marine science staff have gained tertiary qualifications with organisational support; thus they are academically qualified in their chosen areas. As mentioned previously, a comment by a senior marine science staff member of Company A highlights this issue.

I started here sixteen years ago as a hot dog salesman. Nine months after working at food and beverage I became a dolphin trainer and worked in this position for about five years. While I was a dolphin trainer, the company paid for me to get my vet nursing certificate. So I’m a qualified vet nurse. At the end of five years working with dolphins I went to the education department because I found that I have a passion to talk to people about animals. At the end of that two-year period I did seals for two and half years. And when I was a seal trainer I actually got my zoo keeper certificate, so I am a qualified zoo keeper as well, through the help of the company.

In relation to Company C, findings indicate that none of the “marine science employees” have degrees, only one employee has a tertiary qualification but six employees are currently undertaking Certificate IV related to animal training. Among the marine science staff in the focus group discussion with employees in Company A,
only one has a degree and the two other employees have tertiary qualifications in water quality control.

Even though most “marine science employees” do not have degrees, and some do not even have tertiary qualifications, they do possess highly specialised knowledge which gives them a “professional expertise” that many people with degrees do not possess. This knowledge is based on lengthy on-the-job training without formal education. A comment by a senior marine animal trainer of Company C, who does not have a degree and is currently undertaking a certificate IV in animal training, highlights this issue.

I’ve been here for 35 years. I’ve been involved with marine mammals for almost forty years. All my experience I’ve learned here on-the-job and visiting other oceanariums to learn from them.

On the other hand, many marine science people with degrees have formal education but lack work experience. In Company C, when it was decided to hire people with degrees, it was found that most of the applicants with degrees did not have real life experience. As stated by a senior marine science staff member of Company C:

Then suddenly we found that we had all these people with degrees, professionals, but they didn’t have real life experience. So now it’s a balance - now we hire people from other zoos; we hire people with degrees; we hire people whom we think have the potential. And all of these people share their differences. The people who have been in the workforce for quite some time share their experience with degree people who have no workplace understanding.

A marine science employee of Company A is an example of a person with a degree who developed his skills, coached by a marine science employee without a degree.

I did some research here as part of my university degree. Then I did some work experience as a volunteer before becoming a casual employee.
These findings suggest that education levels do not determine professionalism and do not provide support for hypothesis 16. These findings support findings from the quantitative data which indicate that among the 66 employees undertaking marine science related activities, only 21 have degrees, 20 have tertiary qualifications, 6 are commercial divers, and 20 have no formal qualifications (Y10 and Y12). These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.4.2 Hypothesis 17

Hypothesis 17 predicts that perceptions of professionalism determine professionalism for employees undertaking marine science related activities. The qualitative data provides support for this hypothesis, as outlined below.

Although most of the marine science staff do not have degrees, information from the in-depth interview with a senior marine science staff member of Company B suggests that most of marine science employees perceive themselves as professionals. Based on this staff member’s own experience:

Yes, definitely. I think that is based on the sixteen years that I have been here and the things that I have done; the skills that I have gained, and the opportunities that I have had here. … People from other zoos will ring me and ask for my opinion on a new program they want to run and I feel that I have a good reputation in the industry. Yes, I don’t have my degree. So… yes, I think I am as professional as anyone who has a degree in the same role in other zoos.

A similar comment was provided by a senior marine animal trainer in Company C when asked if all “marine science employees” perceive themselves as professionals.

Yes, we all do. The younger ones may not perceive themselves as professionals because they are younger and are still learning.
In relation to the marine science staff who do not have a degree, the senior marine staff member of Company B quoted above observed that:

I think they do have a perception that they are definitely professionals. If you ask them they would say “Yes”. They do consider themselves very knowledgeable in their job roles.

These findings provide clear evidence that marine science employees perceive themselves as professionals. A number of factors support this proposition. First, they possess significant skills through lengthy on-the-job training, which gives them professional expertise in the marine science field, especially regarding work with animals. Second, this specialized knowledge means that they are able to exercise some level of control over knowledge related to their practice of marine science, including their ability to coach and pass on knowledge and provide advice to other institutions or other theme parks on marine science issues and problems. The evidence also suggests that senior marine science employees have a significant level of operational autonomy in making decisions on technical issues. They also have strong ethical standards especially in relation to animal welfare issues because they are highly committed to the well-being and training of the animals. Thus, the findings provide support for hypothesis 17.

6.4.5 Dimensions of Professionalism

In this section, a discussion of the findings in relation to each of the professional dimensions (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) is provided below, followed by an analysis of the hypotheses 18 to 21 regarding the impact of dimensions of
professionalsm on organisational outcomes (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance).

Professional associations as a ‘referent’

In relation to professional bodies, the evidence indicates that few employees are members of their relevant professional bodies. The companies are members of a number of professional bodies, which gives all marine science staff access to journals, websites and conferences. A list of these professional bodies, based on the qualitative data, is provided in Appendix 11.

Both of the marine science staff members interviewed at Companies B and C are members of professional bodies related to their specific areas and they perceive that it is important to be engaged in their professional community, even though neither of them have degrees. As stated by the senior marine staff member interviewed at Company B:

I am an individual member of IZE and the IRAZPA because I want to have voting rights for key decisions in regards zoo education in this country. That is my choice but not everyone takes that opportunity.

This indicates that being part of a professional body is not a relevant issue for most marine science employees. Evidence also suggests that the company provides financial support to senior marine staff members for participation in international conferences. Both marine science interviewees at Company B and C have participated in international conferences with support from their company. As stated by a senior staff marine science member of Company C:
We do have a commitment, if financially we can afford it, to send staff to the conferences. I have been extremely lucky that I have been to two international zoo educator conferences, one in Hong Kong and one in Vienna which was just fabulous, culturally and professionally.

The findings also indicate that few employees are members of trade unions. In Company A and B only few marine science employees are members of trade unions and there are no marine science trade union members in Company C. As stated by a senior marine science staff member of Company B:

I think one or two of our staff are members of the Australian Workers Union. Unionism in this park is not huge – it’s not big. Membership increases when we get close to voting for the enterprise bargaining agreement every two and half years. But at the end of that year subscription decreases and most of them stop being members.

These findings suggest that some few marine science staff use the affiliation to professional bodies as a “referent” as a way to maintain professional currency and also to become more socialised into the marine science profession. The findings, therefore, suggest that the majority of marine science employees are not actively engaged in the professional marine science community to a significant extent and thus do not place great importance on the role of professional associations in their occupational field. Because many marine science employees do not have degrees and some do not even have tertiary qualifications, it is possible that they may well feel that they are under-qualified for relevant professional membership. This may be a reason why the professional bodies do not have a significant influence on their values, beliefs and identity regarding their work. These findings suggest that the “referent” dimension of professionalism is not likely to influence organisation outcomes examined in this study (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee
performance). These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

**Belief in ‘self-regulation’**

The evidence suggests that many marine science employees possess highly specialised knowledge which provides them with some power and control over their work. This indicates that they possess a high degree of self-regulation over their work related to the marine science disciplines, particularly regarding training and caring for animals. However, the findings also indicate that marine science based organisations do not have strict entry standards to the industry and the body knowledge is also not controlled and monopolised. Anybody who is motivated and willing to accept the work conditions can be part of the marine science area, regardless of education level and area of expertise. As stated by a senior marine science staff member in Company B:

…we hire people from other zoos; we hire people with degrees; we hire people who we think have the potential. … And all of these people share their differences. The people who have been in the workforce for quite some time share their experience with degree people who have no workplace understanding. And the zoo people bring in other experience from other facilities.

An interesting issue is the recruitment of non-marine science professionals (with degrees) and the lateral thinking that is leading to the recruitment of psychologists, whose disciplines, along with educators, are becoming a relevant area in the Australian marine science environment. As stated by a senior marine science staff member of Company B:

We probably prefer psychology over a science degree to work with the animals because they have a very good understanding of animal behaviour such as stimulating our animals (e.g. dolphins, seals, polar bears) by keeping their minds active.
Another relevant issue to ‘self-regulation’ is that not many marine science people with degrees are part of the Australian theme park workforce. More people with degrees would give the marine science community more power to self-regulate their work. One possible reason for the low professional degree holders is that not all academically qualified marine science people will accept the work process and conditions in Australian marine theme parks. First, marine science jobs are very competitive in Australian aquatic theme parks and marine science staff usually start as work experience/volunteers, often as casual workers doing jobs outside the marine science area (e.g. food and beverage/retail) until a position in the marine science area is available. For example, one marine science employee in a focus group discussion at Company A stated that:

When I first started here, I started as a casual and I wasn’t involved in an aquarist role as I was employed as a front of house employee which involves reception, and involves working at all the other front of house stations, education, these sorts of things.

Another long-term team member of Company A, when asked about the employment process for new employees, said:

So they might come as a casual and they see what their future is to be, an aquarist, someone who is multi-skilled and work in education, front of house, touch tank, etc. And they come into the group and their focus is on getting out to work as an aquarist and they work towards that over time so to further themselves once they get here. In my case, it took three or four years before I got to work in the Back of House. Eventually they will get there. It depends on each person.

It is likely that very few qualified marine science professionals are prepared to work through such apparently irrelevant job pathways to achieve the objective of a professional position. Second, not all marine science people with degrees have the motivation, commitment and aptitude required for marine science work. A comment by a senior marine science staff member of Company B highlights this issue:
I also think that around the country people probably perceive it as a really fun place to work. In reality it is sometimes stressful, sometimes really difficult, and frustrating. But I think that the perception is that it is a really fun place to work. There is a lot of cleaning; there is a lot of scrubbing; … it smells and you smell like fish, and you have to be able to pick up a fish. A lot of people don’t want to touch a fish but they want to be dolphin trainers!

A senior marine science trainer of Company C also stated that:

I think the main factor that affects the keeper is the enjoyment of working with animals – yes, some people get a lot of pleasure out of working with animals, whereas other people find that it is unpleasant. We see this with different people who come to us and say that they want to volunteer here – we can see it in the way they perform tasks. Some tend to be afraid of the animal, they show fear… they like the idea of working with the animal, but when it actually comes to performing the job, it’s a different matter. They don’t have what it takes, in terms of the right attitude towards the animal. You’ve got to be outgoing you’ve got to have a joyful attitude towards life and you’ve got to enjoy being around animals, no matter how mucky or cold or wet or unpleasant it can be.

It is apparent that qualified marine science professionals do not always fit readily in the marine park environment. The evidence also indicated, based on previous discussion, that most marine science employees within Companies A, B and C are not actively involved in professional bodies nor in trade unions, which suggests that these employees do not work closely with the marine science community (e.g. government or institutions) to establish and maintain standards for the Australian aquatic theme park segment. This suggests that belief in ‘self-regulation’ is unlikely to affect the organisational outcomes examined in this study (employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

Specifically, the high level of commitment and consequently high satisfaction with the jobs for marine science staff may not be related to whether or not their self-regulation power is poor or strong. Self-regulation may be more related to the
specific work environment within each company rather than in the industry. Based on their high specialised knowledge and professional expertise, marine science staff are able to set standards, in their area of expertise within their work environment, not only to protect and care for the animals but also to enhance the performance of the marine science functions. Thus, self-regulation is more likely to influence employee performance than employee commitment and job satisfaction.

**Autonomy**

Even though most marine science employees do not have degrees, the findings suggest that senior marine science staff exercise a significant degree of autonomy in carrying out their tasks because of their specialised knowledge and professional expertise. Because of this specialised knowledge, based on experience, they are able to make their own decisions without a great deal of external reference, even from hierarchical organisations. As mentioned previously, most of the senior marine science staff who have highly specialised knowledge have been working in the marine science area for many years and, although they do not have relevant degrees, they exercise considerable control over their work, particularly in relation to the decisions on technical aspects of their jobs. They are the ones who coach and pass knowledge to university students and graduates who come to work in the organisation. They share their experience, and together with the theoretical knowledge of any available university graduates, they are able to set standards and exercise more control over their professional environment. A comment from a senior marine science member of Company B highlights another aspect of this issue:

> When I became the education co-ordinator it was quite scary as I don’t have a university background and I’m dealing with a lot of clients who are university trained. Now I take care about all education programs across
the four properties. Now I run our education programs for pre-school, primary school, high school and universities.

The findings across the three organisations suggest that “autonomy” is an important factor affecting employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance for marine science employees. It is a significant source of pride and motivation for employees who see themselves as ‘professionals’ in their area of expertise.

6.4.5.1 Hypotheses 18

Hypothesis 18 predicted that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the organisation for “marine science employees”. The findings suggest that ‘autonomy’ is the only dimension of professionalism that is likely to influence affective commitment, in general. The evidence also suggests that ‘autonomy’ is likely to have a significant impact on affective commitment to the organisation for marine science employees.

The evidence from the qualitative data indicates that training and development practices are likely to have a significant impact on affective commitment to the organisation (see discussion related to hypothesis 1). The evidence also indicates that on-the-job training provides the major means of skills development for most marine science employees. This on-the-job experience is the main source of the specialised knowledge and professional expertise of most marine science employees, particularly the senior ones, which provides them a significant degree of autonomy over their jobs. This discussion provides a clear linkage between ‘autonomy’ and affective
commitment to the organisation for marine science employees, thus providing support for hypothesis 18. This supports the quantitative results, which indicate that ‘autonomy’ was the only dimension of professionalism that had a significant effect on affective commitment to the organisation. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).

6.4.5.2 Hypothesis 19

Hypothesis 19 predicts that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and affective commitment to the occupation for “marine science employees”. The findings above suggest that ‘autonomy’ is the only dimension of professionalism that is likely to influence affective commitment, in general. The discussion below also suggests that ‘autonomy’ is also likely to have a significant impact on affective commitment to the occupation for marine science staff.

The findings indicate that high commitment to their occupation appears to be a strong feature for marine science employees working in the Australia aquatic theme park segment. As stated by a senior marine animal trainer of Company C:

I think that anyone who wants to work in a career with animals needs to be committed to those animals because they are taking on the responsibility for those animals and their well-being and welfare. So if those people are not committed to that purpose, they are not doing those animals any good – they are not going to be good for those animals. So commitment is a very important part of being in this career.

This same marine science staff member of Company C, when asked about the main strengths of marine science employees, said:
The main strengths of our staff would be our commitment to our jobs working with the animals. That what we are here for. We are here for the animals. I didn’t take on this career to make lots of money. I don’t think any of us would do this.

These findings reinforce the previous discussions about the high levels of commitment to the occupation for staff undertaking marine science related activities in Australian aquatic theme parks. The evidence also strongly suggests that marine science employees perceive themselves as professionals. This perception of ‘professionalism’ may be another factor that strengthens the value that marine science staff attach to their work and in turn strengthens their commitment to their occupation. The findings also indicate that marine science employees not only are highly attached to their occupation but also that they possess highly specialised knowledge and professional expertise, which provides them with a significant control over technical aspects of their work activities within their professional environment, particularly regarding their work with animals. The ability to make decisions about technical aspects of their jobs is another relevant motivator factor that strengthens the commitment of marine science employees to their occupations.

The ‘autonomy’ dimension of professionalism therefore is likely to influence affective commitment to the occupation for staff undertaking marine science related activities in Australian aquatic theme parks. This supports the quantitative results which indicate that ‘autonomy’ was the only dimension of professionalism that had a significant effect on affective commitment to the occupation. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).
6.4.5.3 Hypothesis 20

Hypothesis 20 predicts that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and job satisfaction for marine science employees. The findings suggest that ‘autonomy’ is the only dimension of professionalism that is likely to influence job satisfaction for marine science employees undertaking activities in Australian aquatic theme parks. An analysis of the findings follows.

The findings indicate that the positive attitude of marine science employees towards their jobs and their high level of commitment, particularly to their work with animals, are some of the motivational factors that strengthen their satisfaction with their jobs. As mentioned previously, based on a comment by a senior marine animal trainer in Company C, job satisfaction is one of the major motivational factors for the majority of marine science employees, particularly because they want to use their knowledge and have the opportunity to work with animals in their specific areas of expertise. Satisfaction with their jobs may be enhanced when their specialised knowledge and their professional expertise enable them to exercise significant control over their jobs, particularly in relation to technical aspects of their work with animals. This discussion provides support for the proposition that the ‘autonomy’ dimension of professionalism is likely to influence job satisfaction for employees undertaking marine science related activities in Australian aquatic theme parks. This supports the quantitative results which indicate that ‘autonomy’ was the only dimension of professionalism that had a significant effect on job satisfaction. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).
6.4.5.4 Hypothesis 21

Hypothesis 21 predicted that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of professionalism (referent, self-regulation and autonomy) and employee performance to the organisation for “marine science employees”. The findings suggest that ‘autonomy’ and ‘self-regulation’ are likely to influence employee performance. An analysis of the findings follows.

If the discussion above suggests that the “autonomy” dimension of professionalism is likely to influence job satisfaction for marine science employees, it is also likely that this dimension of professionalism is an important variable in influencing performance levels of employees undertaking marine science related activities within Australian aquatic theme parks, for the same reasons outlined above.

In relation to the “self-regulation” dimension of professionalism, the scope of marine science professionals to set standards in their area of expertise within their own work environment may be critical in enhancing their performance levels, in terms of protecting and caring for the welfare and wellbeing of the animals. This suggests that both “autonomy and ‘self-regulation’ are likely to influence employee performance for marine science employees, thus providing support for hypothesis 21. This not supports the quantitative results which indicate that ‘self-regulation’ was the only dimension of professionalism that had a significant effect on employee performance. These issues will be further explored in the discussion section of this study (Chapter 7).
6.5 Chapter summary

In summary, a major pattern within these findings relates to the significant differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” in terms of their perceptions regarding organisational practices (training and development and communication) and how these perceptions impacted on organisational outcomes examined in this study (affective commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance), and also in terms of their attitudes and behaviours regarding informal communication mode and job satisfaction. The differences between these types of employees suggest that they have different values, beliefs and behaviours which are reflected in the different meanings that they attach to their work. An analysis of these work meanings is critical to improve the understanding of the differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” and also in relation to professionalism issues regarding “marine science employees”.

The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework will be critical in this analysis because it facilitates an understanding of the different attitudes and behaviours of theme park employees. This includes the development of insights into how their perceptions of work affect their satisfaction with organisational practices (training and development and communication) as well as their satisfaction with their jobs, their performance level and also the perceptions of professionalism for ‘marine science employees’ as a particular group. The following chapter addresses a discussion of both quantitative and qualitative data, addressing issues related to ‘employee commitment’, ‘job satisfaction’, ‘employee performance’ and ‘professionalism’.
CHAPTER 7 - DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data in addressing the three major research questions in this study. The discussion addresses the major issues related to ‘employee commitment’, job satisfaction’, ‘employee performance’ and ‘professionalism’. The reasons given for the trends identified in both the quantitative and qualitative analysis will be explored, including similarities and differences between “marine science employees” and ‘other theme park employees”. The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework will be also employed in this discussion to achieve greater depth in an extended analysis of the significance that “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” attach to their work roles.

7.2 Summary of hypothesis testing

In relation to the 21 hypotheses tested in this study, sixteen were supported, one was partially supported and four were not supported. Table 7.1 below summarises the outcomes of hypotheses testing using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. For some hypotheses, both quantitative and qualitative data were used as evidence to either support or reject them. The discussion of hypotheses outcomes follows.
Table 7.1 Results of hypothesis testing

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION 1</th>
<th>Outcome based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Employees</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship between Training and Development and</strong></td>
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<td>Affective commitment to the organisation</td>
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<td>H₂</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₃</td>
<td>Affective commitment to customers</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₄</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₅</td>
<td>Employee performance</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>RESEARCH QUESTION 2</strong></td>
<td>Differences between “Marine Science Employees” and “Other Employees”</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₁₅</td>
<td>The impact of organisational practices on work-related outcomes varies between “marine science employees” and “other employees”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RESEARCH QUESTION 3</strong></td>
<td>Marine Science Employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₁₆</td>
<td>Education levels determine professionalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>H₁₇</td>
<td>Perception of professionalism determines professionalism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship between Professionalism and</strong></td>
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<td>H₁₈</td>
<td>Affective commitment to the organisation</td>
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<td>Employee performance</td>
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7.3 Employee Commitment

The findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative data suggest that training and development practices and communication processes generally have a positive significant impact on employee commitment (to the organisation, to the occupation and customers) for employees working in the Australian aquatic theme parks studied. The major exception to these positive relationships was found specifically in the level of affective commitment to customers, which was not affected by communication processes. A number of other unexpected results emerged from the data, particularly in relation to the similarities and differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”.

Generally, the findings suggest that ‘training and development practices’ are more relevant in influencing affective commitment (to the organisation, to the occupation and customers) than ‘communication processes’, particularly for “marine science employees”. A major factor influencing this result is the level of on-the-job training for “marine science employees”, which is high compared to “other theme park employees”, particularly in relation to the development of specific skills in care and training of animals. The underlying communication processes involved in the intensive and prolonged on-the-job training is a major factor in shaping the effectiveness of training and development practices in positively influencing commitment for “marine science employees”. The discussion below will summarise relevant issues related to the impact of training and development practices and communication processes on affective commitment to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers.
7.3.1 Training and development practices

Previous studies have reported a positive relationship between training programs and affective commitment to the organisation (Gould-Williams 2004; Paul & Anantharanan 2004; Tannebaum et al. 1991), providing support for the findings of this study. The analysis undertaken in this study revealed that the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to the organisation is more relevant for “marine science employees” ($R^2 = 44\%$) than for “other theme park employees” ($R^2 = 18\%$). However, there is a lack of research exploring the relationship between training programs and the level of employees’ affective commitment to either occupation or to customers.

The findings from the qualitative data demonstrate that on-the-job training, undertaken using mentoring processes, provides the usual means of skill development for most staff, particular for “marine science employees”. This on-the-job training is a major factor influencing affective commitment, particularly to the occupation, which in turn significantly influences commitment to the organisation and customers. The present study indicates that the influence of mentoring (at the heart of on-the-job training) on commitment to the occupation and the organisation, and also perhaps to customer service is significantly related to ‘job status’, because the trainee is strongly personally related to the mentor and over time appears to develop strong aspirations towards the job status of the mentor. A dolphin trainee, for example, can only be trained by an experienced dolphin trainer, and the impact of this process appears to be that the trainee aspires to gain the skills and job (or organisational) status of the trainer.
A dolphin trainer position is used here as an example of job status because findings from the qualitative data suggest that this occupation is one of the highest profile roles in the marine science area of the theme parks studied. Job status in relation to a dolphin trainer has significant influence on issues involving morale, commitment, capability, performance and retention, according to the qualitative findings. Job status, rather than salary, is one of the primary factors influencing the trainees’ decision to become an animal trainer such as a dolphin trainer. Many trainees aspire to and strive for a career as a dolphin trainer (or a marine science job equivalent) because it is perceived as a high status role.

As shown in the interview data, an animal trainer (such as a dolphin trainer) is a role that requires a significant empathetic ability with the animals and a great deal of specialised knowledge, highly technical skills and an ability to undertake intensive training that can neither be acquired easily nor within a short period of time. The myriad of challenges and tasks that underpin the performance of a successful animal trainer makes such positions not easy to achieve and is the basis of the high job status associated with the role. Becoming a successful animal trainer depends largely on continued quality mentoring, through on-the-job training and learning. It also depends on high motivation, determination and a ‘passion’ for the welfare and wellbeing of the animals. Because most dolphin trainers do not have degrees, and some do not possess tertiary qualifications, on-the-job training is the major source of skills development. It is therefore through the on-the-job training, including the positive influence of the mentor (through job status and ‘passion’ for the animals) that trainees develop the high attachment to their occupation demonstrated in this study.
Because this on-the-job training is done exclusively within the work environment, it is primarily through the company that “marine science employees” have the opportunity to work with animals and pursue a high status job such as a dolphin trainer. Thus, a link is established between on-the-job training and affective commitment to the organisation. A similar link between affective commitment to the occupation (and animals) and affective commitment to customers is also established in this study. While the work environment provides “marine science employees” the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge, contact with customers provides them with an opportunity to ‘show off’ their knowledge and demonstrate their ‘passion’ for the animals.

Although past research suggests that employees’ perceptions of career development practices are strongly related to organisational commitment (Gaertner & Nollen 1989; Meyer & Smith 2000; Paul & Anantharanan 2004), in the present study on-the-job training (in parallel with the mentoring system) is a critical factor in encouraging affective commitment, not only to the organisation but also to the occupation and customers, particularly for “marine science employees”. This is supported, in part, by past research suggesting a significant impact of both on-the-job training (McGunnigle & Jameson, 2000) and mentoring (Payne & Huffman, 2005) on organisational commitment. Although it is clear that there is some support for career development within the organisation (e.g. external studies), only some theme park employees, including “marine science employees” develop their skills through external studies. Whilst there is a lack of structure for specific career development within the three companies involved in this study, on-the-job training within the marine science area
helps employees to develop a range of skills, thus improving their career prospects in the form of providing a path towards a high status job.

In relation to “other theme park employees”, one possible explanation for the low impact of training and development practices on organisational commitment might be the relatively high turnover rate in this employee group, which discourages the organisation from investing in training for them. Additionally, the skills developed by many “other theme park employees” through on-the-job training (although company related) are more generalised and more related to the tourism industry in general, particularly in relation to hospitality and retail. Because these skills are highly transferable to most companies in the tourism industry the opportunity to learn a variety of skills (food and beverage, retail, etc) through the on-the-job training enhances their chances of employment outside the company. The link between training and development practices and affective commitment to the organisation is therefore weaker for “other theme park employees” than for “marine science employees”.

However, an ambiguous result is that while the commitment to occupation levels of “other theme park employees” and “marine science employees” is similar (m = 5.90; m = 6.00, respectively) the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to the occupation is more significant for “other theme park employees” (R² = 25%) compared to “marine science employees” (R² = 10%). A possible explanation for this result lies in the perception of “marine science employees” about the role and type of training (e.g. classroom, on-the-job, internal, external, etc). Because few employees, particularly “marine science employees”, have had the
opportunity to do external studies and not all have had the motivation to undertake Certificate IV in animal training, such employees may have a perception that on-the-job training is not legitimate (formal, structured) training.

Another possible explanation is that among “other theme park employees”, some are marine science professionals with degrees waiting for an opportunity to work in the marine science area. The qualitative data suggests that most “marine science employees” start working as volunteers or as casual employees doing jobs outside the marine science area, until a position is available. For example, table 5.12 in chapter 5 demonstrates that four respondents have veterinarian degrees but only one is currently working as a veterinarian. Additionally, the inclusion of administrative personnel such as qualified accountants, support staff and managers tends to skew the results for “other theme park employees”. Such respondents may have a different perception about the nature and impact of training than the food and beverage and retail group. These explanations may provide insights about the results indicating that the impact of training and development practices on affective commitment to the occupation is higher for “other theme park employees” compared with “marine science employees”.

Of particular interest, however, was the fact that training and development practices had a direct and positive influence on affective commitment to customers for “marine science employees” but not for “other theme park employees”. This is a surprising result because the qualitative data indicates that more emphasis on customer service issues related to hospitality has been placed for “other theme park employees” because of the nature of their jobs (retail, hospitality, etc). However, in contrast, the qualitative analysis also suggests that “other theme park employees” lack appropriate
training about animal issues, which is a major negative factor influencing their level of ambiguity and uncertainty when answering customer questions about animals. This indicates that “other theme park employees” have a higher level of ambiguity in relation to customers than “marine science employees”. Findings suggest that the role played by training and development practices in influencing affective commitment to customers for “other theme park employees” is limited because they demonstrate higher levels of ambiguity regarding customers, particularly in relation to information about animals, compared with “marine science employees”.

However, customer service is also an issue affecting “marine science employees” but not in the same way as “other theme park employees”. Although training and development practices have a positive impact on affective commitment to customers for “marine science employees”, this impact is not very high ($R^2 = 12\%$). One explanation is that the main activities of “marine science employees’ are related to the care and training of the animals and thus, the customer service skew is toward technical skills related to animal issues. As a result, there is a lack of formal training in customer service for “marine science employees”, regarding hospitality issues. Instead, only very basic information is provided during the induction program. Results from the quantitative data suggest that while 47 per cent of respondents agreed that they received training on customer service, only 7 per cent strongly agreed that the training was sufficient and 22 per cent slightly agreed. For those who slightly agreed 19 were “marine science employees” and 1 was from the other theme park employee group.
Clearly, both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” need to have an adequate grasp of customer service issues related to both hospitality and animal issues. This suggests that ‘customer service’ is a ‘gap’ in the training programs adopted by the three aquatic theme park companies involved in this study. This “gap” is important because of the demonstrated level of role ambiguity regarding customers which is common across both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. This training ‘gap’ is therefore a critical factor influencing role ambiguity regarding customers and it has a direct impact on employees’ perception of communication effectiveness. Past research has already established that employees’ overall role ambiguity is a function of the quality of communication practices generally (Johlke & Duhan, 2000). Indeed, effective communication practices are associated with decreased employee role ambiguity overall (Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke & Duhan 2001; Johlke et al. 2000). This training ‘gap’ is explained by the established relationship between role ambiguity and the clarity of communication processes. The findings from the present study suggest that training and development practices and communication processes in the three companies studied have some limitations regarding customer service. Further discussion about role ambiguity regarding customers is provided within the discussion of communication processes below.

The discussion above clearly indicates that there are significant differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” in the way training and development practices are perceived, particularly regarding customer service. As mentioned previously, the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework is employed in the analysis of these differences between types of employees, based on the
importance of the meanings that these two groups of employees attach to their work. The analysis of the differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” is discussed in section 7.6 below.

7.3.2 Communication processes

Extensive research have been undertaken examining the impact of communication processes on affective commitment to the organisation (Guzzo & Noonan 1994; Thornhill, Lewis & Saunders 1996; Varona 1996), providing support for the findings in this study. However, there is a lack of research into the relationship between communication processes and affective commitment to the occupation and customers in previous studies.

In general, the communication processes (communication frequency, informal communication mode, indirect communication content and bidirectional communication flow) as a set had a significant and positive impact on both the level of affective commitment to the organisation and to the occupation for aquatic theme park employees, with ‘bidirectional communication flow’ being the only significant predictor. Previous research suggests a significant relationship between two-way (bidirectional) communication and organisational commitment (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2003). However, further analysis suggests that the impact of communication process as a set on affective commitment to the organisation is higher for “other theme park employees” ($R^2 = 38\%$) than for “marine science employees” ($R^2 = 28\%$). Given the high attachment of “marine science employees” to their occupation, it is not surprising that the impact of communication processes (as a set)
on affective commitment to the organisation is relatively higher for “other theme park employees” compared with “marine science employees”.

This study also indicates that ‘two-way communication flow’ and ‘informal communication mode’ were the only communication processes to have a positive influence on affective commitment to the occupation but only for “marine science employees”. While ‘two-way communication flow’ had a positive impact on both ‘affective commitment to the organisation’ and the ‘occupation’ for aquatic theme park employees in general, it was not relevant in influencing the affective commitment of “other theme park employees” to the organisation or to the occupation and to customers. This suggests that there are significant differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” in the way communication processes are perceived, particularly regarding informal two-way communication processes. The importance of the meaning that these two groups of employees attach to their work is critical when analysing these differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework is employed in the analysis of these differences between types of employees, which is discussed in section 7.6 below.

The major communication channel for “marine science employees” in relation to on-the-job training is their informal interaction with peers rather than through a formal communication channel (e.g. email), and it is based on two-way communication. Two-way communication processes, which are present on a continuous basis through on-the-job training, are not only essential for improving information exchanges between peers (and also between peers and managers/supervisors) but particularly for
building and reinforcing knowledge, skills and confidence. Because the main activities of “marine science employees” involve the care and training of animals, they need to constantly communicate with their mentors and also their supervisors and peers about the conditions, development and progress of the animals. It is through this close contact and communication with mentors, supervisors and peers, exchanging information about animals, that “marine science employees” increase their knowledge and develop their skills and confidence. This, in turn, reinforces their commitment to their occupation. Hence, the findings from this thesis provide support for the importance of informal communication mode and two-way communication flow for “marine science employees” in influencing their commitment to their occupation.

While there is no significant statistical relationship between communication processes and affective commitment (to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers) for “other theme park employees”, the qualitative response would suggest that communication processes are providing indirect influence on employees’ perceptions and in turn on work-related outcomes. The lack of a significant relationship between communication processes and affective commitment to customers for all aquatic theme park employees suggests that ‘customer service issues’ are a significant gap not only in relation to training and development practices but also in relation to communication processes. Indeed, evidence from the qualitative data related to training and development practices suggests that both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” are inadequately trained in recognising and responding to customers’ needs and expectations because they lack sufficient and relevant information, skills and capability regarding customer service to effectively
complete their tasks. Whilst “marine science employees” lack an understanding of customer service involving hospitality issues, “other theme park employees” lack understanding and information about the animals in their theme parks.

This ‘gap’ in relation to customer service is borne out by the data which suggests that both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” face some level of uncertainty and ambiguity regarding their relationship with customers. Although issues related to uncertainty and ambiguity are usually associated with a lack of clarity rather than lack of information (Keller, 1994), this ‘gap’ in customer service for aquatic theme park employees may be more related to a lack of relevant information than to the lack of clarity of information provided. This relates particularly to the information about the animals, their welfare and training, which can be imparted to customers with a high level of confidence. Therefore, lack of clarity about job outcomes and role ambiguity, particularly regarding customers, is affected by ineffective communication processes in the companies studied. This in turn, affects the impact of training and development practices and communication processes on both job satisfaction and employee performance, particularly to “other theme park employees”, whose level of role ambiguity regarding customers is higher than “marine science employees”. Further discussion of role ambiguity regarding customers is provided within the discussion below exploring issues relating to job satisfaction and employee performance.
7.4 Job Satisfaction

This section examines the interaction between organisational practices (training and communication) and ambiguity regarding customers in the prediction of job satisfaction.

7.4.1 Training and development practices

Previous research supports the findings of this study in relation to the positive impact of training programs on job satisfaction (Gould-Williams 2004; Karia & Asaari 2006; Lam & Zhang 2003). The discussion above indicates that it is through the on-the-job training that “marine science employees” develop a high attachment to their occupation. For those who are really committed to their occupation and really want to progress in their chosen careers, such as dolphin trainers, they perceive working with animals as stimulating, challenging, and satisfying. They have a ‘passion’ for their occupation and are very proud of sharing this ‘passion’ with others, including peers and customers. This high attachment to the animals suggests that they are also highly satisfied with their jobs.

However, the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction was higher for “other theme park employees” ($R^2 = 41\%$) than for “marine science employees” ($R^2 = 28\%$). In addition, both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” are very satisfied with their jobs ($m = 6.12$; $m = 5.53$, respectively). Management perception in the three companies studied is that “other theme park employees” in general have low commitment, particularly given their relatively high turnover rate. However, this does not mean that they are not satisfied
with their jobs. They are not only satisfied with their jobs but they also demonstrate a significant level of commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers (m = 5.09; m = 5.90; m = 5.12, respectively).

One possible reason for the high impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction for “other theme park employees” lies in the opportunity provided by the training programs, through on-the-job training, to learn a variety of skills (e.g. hospitality, retail and marketing) which are highly transferable to many companies in the tourism industry. It may be that “other theme park employees” perceive this training as a good opportunity to ‘sell’ their skills outside the company. The skills development/portability aspect of training may influence their satisfaction with their jobs. The identified ‘gap’ in relation to training programs for “other theme park employees” is related to the lack of information about animals, which is very specific to aquatic theme park companies and thus it is not easily transferable to other companies in the tourism industry. However, this ‘gap’ appears to have very little impact on job satisfaction for “other theme park employees”, because the data suggests that ambiguity regarding customer does not moderate the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction for this group of employees. Appropriate training about animals, especially related to customer interaction and specific questions, would motivate this group of employees by influencing their attachment to the animals. This may positively affect their desire to stay longer in the company, and in turn further enhance their commitment to the organisation and customers.
While “other theme park employees” use the skills developed through on-the-job training to gain a competitive edge and facilitate job opportunities outside the company, “marine science employees” use on-the-job training to enhance their career progress within the company. This is influenced by the fact that the highly specialised skills and technical knowledge required is not acquired within a short period of time. Given that it is through on-the-job training that “marine science employees” develop their relatively higher attachment to their occupation (m = 6.00), which reflects their higher satisfaction to their jobs (m = 6.12) compared to “other theme park employees” (m = 5.90; m = 5.53, respectively), one of the major reasons for the lower impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction of “marine science employees” might relate to training on customer service issues.

Even though “other theme park employees” appear to have higher role ambiguity regarding customers than “marine science employees”, customer ambiguity may not be a critical factor influencing the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction for this group. Their positive perceptions about training and development in providing them with a variety of skills and giving them a competitive edge appear to be more relevant in influencing their satisfaction with their jobs than a perceived lack of appropriate training on customer service about animals. In relation to “marine science employees”, the findings have demonstrated that some of them do not enjoy customer service, particularly because some of these employees have difficulty in the interpersonal and service aspects of face-to-face contact with customers. Additionally, “marine science employees” generally are not specifically trained about customer service related to hospitality issues, which negatively affects their role ambiguity regarding customers. Because they need to provide quality customer service (it is part
of their jobs), despite their self-perceived limitations, role ambiguity regarding customers appears to be more relevant in influencing job satisfaction for “marine science employees” compared with “other theme park employees”.

The findings indicate that ambiguity regarding customer service does moderate the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction for “marine science employees”. While the direct impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction was 28 per cent, when this impact is moderated by ambiguity regarding customers the results are significantly higher (36%). This result also support the findings demonstrating that the ambiguity regarding customers is higher for “other theme park employees” compared to “marine science employees”. The role played by employee ambiguity regarding customers as a moderator significantly enhanced the impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction for “marine science employees” particularly because the level of role ambiguity regarding customers for those employees is not very high.

In relation to “marine science employees”, the findings suggest that they have a reasonable level of role clarity in relation to answering questions about animals. The major issue for them is their weakness in communication and interpersonal skills in relation to customers. However, because they enjoy passing on their technical knowledge and because of their ‘passion’ for the animals, despite this self-perceived weakness, their level of ambiguity is relatively less than for “other theme park employees”. Most “other theme park employees” possess people and customer skills at levels that ensure role clarity in relation to customers. However, because animals are the main attractions of aquatic theme parks, most of the questions from customers
are related to animals. The lack of training about animals for “other theme park employees” may be a significant influence on their level of ambiguity regarding customers because they are uncertain about how to answer questions about the animals.

Given this critical role of ‘ambiguity regarding customers’ as a moderator, particularly for “marine science employees”, it is notable that there is minimal research examining the relationship between training and development practices and either or both job satisfaction and employee performance within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. However, a relationship between training and development practices and role ambiguity regarding customers is established in this study, which also has a direct impact to the effectiveness of the communication processes. This link, in turn, influences not only job satisfaction but also employee performance.

Several previous studies have indirectly provided some support for the findings of the present study about the linkage between training-communication and customer ambiguity. A common theme in relevant research is the consistent negative relationship between role ambiguity and job outcomes such as job satisfaction and employee performance (Hartline & Ferrel 1996; Jackson & Schuler 1986; Johlke & Duhan 2000). For instance, empirical evidence has demonstrated the negative impact of employee role ambiguity on job satisfaction (Singh, 1993). Moreover, employees’ perceptions about role ambiguity are dependent on the quality of communication processes (Johlke & Duhan, 2000). The findings from this thesis identified the link between training and development practices and ambiguity regarding customers in
influencing job satisfaction. The discussion below will provide more insight about this linkage in exploring the relationship between communications processes, employee role ambiguity regarding customers, and job satisfaction.

7.4.2 Communication processes

The findings suggest a significant relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction for aquatic theme park employees, with ‘two-way communication flow’ being a significant predictor. These results are supported by previous studies that have established a link between communication processes and job satisfaction (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2004; Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000). However, while training and development practices significantly influenced job satisfaction for “other theme park employees” compared to “marine science employees”, communication processes did not influence job satisfaction for the former group of employees.

The analysis from this thesis suggests that the impact of communication practices on job satisfaction was significant for “marine science employees” only, specifically with ‘informal communication mode’ and ‘two-way communication flow’ being significant predictors. This result suggests that informal communication mode and two-way communication flow not only reinforce the commitment of “marine science employees” to their occupation (as discussed above) but also enhance their satisfaction with their jobs. This supports the proposition that the high attachment of “marine science employees” to their occupation (work with animals) is reflected in their high satisfaction with their jobs and that both occupational commitment and job satisfaction are influenced by effective communication.
In contrast to training and development practices, employee ambiguity regarding customers does moderate the relationship between communication processes and job satisfaction for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. Therefore, role ambiguity regarding customers is a significant factor influencing the impact of communication processes on job satisfaction for all employees. This impact was more significant for “marine science employees” than for “other theme park employees”. Given that informal two-way communication is a major communication channel for “marine science employees” (as discussed above), this suggests that for “marine science employees”, two-way communication is vital in terms of reducing ambiguity regarding customers and increasing job satisfaction. Previous research has specifically suggested that bidirectional (two-way) communication was negatively related to ambiguity regarding customers (Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke et al. 2000). However, as for training and development practices, there is no specific research examining the moderating impact of ambiguity regarding customers on the relationship between communication practices and job satisfaction within the Australian aquatic theme park segment.

7.5 Employee Performance

This section examines the interaction between organisational practices (training and communication) and ambiguity regarding customers in the prediction of employee performance.

7.5.1 Training and development practices

An unexpected aspect of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data relates to the lack of direct impact of both training and development practices and
communications processes on performance levels for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”. The argument that the factors that affect job satisfaction also affect employee performance (Goris et al. 2000; Petty et al. 1984) is not supported in the present study, at least not in terms of a direct evidential relationship.

Past research suggests that positive perceptions (based on experiences) about HRM practices, such as training and development, are likely not only to develop employees by improving their skills and knowledge but also to improve job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Gould-Williams 2004; Lam & Zhang 2003) and in turn enhance individual performance in terms of providing high quality service (Burke & Day 1986; Zerbe, Dobin & Harel 1998). In this present study, positive perceptions about training and development practices are a relevant factor in strengthening affective commitment to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers, and also job satisfaction. However, the overall positive perceptions about training and development practices did not motivate employees to perform above organisation expectations (as identified in the quantitative/qualitative study), for either “marine science employees” or “other theme park employees”.

A major issue affecting the impact of training and development practices on employee performance is the identified ‘gap’ regarding customer service mentioned above. This ‘gap’ suggests that the effectiveness of training and development practices on enhancing customer service is quite limited. In considering this finding, it should be remembered that while performance issues for “other theme park employees” is primarily customer service related, performance issues for “marine science
employees” are primarily related to the care for and training of the animals and only incidentally related to customer service. The customer service ‘gap’ does not arise from the relationship between the employees and the animals but from the tension between job productivity and from acknowledged customer service deficits in their customer service focus and skills for many “marine science employees”.

In a parallel way to the analysis of job satisfaction, customer ambiguity appears to moderate the affect of training and development practices on employee performance, particularly for “marine science employees”. However, similarly to the relationship between training and job satisfaction discussed above, there is no extensive research examining the moderating impact of ambiguity regarding customers on the relationship between training and employee performance within the Australian aquatic theme park segment. The current study has established a link between training effectiveness and ambiguity regarding customers in influencing employee performance. The discussion below will explore another such linkage in terms of the relationship between communication processes and employee performance within the Australian aquatic theme parks studied.

7.5.2 Communication processes

Extensive research has reported a positive relationship between organisational communication practices and employee performance (Clampitt & Downs 1993; London et al. 1999; Rodwell et al. 1998). However, employee performance in the present study was not directly affected by organisational communication processes. The impact of organisational communication processes on employee performance, as shown by the quantitative data, was moderated by employee ambiguity regarding
customers. However, the analysis revealed that this impact was statistically significant for “marine science employees” but not for “other theme park employees”.

A study conducted by Boorom et al. (1998) suggests a significant positive relationship between employee communication and sales performance. This study also suggests that effective organisational communication may have a flow-on effect for communication with customers by salespeople.

In the current study, however, the qualitative findings demonstrate that customer service is a relevant issue negatively affecting the performance level of marine park employees, particularly “marine science employees”. Communication for “marine science employees”, as shown by the qualitative analysis, is very effective in terms of animal husbandry, as part of training and operation requirements. However, it appears to be relatively ineffective in reducing ambiguity regarding customer service, particularly in high season where the combination of customer demands and deficits in customer service skills heightens ambiguity regarding customers.

On the other hand, communication for “other theme park employees” are outside the mainstream communication processes in the aquatic theme parks studied, which relate primarily to animal husbandry. This is supported by the fact that communication processes did not have a statistically significant impact on commitment to the occupation, commitment to customers, job satisfaction and employee performance for this group of employees, as shown by the quantitative data. Another major issue is the apparent lack of impact of communication processes on reducing ambiguity regarding customers, which is focused on the inability of “other theme park employees” to respond to basic questions about animal husbandry. This is supported
by the data demonstrating that ambiguity regarding customer does not moderate the impact of communication processes on employee performance for this group of employees. The relatively high level of performance of “other theme park employees” (m = 5.69) compared with “marine science employees” (m = 5.17) supports the insight that communication for “other theme park employees” within the aquatic theme parks studied is outside the mainstream. The performance of “other theme park employees” appears to be related to the social environment and work relationships more so than organisational communication processes.

As for training and development practices, there is minimal research examining the moderating impact of employee ambiguity regarding customers on the relationship between communication processes and employee performance. However, previous studies provide indirect support for the findings of this study about the linkage between communication and employee ambiguity regarding customers (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2003; Johlke & Duhan 2000; Johlke & Duhan 2001). A relationship between training and development practices and role ambiguity regarding customers is established in this study, which also has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the communication processes. This link, in turn, influences not only job satisfaction but also employee performance.

The present results uniformly suggest that the impact of both training and development practices and communication processes on job satisfaction and employee performance are enhanced when there is a low level of ambiguity regarding customers. This leads to the proposition that both job satisfaction and employee performance are likely to be enhanced by customer service training and structured communication.
Discussion – Chapter 7

processes specifically tailored for “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”.

7.6 Comparison of employees groups

A major pattern within the findings of this study relates to the significant differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” in terms of their perceptions regarding organisational practices (training and development and communication) and how these perceptions influenced work-related outcomes examined in this study (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance). The quantitative analysis indicates that the only variables that showed some level of differentiation between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” were ‘informal communication mode’ and ‘job satisfaction’. The qualitative analysis, on the other hand, provides significant insights on the differences between these two groups of employees, suggesting that their perceptions about organisational practices (training and development and communication) are based on somewhat different values, beliefs and behaviours which are reflected in the meanings that they attach to their work. These insights also indicate that theme park employees’ perceptions about such organisational practices as training and communication influence not only their satisfaction with their jobs but also their commitment and performance levels.

The following discussion will provide an extended analysis of the importance of working for “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” and the differences between these two groups of employees, based on the culture and subculture of the workplace. The discussion addresses the analysis of the working
meanings for these two groups of employees, based on the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework, followed by an analysis of the cultural influences on behaviours and relationships in the work environment.

7.6.1 The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework

The discussion in this section covers the analysis of four work domains for the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework, including work centrality, importance of work goals, valued work outcomes and work-role identification. Following this, the influence of the organisational aquatic theme park culture on the meanings that employees attach to their work is examined.

7.6.1.1 Work Centrality

The quantitative findings indicate that both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” are very satisfied with their jobs, which suggests that ‘working’ plays a significant role in their lives. Findings reported by Lundberg and Peterson (1994) demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between work centrality and both intrinsic job satisfaction and individual effectiveness (e.g. individual performance). However, the findings from this thesis suggest that work centrality is higher for “marine science employees” compared with “other theme park employees’. The high work centrality for “marine science employees” lies primarily in the attachment to the animals, reinforced by the intensive and prolonged on-the-job training. The findings from the qualitative data suggest that on-the-job training is a major mechanism that establishes work values and meanings for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. However, there is a significant
difference in the way they related to on-the-job training and therefore in their appropriation of their work meanings by this mechanism.

The opportunity for skills development through work experience and on-the-job training seems to be one of the motivating factors for these two groups of employees in influencing their satisfaction with their jobs. This suggests that positive perceptions about on-the-job training influenced work meanings and in turn influenced the job satisfaction for both groups of employees. This provides indirect support for the qualitative research, linking job satisfaction and values attached to working (Probert and MacDonald, 1996). This analysis is also supported by previous research linking training and high work centrality in Japan (Misumi & Yamori, 1991). However, there are significant differences in motivation factors between these two groups of employees in relation to the way on-the-job training is perceived.

The findings from the qualitative data suggest that “marine science employees” use on-the-job training for their career progress within the company to increase their autonomy, and also to acquire job (or occupational) status. In other words, on-the-job training provides “marine science employees” with the technical skills and specialised knowledge required by the job, which in turn, motivates and prepares them for a high status job such as animal trainer. Given that becoming an animal trainer (e.g. dolphin trainer) requires an extensive period of training, a high level of motivation, and long-term commitment, it would not be surprising to find very high work centrality among “marine science employees”, especially the animal trainers.
On the other hand, the findings suggest that some “other theme park employees” use the skills developed through on-the-job training to acquire a competitive edge and facilitate job opportunities outside the company. Although the findings suggest that “other theme park employees” also show a significant level of commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers, the high turnover rate that is common for many such employees appears to suggest that they are not necessarily committed to their jobs. For “other theme park employees”, commitment to work may involve more selective choices compared to “marine science employees”. For example, findings indicate that many of “other theme park employees” clearly give more emphasis to their work-life balance while others have other work, family and personal commitments.

Based on the results and this discussion, it appears that a significant number of “other theme park employees”, whilst enjoying their jobs, nevertheless view their work as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. That is to say, such employees perceive their work as the means to sustain their personal lives in a way that enable them to manage personal and family responsibilities (e.g. single mothers are a significant group with these characteristics). Another group of “other theme park employees” are the seasonal/casual workers who enjoy their work, are committed in terms of organisation, occupation and customers, but view their occupations as a stepping-stone towards their ‘real’ careers which often has nothing to do with aquatic theme parks. Their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance is high but the attitudes to the work they do within aquatic theme park appears to suggest that it is not highly central to the lives of many “other theme park employees”.

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
A further indication of high work centrality for “marine science employees” is found in terms of commitment and involvement, which are the main properties of work centrality (MOWIRT, 1987). High commitment to, and involvement with the animals indicates strong positive feelings (work meanings) about the centrality of work for marine science employees’ lives. Their ‘passion’ for their jobs indicates that working with animals is central to their identity. Findings indicate that many of them work for free, just to have the opportunity to work with animals. They are willing to face the challenges and the negative aspects (scrubbing, cleaning, fish smell, inconvenient hours, etc) involved in their work. While they place value on their family and work-life balance, their work-life balance appears to be strongly tilted towards the animals. The findings support the notion that these employees place the animals first and then try to satisfy other things in their lives. In summary, the strong motivation, long-term commitment and passion for the animals (work) provide strong evidence of the higher work centrality for “marine science employees” than for “other theme park employees”.

7.6.1.2 Importance of Work Goals

A number of work goals are relevant for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” including opportunities to learn new things, a lot of variety, good interpersonal relations, financial rewards (pay) and interesting work. It was demonstrated in the quantitative analysis in this study that those employees’ positive perceptions of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) had a direct influence on commitment and job satisfaction and an indirect influence on employee performance. This suggests that the meanings that those employees attach to these work roles influenced their perceptions of these organisational practices and in turn
influenced these work-related outcomes. This is partially supported by findings from a research study suggesting a significant contribution of the ‘expressive’ work goals (interesting work, autonomy, personal involvement) and the ‘learning’ goals (opportunity to learn new things) in explaining intrinsic job satisfaction and individual effectiveness (e.g. individual performance) (Lundberg & Peterson, 1994). However, a study conducted by Westwood & Leung (1996) demonstrated that the values and attitudes attached to work outcomes are somewhat different for different types of employees.

Westwood and Leung found that while Chinese graduates (highly educated) rated ‘opportunity to learn new things’ as the most important work outcome, the general working Chinese population placed high importance on financial rewards (income). Findings that emerged from the qualitative data in the present study also indicate that there are significant differences regarding how these work goals mentioned above motivate “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” in the work domain. For instance, while ‘variety’ (through the multi-skilling program) and ‘opportunity to learn new things’ are particularly relevant for “marine science employees” for their career progress, many “other theme park employees” use these work goals primarily for gain competitive advantage in the market place.

In relation to ‘good interpersonal relations’, the importance and meanings (values) that these two groups of employees attach to their interpersonal contacts (e.g. colleagues, supervisors/managers and mentors) are also somewhat different. For “marine science employees” their interpersonal contacts are relevant not only for interactions with colleagues but also for networking and for building knowledge,
skills and confidence. As mentioned previously, it is through this informal communication process, through two-way communication, that “marine science employees” reinforce their commitment, particularly in relation to their occupation (animals). Although ‘interpersonal relations’ is also relevant for “other theme park employees” regarding workplace interactions, networking and building knowledge, the high turnover rate among many of such employees suggest that they do not stay long enough in the company to take advantage of their interpersonal relations for building knowledge, for example and particularly for influencing work-related outcomes.

Given that both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” are very satisfied with their jobs, work appears to be ‘interesting’ for these two groups of employees. However, a number of factors suggest that the meanings that those employees attach to this work goal of ‘interesting work’ are somewhat different. First, while “other theme park employees” are satisfied with their jobs they also place a great emphasis on ‘convenient work hours’ and probably ‘financial rewards (pay)’.

This was addressed in the qualitative analysis by a number of factors. First, the impression is that many “other theme park employees” are not fully committed to their particular jobs because of the low centrality of work in their lives. Findings suggest that many of them are not committed to a long-term job for a regular number of hours; they just want work during hours that are convenient for their personal needs (e.g. single mothers prefer to work between 10:00am and 3:00pm). Other such employees clearly emphasise that they just want to work for several months or a short time, which management accepts as planned turnover. Additionally, many “other theme park employees” regard employment on a temporary/casual basis, as a means
of generating cash rather than as a career, a practice which is supported by the relatively high turnover rate among such employees.

The emphasis on these work goals (convenience hour work and pay) is a further indication of the low work centrality for “other theme park employees”. This is partially supported by past research suggesting that low centrality workers scored high on work values including ‘having time for personal needs’ and ‘the method of wage payment’ (Dublin et al., 1975). These characteristics of “other theme park employees” are somewhat similar to the characteristics of part-time workers compared to full-time workers in research reviewed by Roberts and Glick (1980). In this review, Roberts and Glick (1980) suggest that part-time workers place greater emphasis on interpersonal relations, comfort, and financial incentives (pay) compared to full-time workers.

A study conducted by Elizur (1996) demonstrated a positive relationship between ‘pay’ and organisational commitment. However, findings from other studies suggest that intrinsic work values such as ‘interesting work’ appears to be more strongly related to organisational commitment than extrinsic work values such as ‘pay’ (Kidron 1978; Putti et al. 1989). Certainly, while financial reward (pay) is important for “marine science employees”, their intrinsic satisfaction from work depends significantly on the nature of the job they do. The findings clearly suggest that their high commitment and ‘passion’ for the animals is self-rewarding, irrespective to a certain degree, of financial reward because most of them start working in the theme parks as volunteer. Second, the time spent in the job appears to be related to the most ‘convenient’ time to work with the animals rather than what particularly would suit
employees. Findings suggest that, for most “marine science employees”, animals are treated as if they are part of their family. For instance, if one of the animals dies, many “marine science employees”, particularly animal trainers, take it so personally that the company engages grief counsellors for them.

However, the ‘autonomy’ that results from the work with animals appears to be the over-riding work goal that impacts on motivation differentials between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. The qualitative data does not provide clear evidence of the degree of importance of ‘autonomy’ in motivating work for “other theme park employees”. However, given the high turnover rate, low work centrality, and the type of work done by “other theme park employees”, it appears to suggest that ‘autonomy’ has little importance for their motivation to work.

In contrast, the findings suggest that the specialised knowledge and professional expertise held by many “marine science employees”, particularly senior marine science staff, enables them to exercise a significant degree of autonomy in carrying out their tasks in working with animals. This ‘autonomy’ enables such employees to make their own decisions on technical aspects of their jobs without a great deal of external reference, even from the hierarchy of their organisations. Therefore, ‘autonomy’, as indicated by the qualitative data, is a relevant factor affecting not only motivation but also commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Most importantly, the pride and motivation that result from the importance given to ‘autonomy’ influences the perception of professionalism for “marine science employees”, particularly for those who do not have degrees but perceive themselves as ‘professionals’ in their area of expertise. Further information on the importance of
‘autonomy’ for “marine science employees” is provided in section 7.7 below in the discussion of professionalism issues.

7.6.1.3 Valued Work-Outcomes

The discussion above addresses the relative importance of some working outcomes for “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” including ‘income’, ‘interpersonal contact’ and ‘the intrinsic function of working’ (work being basically interesting and satisfying). The discussion in this section focuses primarily on ‘status’ which is an example of work outcome that clearly differentiates “marine science employees” from “other theme park employees”. As for autonomy, the ‘status’ that results from the work with animals appears to be the most relevant working outcome for “marine science employees”. The complexity of their work requirement involving highly technical skills, a great deal of specialised knowledge and intensive training that cannot be acquired within a short period of time, is the base on which the importance of ‘status’ is allocated. In contrast, the role of ‘status’ for “other theme park employees” appears to be an insignificant factor influencing their attitudes and motivation, and in turn, their commitment, satisfaction and performance levels.

On the other hand, the findings that emerged from the qualitative data suggest that ‘status’, rather than salary, is one of the primary factors influencing the motivation of “marine science employees”, particularly for those who aspire and strive for a career as an animal trainer (e.g. dolphin trainer) because of the perception that this career has a high status role. This suggests that occupation is a criteria on which ‘status’ is allocated and that ‘status’ is demonstrated by the role played by animal trainers as
mentors and its relevant to the values held by the trainees. It is therefore through ‘occupation or job status’ and ‘passion’ for the animals (influenced by the mentor) that such employees increase their motivation and develop the high attachment to their occupation demonstrated in this study. This suggests a linkage between the importance of working outcomes, particularly ‘status’, on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. This in turn is supported by findings from a qualitative research study suggesting that among those who were satisfied with their jobs, many strongly identified with the status of their positions (Probert & MacDonald, 1996).

7.6.1.4 Work-role Identification

Both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” have occupational, relational and service roles attached to their specific jobs. However, the degree of work-role identification provides a differentiation between these two groups of employees. The data suggests that ‘occupational roles’ for “marine science employees” are more significant in that they relate to job status/work centrality. For example, the role of animal trainer is primarily occupationally related, and constitutes the major influence on sense of identity. The ‘relational’ aspect of the role for such employees is found in the mentoring/on-the-job training aspect of their development, first as trainees and thereafter, as mentors themselves, with the strong and close relationships between trainees and mentor. The results of the study also demonstrate that the ‘service role’ for “marine science employees” is a critical factor influencing satisfaction and performance. The service role for many such employees is a result of their high attachment to their occupation in terms of sharing their knowledge with customers. It can therefore be concluded that work-role identification for “marine
science employees” is very strong in all three dimensions, particularly in relation to the occupation role.

The importance of occupation role (linked to occupation status) for “marine science employees” emerges clearly from the findings of this study. The discussion above suggests that “marine science employees” have high work centrality, which confirms that the work they do is central to their motivation, achievement and particularly to their sense of identity. The sense of identity derived from their work is therefore strongly related to the occupational status associated with the role. A supportive research study by Probert and MacDonald (1996) demonstrates that the meanings that many participants (interviewees) attached to the work they did are considered as a critical factor in influencing their sense of identity in the form of strong occupational identity associated with their occupational role.

While “marine science employees” place high emphasis on the occupation role, the findings that emerged from the qualitative data suggest that “other theme park employees” place more emphasis on relational and service roles rather than on occupational roles. The work such employees do in providing service to customers is an important factor influencing their sense of identity and therefore their identification with the service role. The importance of the relational role for “other theme park employees” is found in their capacity to assist customers, which is an important positive feature of their relational role. The rapport they form with the customer often involves intense short term relationships, often enough to be a significant element in their work experience.
Although “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” are both committed to their occupation, the relatively low work centrality for many “other theme park employees’ appears to suggest that the work they do is not highly significant to their sense of identity. It should be noted, in this regard, that, although the findings indicate that they are satisfied with their jobs, these employees are not willing to work for free, they do not want a long-term commitment; their turnover rate is relatively high and some clearly emphasise that they just want work for a couple of months. They enjoy the work because of the work environment and the variety of stimuli, but many do not want that type of work for a career. Because the work they do within aquatic theme parks does not play a central role in the lives for many such employees, and because of their other non-work commitments (family, study, personal needs, work-life balance, etc), they tend to evaluate themselves primarily in terms of non-work rather than work roles. Their identity is not strongly related to their occupation. However, it is certainly influenced by the relational and service aspects of their work role.

Although this issue related to work-role identification seems to be of fundamental importance in understanding work meanings within aquatic theme parks studied, there is a lack of research examining this work domain using the Meaning of the Working Theoretical Framework. Most of the studies about the Meaning of the Working Theoretical Framework have focused on the three major work domains including ‘work centrality’, ‘valued work outcomes’ and ‘societal norms about working’. Hence, it would be a valuable contribution to the Meaning of the Working Theoretical Framework if more extensive studies were to be undertaken on the issues of work-role identification.
7.6.1.5 Summary

The discussion above clearly demonstrates that the meanings that “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” attach to their work involve some level of differentiation in terms of their relatively different perceptions about organisational practices (e.g. training and development). The discussion also demonstrates that the different perceptions about these organisational practices have significant implications for the influence of these perceptions on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

In summary, “marine science employees” place greater emphasis on the opportunity to learn new things, a lot of variety, good interpersonal relations and interesting work, and less emphasis on convenient work hours and financial rewards. High work centrality, autonomy and status are central factors influencing their sense of identity. This sense of identity is strongly related to the occupational status associated with the role, which provides some explanation for the higher emphasis on occupational roles compared to relational and service roles.

“Other theme park employees” also emphasise the opportunity to learn new things, a lot of variety and good interpersonal relations. However, although they are satisfied with their jobs, work is not central to the lives of many such employees, particularly because they place significant emphasis on convenient work hours and financial rewards. Indeed, many such employees are most concerned about maintaining the relationship of work-life balance and their work with other aspects of life (e.g. family, study, personal needs, etc). Additionally, autonomy and status appears to have little
importance in their motivation to work and to their occupational roles, given that they place more emphasis on relational and service roles rather than occupational roles.

The analysis and discussion of the meaning of working domains is certainly useful in identifying characteristics of the attitudes and behaviours of “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”. However, the significance of this analysis is enlarged when it is placed in the context of the organisational culture with its values, beliefs and assumptions shaping attitudes and behaviours of employees. In fact, the organisational culture has a major influence on the particular subcultures that characterise the attitudes and behaviours of the employee groups studied. The discussion below provides an analysis of the interaction between the dominant organisational aquatic theme park culture and the subculture of these two groups of employees.

7.6.2 Cultural Influence

The analysis of the qualitative data provides insights into some aspects of the corporate culture of the aquatic theme park companies studied. The aquatic theme park culture is characterised by three aspects, including ‘business’, ‘entertainment and fun’, and ‘ecological-education and environmental responsibility, as shown in the observations and commentary of research participants. The ‘business’ aspect of the organisational culture is characterised primarily by a sense of being profitable and because there is a need to be profitable, the management of the business requires organisational practices that lead to a sustainable business. The ‘entertainment and fun’ aspect is critical, in that it provides the experiential appeal for customers, who are the ‘life blood’ of the business. The ‘ecological-education and environmentally
responsible’ aspect appeals to understanding the animals in the environment setting and therefore is appealing to ecological curiosity and/or sense of responsibility. The ‘ecological-educational and environmental responsible’ aspect is increasingly socially accepted and indeed provides a sense of social responsibility that appeals to a community which is becoming more aware of some of the key issues involved.

All three aspects of the organisational culture (‘business’, ‘entertainment and fun’, and ‘ecological-education and environmental responsibility’) are held in tension, and when one aspect begins to dominate, the organisation may well suffer. These three aspects of the organisational culture are reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of the specific subcultures within the aquatic theme park segment. In the first place, employees undertaking marine science activities tend to embrace the ecological-educational and environmentally responsibility aspect of the theme park culture, reflecting their ‘passion’ for the animals. The food, beverage and retail staff, likewise with a variety of occupations within the theme parks, tend to identify with the entertainment and fun aspect of the theme park experience, where customers enjoy their exposure to the animals and the entertainment/novelty and food, to say nothing of souvenirs. The managers of both “marine science employees” and the food, beverage and retail staff of “other theme park employees”, together with the administrative staff of theme parks and general management have a central concern for the health of the business. They seek to maintain a business like aspect for the aquatic theme park organisational culture.

This analysis demonstrates that there are three distinct subcultures within the dominant culture of aquatic theme parks studied including, ‘marine science

287

Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks
subculture’, ‘entertainment/fun support subculture’ and ‘administrative subculture’. As might be expected, these identified subcultures fit the construct of subcultures developed by Hofstede (1998) consisting of ‘professional’, ‘administrative’ and ‘customer interface’ subcultures. There is insufficient data in the present study to provide a specific link between the general organisational culture and the administrative subculture. Therefore, the following discussion will be related to ‘marine science employees’ subculture and ‘other theme park employees’ subculture, not including administrative staff.

The following discussion provides an analysis of the dynamics of behaviours and relationships of “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the work environment overriding the organisational culture. Each of these subcultures is characterised by different work identities, entailing different attitudes and behaviours. The subcultures differ primarily in terms of the different perceptions of organisational practices (training and communication) with a significant impact on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and performance). It is clearly the case that “marine science employees” are distinguished from ‘other theme park employees’ in terms of the different work identities of these groups, including their expectations and attitudes about work. This distinction is reported below.

7.6.2.1 ‘Marine science employees’ subculture

This group consists of highly skilled people, some with degrees, some with tertiary qualifications and some with school (Y10) and higher school (Y12) certificates only. Despite these differences in education levels, the attitudes, behaviours and values of these employees are quite similar, particularly because the subculture is built on the
principle of high attachment to the animals. The values and meanings attached to their ‘passion’ for the animals reinforce marine science employees’ commitment to their occupation which in turn influences their commitment to the organisation and customers. Commitment to the organisation and customers suggests that there is basic harmony between their values and the values of the organisational culture in respect to the ecological-educational and environmentally responsible aspect. The findings indicate that it is through on-the-job training and the underlying communication processes involved, that “marine science employees” reinforce their commitment to the occupation.

This occupational commitment influences not only the commitment to the organisation and customers and but also influences their level of satisfaction and performance. Thus, the organisational values associated with on-the-job training and communication play a significant role in influencing attitudes and behaviours of “marine science employees”. This highlights the role of organisational culture through HRM practices (training and communication) in influencing work meanings and in turn, work related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and performance). This analysis provides support for the Meaning of Working model developed by Westwood and Lok (2003) and adapted to this study.

Attachment to the organisation suggests that the company’s success matters for “marine science employees”, particularly because ‘success’ for those employees means that the animals are cared for. Their commitment to the animals comes first, and is strongly based on moral and ecological responsibility for the environment and the wellbeing of the animals. This attachment to the animals extends beyond the
personal or business interests for many “marine science employees”, and appears to relegate to second place other issues, such as income. The main desire for “marine science employees” is to maintain the employment relationship as a channel for loyalty and commitment to the animals. This is exemplified by the fact that “marine science employees” tend to begin their career in low paying menial jobs, or as volunteers, who are not paid at all.

The discussion above suggests that it is through their high attachment to and ‘passion’ for the animals (commitment to the occupation) that “marine science employees” make sense of organisational practices. So their particular commitment to the occupation is an important milieu within which training (on-the-job training) and communication at work are situated.

### 7.6.2.2 ‘Other theme park employees’ subculture

Employees of this subculture work in areas such as retail, food and beverage, and reception. What they have in common is the constant face-to-face contact with customers. This is a relationship-based subculture. Employees in this subculture often enjoy the relationship with customers and they enjoy the relationship with one another. They also enjoy having fun in the work environment. Research findings of this study demonstrate that they are satisfied with their jobs, perform well and demonstrate significant levels of commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers. However, the findings also suggest that jobs that they perform are not central to their lives, given the relatively high turnover rate and their emphasis on work-life balance and other work commitments (e.g. family, study, personal needs).
Within this subculture there are three distinct subgroups, each one characterised by somewhat different attitudes, behaviours and values.

One group consists of single parents who are satisfied with their jobs, primarily because the job meets their needs in terms of income and convenient work hours. The findings from the qualitative data suggest that single parents have a higher commitment level than other employees within the subculture, and this is evidenced by a lower turnover rate. However, the meanings and values they attach to their work suggest that the commitment they give to their particular jobs is tempered by low work centrality, given the high emphasis they place on their family and their personal needs. For example, the qualitative data demonstrates their preference for working during times that are convenient for them, in order to balance work with their personal needs and family needs such as school hours. They probably relate well to the entertainment and fun aspect of the organisational culture but they fundamentally want a job; they want income to support their personal/family life.

Another group consists of would-be marine science professionals (some with degrees) who are waiting for an opportunity to work within the marine science area. Some of them are doing volunteer work or work experience and some are doing low paid, menial jobs. They relate to the ‘ecological-education and environmentally responsible’ aspect of the business. Their high attachment to the animals entails that they are willing to accept this interim situation in order to have a future opportunity to work with the animals. They are probably not highly satisfied with the work they do but they are certainly highly motivated and determined to accept the challenge of doing unpaid jobs and low menial paid jobs. The work values and meanings attached
A further (large) group is composed mainly of students (university, high school and tertiary level) who primarily work as casuals during vacations. Their occupational aspirations are not related to aquatic theme parks because findings suggest that they often do not want a career within an aquatic theme park. Their work preference for vacations is not a problem to the management because it is commonly accepted as planned turnover. Consequently their employment is associated with relatively high turnover and significant emphasis on income and convenient hours. Working is definitely not central in their lives, but the findings demonstrate that they enjoy their work and it may be assumed that they also want fun because they often relate to the entertainment/fun aspect of the business.

The qualitative data does not provide enough information about the three subgroups within the “other theme park employees” subculture. This is not just because of the difference in sample size between “marine science employees” (N = 93) and “other theme park employees” (N = 27) but particularly because the latter subculture is quite complex. A wide diversity in attitudes and behaviours between each subgroup demonstrates a distinct set of values, needs and work centrality. However, the data is sufficient to provide a comparison between this subculture in general and the “marine science employees” subculture. This comparison was extremely useful in understanding the values, attitudes and behaviours of each subculture and provided a framework within which “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” perceive organisational practices.
As stated above, this analysis suggests that the “other theme park employees” subculture is quite complex, given the wide diversity of attitudes and behaviours within each subgroup with a distinct set of values, needs and work centrality. Further research is required to explore in detail the characteristics of these subgroups. The scope of this research, however, is primarily focused on “marine science employees” because these employees share a common subculture within the general over-arching culture of aquatic theme parks. Therefore, the analysis in the section 7.7 below is exclusively related to “marine science employees” and their level of professionalism.

In summary, employees’ perceptions about their organisation’s practices in this study are influenced by their own work identities, the type of occupation, the nature of work, and the type of skills. The differences lead to the development of unique subcultures, differentiated by distinct clusters of shared values, needs and meaning about work. The interaction of these two subcultures provides the basis of the overall culture of the organisation. So an understanding of the interactions of the dominant culture and subcultures was essential to understanding the dynamics of the behaviours and relationships of “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the aquatic theme park environment. The findings suggest that employees’ perceptions about the factors that shape the corporate culture such as organisational practices (training and communication) are relevant factors in influencing commitment, job satisfaction and indirectly, employee performance. The following analysis will explore the issues relating to professionalism for marine science employees, with their own distinct subculture.
7.7 Professionalism

A major issue in this discussion is in regard to whether or not employees undertaking marine science activities within Australian aquatic theme parks can be considered as professionals. This is a relevant issue, given that most senior marine science employees in the Australian aquatic theme parks do not have degrees. Most of these employees without degrees possess highly developed skills and specialised knowledge. Most of them are animal trainers who not only coach and pass knowledge on to trainees, including those who do have degrees or are current students, but also influence their sense of work meanings and values through their sense of autonomy and ‘status’ (job and occupational). The discussion above demonstrates clearly that marine science employees, particularly those senior people who do not have degrees, have some of the particular characteristics of professionals (e.g. sense of autonomy and self-regulation). The qualitative and quantitative data also demonstrates that they do perceive themselves as professionals and this is exemplified by the fact that these perceptions (e.g. autonomy and self-regulation) significantly influence their levels of commitment, job satisfaction and performance. The question now arises as to whether or not their perception of being professional is congruent with the literature on professionalism (‘public view’), particularly in relation to the Anglo-American model of professionalism. The discussion below provides significant insights into concepts of ‘professionalism’ and this application to employees undertaking marine science activities within Australian aquatic theme parks.
7.7.1 Characteristics of professionals

The findings and the discussion above demonstrates that employees undertaking marine science activities within aquatic theme parks exhibit a number of characteristics possessed by ‘professionals’. For example, the findings clearly indicate that most employees undertaking marine science activities are highly attached to their occupations, have high work centrality and possess highly developed skills and specialised knowledge. This supports the definitional structure that professionals possess particular abilities (knowledge and skills) and place a special significance on the nature of their work particularly because work for them has an inherent value and significance and attracts a high level of commitment by its very nature (Emmert & Taher 1992; Friedson 1994; Van Maanen & Barley 1984).

There is evidence that such employees place great emphasis on the opportunity to learn new things, a lot of variety, good interpersonal relations and interesting work, and less emphasis on convenient work hours and financial rewards. This is strongly supported by the fact that work, for professionals, is not just a matter of doing a job or merely receiving the wage, because the work they do is usually interesting, creative and self-rewarding (Brien 1998; Osinsky & Mueller 2004). The findings in the present study demonstrate clearly that employees undertaking marine science activities within aquatic theme parks exercise a significant degree of autonomy in carrying out their tasks (particularly senior marine science staff and those who have high job status such as animal trainers). Their specialised knowledge and expertise enables them to exercise a significant degree of technical autonomy which allows them to set standards and have some control over their jobs. This in turn, has a significant and positive impact on their motivation, their sense of identity and their
underlying feeling of pride, with a consequent positive impact on the meanings and values attached to their work.

Indeed, the degree of autonomy enjoyed by many marine science employees, particularly senior people, is a significant factor enhancing their levels of commitment and in turn, their levels of job satisfaction and performance. This sense of autonomy exercised by those employees is considered one of the most important characteristics possessed by 'professionals' (Friedson, 1994). The findings of the current study demonstrate that the significant degree of autonomy in relation to the technical aspects of the jobs done by marine science employees significantly influence their perceptions of their own professionalism.

The sense of autonomy enjoyed by marine science employees also influences the power of those employees to self-regulate their work, within their specific work environment. The themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis demonstrate that many marine science employees possess a significant degree of self-regulation over their work, especially regarding training and care for animals. The findings also suggest that they not only believe in self-regulation but also they are able to set technical controls in their work with animals which is a significant factor influencing their performance and sense of professionalism. The self-regulation characteristic demonstrated by employees undertaking marine science activities within Australian aquatic theme parks is another characteristic associated with 'professionals' (Boyt, et al. 2001; Shafer et al. 2002).
Other characteristics associated with professionals include: ethical standards, training standards, and devotion to a full time occupation and serving society (Boyt et al. 2001; Ferlie et al. 1996; Moore 1970). The findings that emerged from the qualitative data suggest that marine science employees also possess these characteristics. First, all marine science employees need to adhere to a set of normative and behavioural standards ethics embodied in the practice of training and caring for animals (well-being and welfare of the animals). All three companies included in this study are members of WAZA (World Association of Zoos & Aquariums). As members, these companies need to ‘exercise the highest standards of animal welfare and to encourage these standards in others. Training staff to the highest level possible represents one method of ensuring this aim’ (WAZA 2006, p.1). WAZA has also maintained a Code of Ethics to which all members need to abide in order to maintain their membership.

Second, marine science employees are highly attached to their occupational roles, which is a significant factor influencing job status, work centrality and their sense of identity. Third, they do use their knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the community when they provide information about animals to customers and institutions such as school and universities and also when they exchange information/knowledge about animals through networking with other marine theme parks, as shown in the qualitative data.

The discussion above suggests that employees undertaking marine science activities within aquatic theme parks do possess some of the characteristics associated with being ‘professionals’. However, the findings also suggest that there are a number of factors (e.g. education level) that need to be considered in the discussion of the
professionalisation of marine science employees. The discussion below provides an analysis of these factors.

7.7.2 Factors limiting ‘professionalisation’

One of the basic characteristics of professionals is their specialised knowledge based on education and training of exceptional duration and within an academic environment (Ferlie et al. 1996; Greenwood 1957; Emmert & Taher 1992). Many marine science employees have acquired their high skills and specialised knowledge through extensive and prolonged on-the-job rather than academic training. The findings indicate that the majority of senior marine science staff do not have degrees and some do not have even tertiary qualifications. Because education is one of the central factors associated with professionalism, the lack of formal education of many senior marine science staff may be a critical negative factor impacting on their status as professionals. Instead, while these employees do not have ‘professional status’ derived from a degree, their professionalism is strongly associated with job and/or occupational status derived from the work they do. This occupational-related role is the main factor influencing their perception of their own professionalism. According to Boyt et al. (2001), while ‘professional status’ is inferred by the possession of a formal qualification, ‘professionalism’, on the other hand, is more difficult to identify. This inference of professionalism may, in such cases, be strongly related to job/occupational status. The limitation of formal qualifications (professional status) may not be as significant in determining professionalism as is job/occupational status.

The other significant factor that may limit professionalism for marine science employees lies in the fact that few employees are associated with professional bodies
and thus they are apparently not actively engaged in their professional communities. Although most senior marine science employees have a significant degree of autonomy to regulate some aspects of their work, they do not seem to work closely with professional institutions to provide more input to set standards in the industry. However, the few employees who are members of professional bodies do participate in decisions made by those bodies regarding standards of welfare and well-being of the animals within the theme parks. In addition, their companies are members of professional bodies which provide regulation for the industry, such as through codes of ethics. However, individuals do not need to be members of professional bodies to provide specific information about animals to schools, government institutions and even universities. They are the ‘professionals’ in their area of expertise and represent their companies and the ‘profession’ when they provide information to students and institutions about the welfare and well-being of the animals and ecological, environmental and animal husbandry issues. So it would seem that the limitations discussed above (e.g. lack of professional body membership) are by no means fatal to the claim of professionalism for marine science employees. The matter will be examined further in a discussion of the data regarding their own perceptions of professionalism.

7.7.3 Perception of professionalism

Despite the limitations discussed above, marine science employees do perceive that they are professionals and this perception is reinforced through the significant impact of autonomy and self-regulation on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Self-perceptions of their professionalism by marine science employees is filtered through their work experience, socialisation, status, autonomy, self-
regulation and specialised knowledge. Because professionalism is defined in terms of
the individuals’ attitudes and behaviours towards their professions (Boyt et al., 2001),
the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and the strong sense of identification about the
occupational role for marine science employees provides further support for the sense
of ‘professionalism’ among these employees.

However, this perception may not be congruent with the ‘public view’, including the
Anglo-American professional model (Evetts & Buchner-Jeziorska, 1997). According
to the Anglo-American model, professional associations commonly liaise with
universities and government, as advocates of the interests of their members,
participating in the control of the licensing, registration system (accreditation) and
practice management (Evetts & Buchner-Jeziorska, 1997). Some of the marine
science professional bodies, such as the International Marine Animal Trainers’
Association (IMATA) are becoming significant new players in the development of the
profession. IMATA is dedicated to advancing the profession (human care and
husbandry of marine animals) by fostering communication between the professionals
who serve marine animal science through training, public display, research, husbandry,
conservation and education (IMATA, 2006). The influence of bodies such as IMATA
may be a catalyst for changing perceptions about professionalism in the industry,
reinforcing the self-perceptions of marine science employees and enhancing their
engagement with the profession.

In relation to education issues, while formal education may be a critical issue for the
Anglo-American model, it is not strictly relevant for the professional bodies
associated with the marine science field. In the marine science field, the professional
bodies do not necessarily require specific formal education. For example the International Marine Animal Trainers’ Association (IMATA) treats all members as ‘professionals’ regardless of education level. Becoming a professional member of IMATA is open to ‘anyone who has actively participated in the training, husbandry, and/or management of marine animals for a total of at least three (3) years accumulated over a period of no more than five (5) years preceding the date of application’ (IMATA 2006, p.1). Similarly, full membership in the International Zoo Educators Association (IZE) is ‘open to any individual employed full time in the field of education and interpretation within zoos in a professional capacity’ (IZE 2006, p.1).

According to the World Association of Zoos and Aquaria (WAZA, 2006), the diversity of tasks carried out in zoos and aquaria require highly qualified, experienced and well-trained staff. WAZA recognises that many of these competencies are developed through practice experience and on-the-job training.

In this case, ‘the meaning of professionalism is not fixed and the discourse of professionalism does not always operate in a deterministic fashion’ (Evetts 1998, p.32). In the case of marine science employees, the discourse of professionalism is open to members in the field, regardless of education and qualification levels. It seems that the concept and definition of ‘professional’ may be determined by the number and extent of professional attributes (Kearley & Sinha, 1988). That is, the attributes and the perceptions of professionals may be more related to policies on a continuum. Therefore, not all professions strictly fit an a priori definition of profession. It may take some time for a profession to grow. Strictly applied, most definitions of professions would admit only the established ones such as law and
medicine (Kearley & Sinha 1988, p.573). Even some established professions, such as university teaching, may not strictly apply to the definition of a profession.

For example, results of research undertaken with Australian academics demonstrated that they perceive themselves as professionals because they possess a large amount of skills and experiences; have a long duration of study in an academic settings; have a high level of control over knowledge in their discipline, including the ability to mentor and pass on knowledge; and because their research must abide by ethical standards (Milward & Brunetto, 2005). However, results also indicate that, although such academics are actively engaged in their professional community, they do not possess a high degree of regulation over their work in their discipline, and do not experience a high level of autonomy in their daily work. It might well be suggested that these deficits do not satisfy entirely the definition of ‘profession’ in regards to autonomy and self-regulation.

However, it is suggested that professionalism occurs in degrees and on a continuum (Kearley & Sinha, 1988). Professional status is established over time and with development of the knowledge and skills. For example, the professionalisation of medical doctors took a long time to be established (Kearley & Sinha, 1988). The decision of whether or not a field of work is considered as a profession deserves reconsideration. Marine science appears to be a new profession where the knowledge base and new skills are developing in recent years. Based on the discussion above, it is apparent that the designation of professional for marine science employees is a ‘moving feast’. At this point, the perceptions of marine science employees in the theme park studied clearly indicated that they consider themselves to be professionals.
The discussion appears to support this perception. In the conclusion following, these issues of professionalism, commitment, employee performance and work satisfaction will be brought together in the form of a number of conclusions relevant to the aquatic theme park segment of the Australian tourism industry. The following chapter also addresses research contributions and implications for management practice, together with research limitations and recommendations for future research.
8.1 General Conclusions

The four major general conclusions examined in this section relate to the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework, training and development practices, communication processes and professionalism. General conclusions are discussed first, followed by an outline of the contributions of the research study to the literature. The implications of the findings for management of the aquatic theme park segment of the tourism industry are explored. A discussion of the major limitations of this study follows and the last section provides a number of indications for further research requirements.

8.1.1 The Meaning of Working (MOW) Model

This study adopted the MOW model developed by Westwood and Lok (2003) and affirms the strengths of this model and the conceptual importance of such an approach to understanding the complexities of work. However, there are a number of limitations associated with this model that need to be considered for a fuller understanding of work meanings. In particular, more detailed analysis of some critical factors that influence work meanings (e.g. organisational culture, subcultures and customer service) and how these influence employees perceptions about organisational practices and in turn impact on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) are required.

The Westwood and Lok (2003) study explored the significance of different working patterns between Hong Kong and Beijing employees in diverse occupations but did
not attempt to account for the major factors that influence these patterns (e.g. organisational culture and subcultures) and their impacts on work-related outcomes. It should be noted also that Westwood and Lok’s (2003) study was not done within a single industry or type of organisation. Westwood and Lok (2003) based their study on a stratified sample of enterprises representing major industries and a randomised sample of employees within these enterprises in an attempt to achieve a general representativeness of the total Chinese working population of Hong Kong and Beijing. This procedure is similar to most studies examining work meanings using the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework (MOWIRT 1987; Westwood and Leung 1996).

However, each enterprise/industry has different and specific characteristics/culture (e.g. manufacturing and service industries), which supports the proposition that the meanings that employees attach to their work roles display considerable variability across a number of factors, such as location, type of work and industrial sector (Hall 1994; Westwood and Lok 2003). The major occupational groupings within a particular organisation will, within the overall organisation culture, display variations that reflect the nature of occupations and employees within that occupational segment. As shown in this study, marine science employees’ values and beliefs result in behaviours that are distinctively different from those of retail or food and beverage employees. The main focus of marine science employees is on animal welfare and training rather than on customers-revenue focus for retail or food and beverage employees.
The meaning of working patterns for Australian aquatic theme park employees are shaped by a complex combination of factors, including personal background and life goals, work experience and the values nurtured by the organisational culture. An analysis of organisational culture was useful in understanding the dynamics of organisational inter-relationships within particular organisational contexts and within the major subcultures identified within the aquatic theme parks studied. In particular, this research study demonstrates the value of analysing work patterns from a comparative point of view, in terms of “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, in order to understand the values, beliefs, needs and meanings of work for employee groups within their particular subcultures within the same industry. This approach is supported by the study conducted by Westwood & Leung (1996) which demonstrated that the values and attitudes attached to work outcomes are somewhat different for different types of employees.

Most empirical studies adopting the MOW model suggest that ‘working’ is central to the lives of the majority of employees (MOWIRT 1987; Westwood & Leung 1996; Westwood & Lok 2003). However, much of the significance placed on ‘working’ for most employees is highly associated with ‘income’ (good pay) as an important work value, work goal and element of self-identification. It appears that ‘economic need’ is a critical feature of ‘working’ for those employees. However, the findings of those studies also indicate that the majority of employees say that they would continue to work, even if there was no economic compulsion to do so. The well-known classical research of Maslow, Herzberg, Vroom among many others support such an assertion. Working therefore is clearly fulfilling other needs, indicating that economic needs are not the only, or even a major feature of work significance for those employees (Noon
& Blyton 2002). This is supported by the findings of the current study which indicate that, although ‘income’ is important for “marine science employees”, they place more emphasis on the importance of ‘their work’ in their lives and the autonomy and status derived from this work. On the other hand, although “other theme park employees” are satisfied with their jobs, work is not central to the lives of many such employees, particularly when those employees place significant emphasis on convenient work hours and financial rewards. In addition, many “other theme park employees” would not continue to work without acceptable economic benefits, given their primary need for income to support their personal/family life. This discussion suggests that work meanings are best understood when they are analysed within a particular subculture, and not merely across countries, enterprises and industries, which only provide a general representation of the working population, as was done by Westwood and Lok (2003).

This analysis of work patterns provide insights into employees’ perceptions and attitudes about the work they do, how these perceptions relate to organisational practices (e.g. training practices and communication processes), and in particular, how these perceptions influence work-related outcomes. The analysis of work patterns within the major subcultures within their organisations will assist aquatic theme park managers to be aware of the cultural variety within their organisations, which in turn will assist them to develop effective performance-enhancing strategies that take into account the major needs of each subculture. Future research adopting the MOW model needs to recognise issues related to organisational culture and its relationships with organisational subcultures, in order to better understand the meanings that employees attach to their work roles.
The Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework was extremely useful in analysing the significance of the work patterns displayed in this study and it was also relevant to and indicative of some of the managerial and HRM issues that require attention, in practical terms. However, some important cultural/sub-cultural issues may be more relevant to some industries than to others, such as customer service issues. The present study indicates that employee perceptions of customer service requirements may be one such particular factor. The customer service issue needs to be carefully addressed in order to improve the effectiveness of training and development practices and in turn, improve the clarity and performance of employees in relation to the task of meeting the needs of customers (Noe 2005; Ulrich et al. 1991).

The findings of this study suggest that, particularly for “marine science employees”, quality customer service is inhibited by technical/job demands which need balancing against customer demands for attention. It is not just the lack of relevant information regarding customers needs and expectations that limits the effectiveness of training practices for “marine science employees”; it is the attitudes and behaviours (reflecting the subculture) of some “marine science employees” towards customer service that requires more attention, compared to “other theme park employees”, who are generally better attuned to the needs and expectations of customers. This suggests that any research undertaken within the service industry needs to take into account employee perceptions of customer requirements (needs and expectations) and how these perceptions influence their attitudes and behaviours and in turn, work-related outcomes.
Westwood and Lok (2003) suggest that the meanings that employees attach to their work roles are likely to influence a number of variables including job satisfaction, commitment, motivation, performance, turnover, and pro-social behaviour. However, their study did not analyse the impact of work meanings on these variables. The present study provides significant insights on the differences between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees”, suggesting that their perceptions about organisational practices (training and development and communication) are based on somewhat different values, beliefs and behaviours, which are reflected in the meanings that they attach to their work.

The insights of the present study suggest that employees’ perceptions about the factors that shape the corporate culture, such as organisational practices (training and communication), are relevant factors influencing commitment, job satisfaction and indirectly, employee performance. The analysis is partially supported by other studies examining the influence of work meanings on work-related outcomes. For instance, the findings from Lundberg and Peterson (1994) demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between work centrality/work goals and both intrinsic job satisfaction and individual effectiveness (e.g. individual performance). Another example is found in a qualitative research study that demonstrates the positive relationship between job satisfaction and values attached to working (Probert and MacDonald, 1996). Other studies suggest a positive relationship between work values (‘pay’; Elizur 1996; ‘interesting work’; Kidron 1978; Putti et al. 1989) and organisational commitment. The findings from the present study demonstrate that different employees perceptions about organisational practices (training and communication) have significant implications for the influence of these perceptions
on commitment (organisation, occupation and customers), job satisfaction and employee performance.

8.1.2 Training and Development Practices

The research structure choice to include ‘training and development’ as one of the HRM practices that may have a significant impact on work meanings and in turn, on work-related outcomes was guided by Westwood and Lok (2003), who highlighted the importance of training and development in influencing work meanings. Indeed, past research suggests that relevant training significantly changed the importance attached to working for Japanese employees (Misumi & Yamori, 1991). Past research suggests a positive and significant relationship between training and organisational commitment (Gould-Williams, 2004), job satisfaction (Lam & Zhang, 2003) and employee performance (Burke & Day, 1986).

However, the comparative approach adopted in this research between “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” within the Australian aquatic theme parks suggests that the impact of training and development practices on work-related outcomes cannot be generalised, as it is dependent on the type of employee groups who often have quite different perceptions about, not only training, but any organisational practice. For example, the overall positive perceptions about training and development practices found in this study did in fact influence levels of commitment and job satisfaction but did not motivate employees to perform above organisation expectations, for neither “marine science employees” nor “other theme park employees”. There remains an open question about whether or not better-directed training will positively influence employee performance. However, it is clear
that the general approach to training in the organisations studied does not influence performance, despite being viewed positively by employees.

A major issue in the consideration of the impact of training and development practices on employee performance is an identified ‘gap’ in beliefs and behaviours regarding customer service. The existence of this ‘gap’ is supported by the fact that customer ambiguity appears to moderate the impact of training and development practices on employee performance, particularly for “marine science employees”. The current study therefore has established a link between training effectiveness and employee ambiguity regarding customers which is a major influence on employee performance. This link helps to fill the gap within the literature on this relationship and provides more insight into the nature of the relationship between training and perceptions about customer service within particular employee groups (or subcultures) within service organisations.

Work patterns for employees within Australian aquatic theme parks revolve around the issue of the attachment of employees to the animals. This applies to “marine science employees” in a primary and determinative way and is an over-riding factor providing the major differentiation between these employees and “other theme park employees”. A major factor influencing this differentiation is related to on-the-job training. On-the-job training is not only a major mechanism used for skills development but it is also a significant motivational factor influencing meanings, values, beliefs, work-outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) and perceptions of professionalism for marine science employees. On-the-job training works well in Australian aquatic theme parks and is particularly
effective in transmitting the body of knowledge and experience, together with the skills required for the effective marine science-based operations of theme parks. This highlights the pivotal role played by a key HRM practice (training), which is more relevant in influencing work-related outcomes than the impact of communication processes, as demonstrated in the study data and analysis. It is clear that future research should explore in more depth the training variable in the MOW model.

8.1.3 Communication Processes

Past research suggests that organisational communication processes have a positive and significant impact on work-related outcomes such as commitment (Varona, 1996), job satisfaction (Johlke & Duhan, 2000) and job performance (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). However, the findings from the present study suggest that communication processes played an indirect role in influencing organisational effectiveness, in terms of providing high quality service. Contrary to expectations, current communication processes have little affect on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance, particularly for “other theme park employees”. This employee group, which is marked by relatively high labour turnover, tends to be outside the mainstream communication processes found in the marine science occupations.

This situation highlights an important finding in this research; that organisational communication processes are fundamentally contextualised in organisational cultures where the vehicle for information transmission is in ‘on-the-job training’ processes, particularly for “marine science employees”. That is, it is evident that communication, including information transmission, is directly mediated through on-the-job training. “Marine science employees” receive information and organisational communication
through their participation in on-the-job training, which acts as the vehicle for their connection to the larger organisation and its culture. However, the relatively low levels of on-the-job training for “other theme park employees” result in reduced communication effectiveness, especially with respect to the transmission of organisational culture. This analysis supports the assertion that employees make sense of organisational practices from within the occupational context of their work and in terms of their unique work cultures (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

This analysis lends weight to the argument that, within the aquatic theme parks studied, current communication processes both complement and are integrated with on-the-job training, particularly for “marine science employees” but also for “other theme park employees” in both administrative and customer support streams. Communication processes work well for “marine science employees”, particularly in terms of animal husbandry, as part of training and operation requirements and in terms of improving levels of commitment and job satisfaction. However, communication processes appear to be relatively ineffective in reducing ambiguity regarding customer service for “other theme parks employees”. This is supported by the data that demonstrates that ambiguity regarding customer service does not moderate the impact of communication processes on employee performance for this group of employees. Further research should explore the impact of the communication processes on other variables, including labour turnover, in terms of the MOW model elsewhere in the tourism industry.
8.1.4 Professionalism

The findings suggest that marine science employees possess a number of characteristics associated with professionals, including ethical and training standards, devotion to a full time occupation that serves society, a sense of autonomy and the ability, to a certain extent, to self-regulate their jobs (Boyt et al. 2001; Ferlie et al. 1996; Friedson 1994; Shafer et al. 2002). However, most marine science employees do not fit the definitional norms for professional structure because, while the specialised knowledge of such employees is based on on-the-job training of exceptional duration, it is not based on education within an academic environment (Emmert & Taher 1992; Ferlie et al. 1996). Consequently, based on the norms of the ‘professional model’, most marine science employees lack professional ‘status’ derived from a degree (Hall, 1968). However, they do possess specialised knowledge that their customers require or from which their customers derive benefit, which contributes to their professional culture (Boyt et al., 2001). So, the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and very strong sense of identification about the occupational role (job status) for marine science employees provide support for the emerging sense of ‘professionalism’ among these employees. This perception of ‘professionalism’ is a relevant factor that affects the value that marine science employees attach to their work and in turn strengthens their commitment to their occupation. This particular sense of ‘professionalism’ is more difficult to identify than simple possession of a formal qualification (Boyt et al., 2001).

Even though most marine science employees lack the ‘professional status’ derived from formal education, the findings demonstrate that senior marine science staff exercise a significant degree of autonomy in carrying out their tasks (based on
specialised knowledge and professional expertise) which is considered one of the most important characteristics possessed by ‘professionals’ (Friedson, 1994). The sense of autonomy that marine science employees bring to the work they do reflects their professional attitude and this characteristic matches Hall’s model with respect to the attitudinal attributes of professionalism (Hall, 1968), which can be defined in terms of the individual’s attitudes and behaviours towards his or her profession (Boyt et al., 2001). The findings clearly indicate that marine science employees not only perceive themselves as professionals but their status (job/occupation) within the marine science community supports these perceptions of emerging professionalism.

The current stage of professionalisation for marine science employees in Australian aquatic theme parks (e.g. animal trainers) is a practical intersection of on-the-job experience with the development of research-based theory, to provide an emerging professional educational base for practitioners and would-be practitioners. This developing professionalisation is marked by the codification of practices and a body of empirical, experimental research, which distinguishes emerging professions. The findings illustrate that occupations within the marine science field are going through a number of stages in the process of becoming a profession. Animal trainers, for example, began their journey towards a profession as an occupation based on apprenticeship (e.g. based on the fruit of extensive experience).

Now animal trainers and other marine science occupations are becoming academically recognised and the features of these emerging professions are developed and passed down by mentoring, example, training/education, and research. In addition, increasing numbers of marine science employees do bring tertiary qualifications to
their work, including for example, degrees in marine biology, veterinary science, animal psychology and qualifications in water quality control (e.g. aquarist). In their attempt to professionalise, some senior marine science employees have undertaken tertiary qualifications (e.g. Certificate IV in animal care and training) and some are currently pursuing qualifications in related areas in support of their professional development (e.g. Certificate IV in zoo keeping/animal care).

A significant factor limiting the claim of professionalism for marine science employees in terms of the Anglo-American model of professionalism (Evetts & Buchner-Jeziorska, 1997) lies in the fact that few employees are associated with the professional bodies which provide input to the setting of standards in the industry, in terms of controlling the licensing, registration system (accreditation) and practice management within the industry. The formation of professional associations is considered to be a significant mechanism reinforcing the values, beliefs and identity of professions (Evetts, 2003) and is one of the fundamental stages on the way to becoming an emerging profession. However, the findings suggest that the high level of commitment and consequent high levels of job satisfaction and perceptions of professionalism for marine science employees are not directly related to whether or not self-regulation of their practice is weak or strong.

Another feature of the process of professionalisation of marine science employees is the emergence and influence of professional bodies. Some Australian marine science bodies are currently seeking to shape occupational standards in a way that fits the requirements of the Anglo-American model of professionalism. For instance, the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria (ARAZPA) has a
Conclusions – Chapter 8

The Code of Ethics and a Code of Practice which provides guidelines and establishes standards in relation to the zoo and aquaria professions. ARAZPA also has a list of publications such as manuals, Workshop Reports and a Regional Census. ARAZPA liaises with a number of Government Agencies including the Australian Department of Environment and Heritage (ARAZPA, 2006). Developments such as this support the emergence of marine science occupations as an emerging profession.

8.2 Research Contributions

A number of major contributions to the literature have been identified in this research study. The first of these contributions relates to the MOW model. The findings of this study have broadened the scope of the MOW model developed by Westwood and Lok (2003), in a number of significant and original ways. The analysis of the values maintained by the organisational culture and its influence on the particular subcultures within the organisations studied proved to be of primary importance in understanding the major factors that shape the values and meanings that Australian aquatic theme park employees attach to their work. In particular, consideration of the relationship between employees and customers proved to be essential to truly understand the work meanings patterns in this study. This understanding is important not only in terms of contributing to the literature but also in a practical way.

The present study helps also to further develop the MOW model by clearly demonstrating the critical role played by on-the-job training (HRM practice) in influencing patterns of work meanings. Although the impact of training has been described within the Meaning of Working literature (Misumi & Yamori, 1991), no research until now has examined this HRM practice using Westwood and Lok’s
Making fun: Work and organisational practices in Australian aquatic theme parks

(2003) MOW model within the Australian context. In terms of the work-related outcomes within this model, multiple commitment (to organisation, occupation and customers) and employee performance proved to be significant variables that further developed the application of Westwood and Lok’s MOW model. This study also strengthened the MOW model by including communication processes as one of the organisational practices. Although the training variable was shown to be more influential than communication variables, the comparative analysis between types of employees revealed that the influence of communication processes needs to be understood within the particular subcultures of any particular organisation.

Another significant contribution in terms of the MOW model relates to the significant impact of meaning of working patterns in influencing perceptions of professionalism for employees undertaking marine science activities within Australia aquatic theme parks. Although the Meaning of Working Theoretical Framework remains a neglected construct in management and organisational studies (Westwood & Leung 1996; Westwood and Lok 2003), this study reinforced the value of the MOW model as both a theoretical contribution to management thinking and practice and also a practical tool for analysis of a range of work parameters and outcomes within the Australian context.

Other contributions relate to the influence of training and communication on work-related outcomes, such as commitment, job satisfaction and, indirectly, employee performance. This research broadened the scope of affective organisational commitment by including three commitment foci including commitment to the organisation, occupation and customers, and employee performance. In addition, this
study also expanded the Westwood and Lok’s (2003) MOW model by including issues related to customer service and professionalism. These contributions are highlighted in the shaded areas within Figure 8.1 below.
Figure 8.1 Meaning of Working Model (Westwood & Lok, 2003) – Findings-Contributions

Macro-societal level
- Cultural values
- Social norms and expectations
- Stage of development
- Industrial organisation
- Labour market functioning

Micro-personal level
- Demographics, career
- Working experience and expectations

Organisational Level
- Organisational culture and subculture
- Employment relations and work environment
- Human resource practices: Training and development (e.g. on-the-job)
- Communication processes (e.g. two-way and informal)
- Management style and leadership:
  - Relationships between employees and customers
  - Perception of professionalism
Another major contribution of this research study is the provision of significant insights into theoretical and practical issues surrounding the process of professionalisation of marine science employees. This study provides preliminary data on the effects of a number of dimensions of professionalism on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance for marine science employees. Additionally, this study has demonstrated that professionalism involves more than professional status derived from a degree (Boyt et al., 2001). It also involves appropriate work identity (Fournier, 1999) in the form of ‘passion’ for animal welfare and well-being as core issues in marine animal husbandry. It is through this ‘passion’ that employees acquire their motivation and commitment to their occupational roles. Analysis of the data in this study has demonstrated that ‘identity’ for most marine science employees is not strongly related to whether they have professional status acquired from a degree nor whether they are members of professional bodies, but by their perceptions of their job/occupational status, which is largely influenced by their sense of autonomy within their work. The ‘status’ they enjoy (based on the recognition of their professionalism in carrying out their occupations, in the view of the industry) is deemed to be equivalent to the professional status of professional practitioners in other occupations.

The sense of autonomy that marine science employees bring to the work they do reflects their professional attitude and this characteristic fits Hall’s model with respect to the attitudinal attributes of professionalism (Hall, 1968). However, the structural characteristics of marine science occupations with respect to formal education and entrance requirements in accordance with the professional model (Hall, 1968) and with the Anglo-American model (Evetts & Buchner-Jeziorsks, 1997) are important professional attributes that need attention. Currently, professional bodies for marine
science employees do not require formal education for members, particularly because it is recognised (e.g. World Association of Zoos and Aquaria - WAZA) that much of the knowledge and skills required within theme parks regarding animal issues cannot be acquired within an university environment.

The process of professionalisation is boosted normally through increased structured occupational training and the certification of workers (Evetts, 2003). Despite the lack of accredited qualifications for many marine science employees, many such employees perceive themselves as professionals and the data supports this view, as outlined above. Marine science occupations are yet to be recognised as professions. However, the meaning of professionalism for such occupations, associated with professional attitudinal attributes, workplace autonomy and self-regulation, supports the perception that marine science occupations are components of an emerging profession. The argument that the meaning of professionalism cannot be fixed (Evetts, 2003) is therefore supported, particularly where a professional continuum exists (Kearley & Sinha, 1988). The analysis also supports the argument that professions must be studied in a much broader context (Brante, 1990) and this present contribution to the analysis of professionalism in the marine science environment may be a significant factor in the emergence of the marine science professions.

8.3 Implications for Management

Major implications for management emerging from this study relate to enhancing customer service for both ‘marine science employees’ and ‘other theme park employees;’ and also the recognition of current competencies for marine science
employees, particularly for senior marine science staff who do not have tertiary qualifications. The following discussion addresses these implications.

8.4.1 Training/Communication on customer service issues

In relation to training and communication for customer service, “other theme park employees” need to have a sound grasp of very basic technical aspects related to animal well-being and care. The information required to meet the needs of customers needs to be basic and general; rather than specifically related to highly technical issues about animal behaviour/training. Most “other theme park employees” already possess customer service and people skills, because the nature of their jobs relates to hospitality, marketing and retail. However, they are often asked questions about animal behaviour and care by their customers and are either at a loss or in doubt about how to answer; and so, they often direct customers to marine science staff. Basic information provision and training on responding to questions about the animals would enhance organisation effectiveness in terms of providing improved service to customers in a timely manner and would provide benefits to the employees. Some of the potential benefits available include enhanced motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and performance; reduction in ambiguity regarding customers; reduction of the pressure on marine science employees, particularly during holiday time, when they may feel frustrated due to an overload of customer questions; and a communication/working environment that may motivate and improve retention for all employees as they work as a team to care for both customers and animals.

However, for “marine science employees”, the need is not just to improve their basic ‘customer skills’ (e.g. Have a good day, mate!) but the need is to develop their
‘people skills’ to help them to engage customers and provide a high quality service. Because some “marine science employees” do not seem to particularly enjoy customer service and have difficulty in providing effective face-to-face contact with customers, their needs for training/information about customer service require a different approach to the general information/communication needs of “other theme park employees”. Most “marine science employees”, particularly the senior ones, are very knowledgeable about animals, have high motivation and determination and are highly attached to the animals and to their occupations. Talking about their ‘passion’ for the animals promotes self-esteem and status and provides a way of showcasing their knowledge. Some marine science employees do this extremely well. However, others would significantly benefit from specifically tailored customer service training, based on quality customer service provision and particularly on enhanced interpersonal skills to improve their communication with customers and with other members of staff. Such training would assist them to overcome difficulties in interacting face-to-face with customers, reduce their uncertainty and ambiguity about customers and in turn enhance their satisfaction with their jobs and their performance levels in terms of contributing to the health of the business.

This analysis suggests that training programs within aquatic theme parks need to be specific and tailor-made in order to address current ambiguity for both “marine science employees” and “other theme park employees” regarding customer service issues. A number of potential training programs have been identified in the literature including on-the-job, class-room, mentoring, coaching, individual orientation, and regular feedback sessions among others (Cooney & Bhatia 2006; Noe 2005). The following discussion provides some suggestions for appropriate training programs for
aquatic theme park employees. In relation to “other theme park employees”, their training needs are for basic information about animal well-being. This can be supplied by marine science staff or supervisors. For new employees, such training should be provided during orientation and/or induction and periodically reinforced. For existing employees, in-house training seminars on basic animal issues should be conducted periodically.

In relation to “marine science employees” specific training programs are required for particular groups of employees. For those who seem to be ‘customer averse’ the training should progress from workshops and coaching to enhance their interpersonal skills, to workshops on specific customer service models required in the industry. This could be followed by mentoring and coaching as required to strengthen the application of interpersonal skills to customer service situations and build supportive and constructive relationships among staff (Noe, 2005). Such a program is likely to extend over 12 months for any particular group of marine science employees and it is vital that the skills developmental program should be accompanied by structured management-staff dialogue and feedback on the importance of customer service and the development of customer service improvement initiatives. It is likely that while experienced marine science employees can assist to develop and enhance customer service quality, expert external assistance to conduct workshops and provide coaching assistance and support will be required.

For those “marine science employees” who enjoy customer service contact but are underconfident, participation in the customer service workshops and support for strengthening interpersonal skills should be provided. There is significant advantage
in providing this type of development opportunity for this group alongside employees who are ‘customer averse’, because they can encourage the latter. For those who enjoy customer service and have a good level of confidence in dealing with individuals and groups of customers, a potential area for skills enhancement could be presentation skills. There are many resources available in the tourism training community to support such a developmental exercise, which will yield dividends in terms of enhancing customer satisfaction.

The effectiveness of any particular training initiative in building self-efficacy depends on the quality of design and delivery of that initiative or program (Noe 2005; Schwoerer, May, Hollensbe & Mencl 2005). However, the initiative also needs to be supported by management, because training in customer service for staff not only helps them to develop their knowledge and skills and improve their performance in delivering high quality service but also helps the business to improve its competitive position (Tharenou, 2006), indicating that management needs to be proactive in promoting and supporting training programs. It should be noted that employees’ perceptions about the commitment of management to particular training programs are as important as the quality of the programs themselves (McEvoy 1997; Meyer & Allen 1997). So, management must be prepared to invest in such programs for the long term, to provide the resources and support required by those programs and to be directly involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of such programs. This will include the provision of supervision feedback, encouragement and recognition of performance for all staff, which is integral to affective commitment. The research results demonstrate the importance of such communication processes for commitment, job satisfaction and ultimately job performance.
8.4.2 Professional recognition

Another implication for management is in respect to the recognition of current competencies for marine science employees. Clearly, one of the major issues impacting on the process of professionalisation of marine science employees is the lack of formal education, particularly for many senior marine science staff. Such employees are the life-blood of their organisations and their professionalism needs to be appropriately recognised and reinforced. This is congruent with the argument that specialised knowledge possessed by professionals needs to be recognised through credentials, advanced degrees or certifications that differentiate one profession from another (Boyt et al., 2001; Freidson, 2001).

There is a need, therefore, to build a system, perhaps based on recognition of prior learning (RPL), in order to formally recognise the levels of achievement of marine science employees, particularly those senior staff who do not have degrees. RPL is the skills recognition process within the Australian Vocational National Training system which provides for formal assessment and recognition of employees’ existing skills and knowledge (NTIS, 2006). The acknowledgment of the knowledge, skills and experience of marine science employees with appropriate qualifications and awards would eliminate any feeling of being under-qualified and would motivate them to be more actively engaged with their professional bodies. This in turn would give more status to the marine science practitioners in the industry and consequently improve the representativeness of professional bodies and their power (controlling and self-regulating) in accordance with the requirements of the Anglo-American model of professionalism.
Organisations benefit from the work performed by individuals who behave in predictable ways because of the complex beliefs of their profession (Freidson, 2001). Enhancing employees’ motivation to undertake professional studies as well as join professional bodies is beneficial to the organisation’s public image as well as further enhancing levels of desirable work-related outcomes including commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Indeed, the findings of this study have demonstrated that job status and professionalism is a motivational mechanism enhancing the self-concept of highly competent individuals (Kalbers & Fogarty, 1995) which in turn contributes to commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Such organisational benefits are indicative of the value of nurturing professionalism.

8.4 Limitations of the Research

As outlined above, this research study has made a significant contribution to the theory. However, there are a number of limitations associated with this research that should be noted. The first limitation refers to the generalisability of the results. This thesis focused only on one sector of the Australian tourism industry, that is, the aquatic theme park segment. Additionally, a convenient sample of aquatic marine park employees was used, who represented only two Australian States, Queensland and New South Wales. In the first case, the industry segment-specific nature of the sample may limit the ability to generalise the results of this research to other segments of the Australian tourism industry with marine science environments such as the Great Barrier Reef. Secondly, the area-specific nature of the companies studied may limit the application of the results to other Australian tourism industry settings.
However, the results of this thesis provide a number of relevant findings and insights concerning the values and meanings for employee groups within their particular subcultures and the influence of these meanings and values on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance within a particular industry segment. The current study has not only identified work patterns and their impact on work-related outcomes but also the influence of these patterns on the perception of professionalism, for marine science employees. The insights that emerged from this study will be useful to future research examining the impact of work meanings on work-related outcomes and also the process of professionalisation of other occupations. The factors that may affect employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance (e.g. training and communication) in relation to these aquatic theme parks studied may also be useful in explaining the experiences of other companies in the Australian tourism industry.

A second limitation of this thesis concerns the sample size. Given the relatively small sample size of this study, some minor effects may not have been detected. Simple rules of thumb for required sample size are $N \geq 50 + 8m$ (where $m$ is the number of independent variables) for testing the $R^2$ of a regression model (Green, 1991). With eight (8) independent variables, 114 cases would be required to do the regression analysis to test the hypotheses of this study. Therefore, the number of cases of the present study (93 respondents) is below the minimum requirement of 114 cases. However, this study adopted the ‘pragmatism paradigm’ which is associated with mixed methods of research in the same study (Creswell 2003; Patton 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). As outlined in Chapter 4 (Methodology), the nature of this study requires the adoption of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in this study minimised the limitation in relation to sample size. For example, ‘the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observation/analytical capabilities of the researchers than with sample size’ (Patton 1990, p.185). As such, the insights generated from the qualitative data provided detailed profiling that may be characterised as typical or representative of the Australian theme park segment (Patton 2003; Yin 2003), which increased confidence in the study conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Another limitation is related to the higher number of “marine science employees” (66) compared with “other theme park employees” (27). The low number of “other theme park employees” is a result of the researcher being unable to survey employees in high season when the number of casual and part-time “other theme park employees” is higher. Additionally, one of the companies was not prepared to conduct a survey with “other theme park employees”. However, a major focus of this thesis is on “marine science employees” and their level of professionalism. The analysis of the process of professionalisation for marine science employees is one of the major contributions of this thesis. However, comparing “marine science employees” with “other theme park employees” was extremely useful in better understanding the differences between these two groups and how these differences impacted on work-related outcomes. The limitation is therefore more apparent than real.

A further limitation concerns common methods bias. These concerns relate to the use of cross-sectional design and self-report data. The research design for the current
study is cross-sectional in nature, where data collection, including qualitative and quantitative data, was undertaken at a single point of time. One weakness of cross-sectional design is that it does not permit casual inferences on the relationships between variables (Zapf et al., 1996). Future research should use a longitudinal study in order to examine continuity of marine park employees’ responses and to observe changes that occur over a period of time in, for instance, the process of professionalisation of marine science employees (Neuman 2006; Zikmund 2003).

The other issue is related to the use of self-reports in a cross-sectional research design, which often does not allow one to derive valid and appropriate conclusions (Schmitt, 1994). It should be noted that a measure is considered valid when ‘there is reasonable evidence that supports our inference about it and our interpretation of what it represents’ (Spector 1994, p.386). However, even valid measures can be influenced by a number of factors including respondent attitudes, cognitive processes, mood, and personality (Spector, 1992). An interactive research strategy, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, leads to more satisfactory results than a single methodology approach (Zeller, 1997). Using multiple methods can expand the confidence with which conclusions can be drawn from a set of data and minimise some sources of method variance (Spector, 1994).

The current study, using a pragmatist approach and a mixed method methodology sought to overcome the inherent limitations on validity and reliability of self-reports. The research methods used in the present study, deployed triangulation of data sources, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and a survey instrument (self-report), which leads to multiple inferences that, to paraphrase
Neuman (2006), complement each other and illuminate different facets of the phenomena under investigation. Self-report data also may involve social desirability bias, as some respondents tend to manipulate scores by giving desirable responses (Behrman & Perreault 1982; Randall 1990). In this study the assumption of social desirability bias associated with self-report were minimised by ensuring confidentiality and by adopting relatively reliable scales.

8.5 Further Research

This study indicates strongly that the relationship between subcultures and corporate culture needs to be carefully analysed for a better understanding of the meanings that employees attach to their work roles. For example, a consideration of the relationships of employees and customers is essential if researchers hope to truly understand the meanings and values that employees attach to their work roles. Moreover, these findings suggest that customer service issues be included in the MOW model developed by Westwood and Lok (2003) to help in the examination of work patterns within service companies where customer service is critical to the effectiveness of their operations and even to their survival. Further research should explore the interactions between the subcultures within Australian aquatic theme parks, the customer service implications and impact on the effectiveness of the organisation and work-related outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance.

The results indicate that labour turnover is a critical factor affecting the organisation, particularly for “other theme park employees”. Further research is required to examine the impact of organisational practices on labour turnover within Australian aquatic theme parks.
tourism industry. The link between communication/training and turnover (among other potential connections) needs to be explored within Australian aquatic theme parks and elsewhere in the tourism industry. Because turnover is closely associated with retention issues, HRM practices affecting retention should be also examined within the MOW model developed by Westwood and Lok (2003). In addition, some organisational level factors included in the MOW model require further research including issues such as employment relations, work design and working environment. The findings of the present study provide insights that suggest that these factors are likely also to influence the meanings that employees attach to their work roles. However, such issues were not part of the scope of the present research.

This is the first study to apply a multidimensional concept of professionalism to the study of marine science employees. There are many opportunities for future research on similar issues which will allow direct inferences to be made about the emergence of a new profession. For instance, further research is necessary to compare the process of professionalisation of marine science employees with other occupations which are seeking to professionalise and comparative studies may be useful to explore similarities between professions and differences from other occupations (Brante, 1990). Further research, using longitudinal designs, is also necessary to analyse the process of professionalisation for marine science employees.

This study demonstrates that ambiguity regarding customers is a critical issue impacting on organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) and therefore on job satisfaction and employee performance for employees working at Australian aquatic theme parks. Further research should examine the effect of role ambiguity
regarding customers on organisational outcomes, especially in terms of effective customer focus, because of the consequences for effective communication and training practices.

8.6 Summary of Conclusions

This research has demonstrated the importance of understanding the impact of organisational practices (e.g. training and communication) on work-related outcomes (commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance) within the Australian aquatic theme parks. The critical place of customer service perceptions and practices has been highlighted. The research has also provided significant insights on the current stage of the process of professionalisation of marine science employees. The relevant results revealed in the present study have the potential to impact positively on the tourism industry in general and in the aquatic theme park segment in particular. The marine science ‘professional’ group showed great commitment to their occupation and the animals in their care and it would be very worthwhile for management to invest in further training and encouragement, particularly in the form of recognition of their current competencies, especially for those senior staff, many of whom do not have degrees. The MOW model, which was used to underpin this research, provides some valuable insights into organisational HR practices and their impact on commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. Some of the MOW factors will require further research, including issues such as employment relations, work design and working environment. However, it is clear from the present research that the vibrancy of the tourism industry can only be enhanced with more attention to communication and training, with an emphasis on improving employee self-efficacy especially in the area of customer service.


References
References


References


Riege, A. M. (2003). Validity and reliability tests in case study research: A literature review with "hands-on" applications for each research phase. *Qualitative Market Research, 6*(2), 5-85.


References


APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT 1

MARINE SCIENCE EMPLOYEES

Date

Dear

I am Silvia Nelson, a PhD student from Griffith University. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I appreciate your effort and contribution in participating in this research.

This survey explores employee commitment in theme parks in Queensland and New South Wales. It involves questions about your satisfaction with organisational communication and training practices and other issues that may affect your commitment, including your personal attitudes to your employment, to customers and to your professional career needs. The results of the survey will assist in understanding the effectiveness of organisational practices in building and maintaining employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. All information you supply will be strictly confidential and all results will be anonymous. This research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your participation in this important research. If you have any questions please contact either myself by email silvia.nelson@griffith.edu.au or phone 0404 119 035, or my supervisors Dr. Yvonne Brunetto (phone: 07 3382 1341) and Dr. Sheryl Ramsay (phone: 07 3735 7460).

Please return your completed survey sealed in the envelope provided and addressed to me.

Yours sincerely,

Silvia Nelson
PhD student
School of Management
Griffith University
SECTION A – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following questions are about you and your job/occupation. This information will be used to describe the groups of people who complete the survey. Please circle the appropriate answer.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age Group: Up to 25 6-45 46-55 56+

3. Length of service at A, B or C: Up to 1yr 2-5yrs 5-10yrs 10+ yrs

4. Highest level of education: Y10 TAFE Degree Masters Y12 Diploma Postgrad Diploma PhD

5. What areas are your qualification(s) in?
   Marine Science Hospitality Retail Marketing Other: (please specify) __________

6. Please indicate the Department/Area in which you work:
   Marine Science Food and Beverage Retail Show and Entertainment
   Other (please specify): ______________________________________

7. What is your occupation? Please circle the one that best describe your current duties.
   Marine Biologist Aquarist Veterinarian Dolphin Trainer
   Seal Trainer Zoo Keeper Animal Care Diver
   Other (please specify): ______________________________________

8. Nature of Employment: Full-time (40+ hours per week) Casual
   Part-time (<40 hours per week) Seasonal

SECTION B – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

This section deals with training provided within your organisation or sponsored by your organisation. Please circle the number that most closely reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Moderately Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Moderately Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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</table>

9. Did you receive any induction training when you joined this organisation? Yes No
   If yes, please respond to the following statement:
   The training I received when I joined the organisation was sufficient. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Have you received further training later on? Yes No
    If yes, please respond to the following statement:
    My further training was sufficient or appropriate for that time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. Have you received any post-induction training regarding customer service? Yes No
   If yes, please respond to the following statement. The training I received was sufficient to provide a good quality service. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. I think my organisation places the right amount of emphasis or importance on training. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. I am happy with the training opportunities provided for me in this organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. My training was useful or helpful to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. I am satisfied with the training I have received so far. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. I think my training has helped or will help my career in the organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. Training is necessary for advancement within my organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. I think I am or will be given the opportunity to develop to my full potential in my organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. My organisation provides me with sufficient challenge. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. Does your organisation pay for optional special courses for you (e.g. college or university courses)? Yes No Don’t know
   If yes, (a) How many such courses have you taken? ___________________
   (b) Please respond to the following statement: The optional special courses offered are very worthwhile. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. How strongly does your organisation encourage you to take such courses? Not very strongly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very strongly

22. Do you want to move forward within your current organisation? Yes No

23. Have you received a promotion in your current organisation? Yes No

24. Is there a plan for your advancement that includes training at various stages? Yes No Don’t know

**SECTION C - COMMUNICATION**

This section examines your satisfaction with organisational communication practices. Please circle the number that most closely reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

25. Rarely does my supervisor communicate with me about my job. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>At my job, communication flows both to and from the supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>I rarely engage in impromptu discussions with my supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>I often discuss my work with my supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Most of the communication I have with my supervisor is through memos or other written directions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>I receive the majority of information about my job through formal meetings with my supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Much of the communication I have with my supervisor is through impersonal means such as the telephone, faxes, or electronic mail.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>In my job, communication with the supervisor flows both ways.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>My supervisor communicates with me about my work in order that we can agree upon the best actions for me to take.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>My supervisor prefers to communicate with why we do what we do instead of just telling us to do it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>My supervisor communicates with me about how to do my job and does not just tell me how to do it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>My supervisor communicates to me how what I do fits into the firm's overall effort.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>At my work, employees exchange ideas and information with the supervisor freely and easily.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>At my job, communication flows both from the supervisor to and from me to the supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>I am certain which specific benefits I am expected to highlight for customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>I am certain how I am expected to interact with my customers.</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>I am certain how I should behave with customers while on the job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>I am certain which specific company strengths I should present to my customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>43.</td>
<td>In my job, I am certain how much service I should provide to my customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>44.</td>
<td>I am certain how vulnerable to job termination I am.</td>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>In my job, I am certain what are the critical factors in getting promoted.</td>
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<td><strong>Moderately Agree</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></td>
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46. I am certain how I should handle ethical issues in my job.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

47. I am certain what I am expected to do if I find others are behaving unethically.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

48. In my job, I am certain of the ethical conduct my supervisor expects of me.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**SECTION D - COMMITMENT**

Listed below is a series of statements that represent possible feelings that you might have about the organisation, your occupation and customers. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number from 1 to 7.

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<td><strong>Slightly Disagree</strong></td>
<td><strong>Neither agree nor disagree</strong></td>
<td><strong>Slightly Agree</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderately Agree</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Organisation**

49. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

50. I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

51. I do not feel a strong sense of “belonging” to my organisation.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

52. I do not feel “emotionally attached” to this organisation.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

53. I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organisation.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

54. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

55. Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

56. It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

57. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

58. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

59. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

60. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
### Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61. My occupation is important to my self-image.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>62. I regret having entered my current occupation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>63. I am proud to be in my current occupation.</td>
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<td>64. I dislike being in my current occupation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>65. I do not identify with my current occupation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>66. I am enthusiastic about my current occupation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>67. I have put too much into my current occupation to consider changing now.</td>
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<td>68. Changing occupation now would be difficult for me to do.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>69. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I were to change my occupation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>70. It would be costly for me to change my occupation now.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>71. There are no pressures to keep me from changing occupation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>72. Changing occupation now would require considerable personal sacrifice.</td>
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<td>73. I feel that my job is valuable.</td>
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<td>74. In my job, I feel that I am doing something worthwhile.</td>
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<td>75. I feel that my job is interesting.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>76. I feel that my job is satisfying.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>77. If I had to do it all over again, I would choose another job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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### Customers

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career working with customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>79. I really feel as if customers’ problems are my own.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>80. I do not feel a strong obligation to provide customer service on behalf of my organisation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>81. I do not feel “emotionally attached” to customers.</td>
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<td>82. I do not feel that providing customer service is central to my job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>83. Working with customers has a great deal of personal meaning for me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>84. Right now, working with customers is a matter of necessity as much as desire.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>85. It would be very hard for me to stop working with customers right now, even if I wanted to.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
86. Too much of my career would be disrupted if I decided not to work with customers.  

87. Working with customers here provides me with a marketable set of skills to find another job.  

88. If I had not already put so much of myself into servicing the customers of this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere.  

89. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the loss of the opportunity to work with customers.  

90. I am better than average at the technical requirements of my job.  

91. I often generate significant return business from customers.  

92. I am better than average in identifying and working with customers.  

93. I am better than average in providing service to customers.  

94. I often exceed the targets and objectives that are assigned to me.  

The following questions are an attempt to measure certain aspects of what is commonly called "professionalism". The referent in the questions is your own profession. Each item then should be answered in light of the way you yourself feel and behave as a member of your profession. Obviously there are no ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers to any of these items. Please answer ALL items, making sure that you have NO MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM. Please use the following scale to choose your answers.

95. I read the professional journals.  

96. I regularly attend professional meetings at the state and/or national level.  

97. My fellow professionals have a pretty good idea about each other’s competence.  

98. People in this profession have a real ‘calling’ for their work.  

99. I find the dedication of people in this field is most gratifying.  

100. I believe that the professional organisation(s) should be supported.  

101. A problem in this profession is that no one really knows what one’s fellow professionals are doing.
102. It is encouraging to see the high level of idealism which is maintained by people in this field.

103. The professional organisation doesn’t really do too much for the ‘rank-in-file’ member.

104. We really have no way of judging each other’s competence.

105. Although I would like to, I really don’t read the journals very thoroughly.

106. Most people would stay in the profession even if their incomes were reduced.

107. There is not much opportunity to judge how other persons do their work.

108. If ever an occupation were indispensable, it is this one.

109. There are very few practitioners who really believe in their work.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
I am Silvia Nelson, a PhD student from Griffith University. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I appreciate your effort and contribution in participating in this research.

This survey explores employee commitment in theme parks in Queensland and New South Wales. It involves questions about your satisfaction with organisational communication and training practices and other issues that may affect your commitment, including your personal attitudes to your employment, to customers and to your professional career needs. The results of the survey will assist in understanding the effectiveness of organisational practices in building and maintaining employee commitment, job satisfaction and employee performance. This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. All information you supply will be strictly confidential and all results will be anonymous. This research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your participation in this important research. If you have any questions please contact either myself by email silvia.nelson@griffith.edu.au or phone 0404 119 035, or my supervisors Dr. Yvonne Brunetto (phone: 07 3382 1341) and Dr. Sheryl Ramsay (phone: 07 3735 7460).

Please return your completed survey sealed in the envelope provided and addressed to me.

Yours sincerely,

Silvia Nelson
PhD student
School of Management
Griffith University
### SECTION A – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following questions are about you and your job/occupation. This information will be used to describe the groups of people who complete the survey. **Please circle the appropriate answer.**

1. **Gender:** Male  Female

2. **Age Group:** Up to 25  6-45  46-55  56+

3. **Length of service at A, B or C:** Up to 1yr  2-5yrs  5-10yrs  10+ yrs

4. **Highest level of education:** Y10  TAFE  Degree  Masters  
   Y12  Diploma  Postgrad Diploma  PhD

5. **What areas are your qualification(s) in?**
   Marine Science  Hospitality  Retail  Marketing  Other: (please specify) __________

6. **Please indicate the Department/Area in which you work:**
   Marine Science  Food and Beverage  Retail  Show and Entertainment  
   Other (please specify): ___________________________________________________________________

7. **What is your occupation?** Please circle the one that best describe your current duties.
   Retail  Food and Beverage  Marketing  Customer Service  Animal Care  
   Other (please specify): ___________________________________________________________________

8. **Nature of Employment:** Full-time (40+ hours per week)  Casual  
   Part-time (<40hours per week)  Seasonal

### SECTION B – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

This section deals with training provided within your organisation or sponsored by your organisation. **Please circle the number that most closely reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Moderately Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Moderately Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Did you receive any induction training when you joined this organisation?** Yes  No
   If yes, please respond to the following statement: The training I received when I joined the organisation was sufficient. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. **Have you received further training later on?** Yes  No
    If yes, please respond to the following statement: My further training was sufficient or appropriate for that time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. **Have you received any post-induction training regarding customer service?** Yes  No
    If yes, please respond to the following statement. The training I received was sufficient to provide a good quality service. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
**SECTION B - TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I think my organisation places the right amount of emphasis or importance on training.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>I am happy with the training opportunities provided for me in this organisation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>My training was useful or helpful to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the training I have received so far.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>I think my training has helped or will help my career in the organisation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Training is necessary for advancement within my organisation.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>I think I am or will be given the opportunity to develop to my full potential in my organisation.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>My organisation provides me with sufficient challenge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Does your organisation pay for optional special courses for you (e.g. college or university courses)?</td>
<td>Yes No Don’t know</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If yes, (a) How many such courses have you taken?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(b) Please respond to the following statement: The optional special courses offered are very worthwhile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>How strongly does your organisation encourage you to take such courses?</td>
<td>Not very strongly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very strongly</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Do you want to move forward within your current organisation?</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Have you received a promotion in your current organisation?</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Is there a plan for your advancement that includes training at various stages?</td>
<td>Yes No Don’t know</td>
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**SECTION C - COMMUNICATION**

This section examines your satisfaction with organisational communication practices. Please circle the number that most closely reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
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<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Rarely does my supervisor communicate with me about my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>At my job, communication flows both to and from the supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>I rarely engage in impromptu discussions with my supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>I often discuss my work with my supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Most of the communication I have with my supervisor is through memos or other written directions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>I receive the majority of information about my job through formal meetings with my supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Much of the communication I have with my supervisor is through impersonal means such as the telephone, faxes, or electronic mail.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>In my job, communication with the supervisor flows both ways.</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>My supervisor communicates with me about my work in order that we can agree upon the best actions for me to take.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>My supervisor prefers to communicate with why we do what we do instead of just telling us to do it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>My supervisor communicates with me about how to do my job and does not just tell me how to do it.</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>My supervisor communicates to me how what I do fits into the firm's overall effort.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>At my work, employees exchange ideas and information with the supervisor freely and easily.</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>At my job, communication flows both from the supervisor to and from me to the supervisor.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>I am certain which specific benefits I am expected to highlight for customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>I am certain how I am expected to interact with my customers.</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>I am certain how I should behave with customers while on the job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>I am certain which specific company strengths I should present to my customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>In my job, I am certain how much service I should provide to my customers.</td>
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<td>44.</td>
<td>I am certain how vulnerable to job termination I am.</td>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>In my job, I am certain what are the critical factors in getting promoted.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>46.</td>
<td>I am certain how I should handle ethical issues in my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I am certain what I am expected to do if I find others are behaving unethically.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
48 In my job, I am certain of the ethical conduct my supervisor expects of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**SECTION D - COMMITMENT**

Listed below is a series of statements that represent possible feelings that you might have about the organisation, your occupation and customers. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number from 1 to 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Neither agree</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>nor disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organisation**

49. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
50. I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
51. I do not feel a strong sense of “belonging” to my organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
52. I do not feel “emotionally attached” to this organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
53. I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
54. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
55. Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
56. It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
57. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
58. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
59. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
60. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Occupation**

61. My occupation is important to my self-image. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
62. I regret having entered my current occupation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
63. I am proud to be in my current occupation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
64. I dislike being in my current occupation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
65. I do not identify with my current occupation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>I am enthusiastic about my current occupation.</td>
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<td>67.</td>
<td>I have put too much into my current occupation to consider changing now.</td>
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<td>68.</td>
<td>Changing occupation now would be difficult for me to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Too much of my life would be disrupted if I were to change my occupation.</td>
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<td>70.</td>
<td>It would be costly for me to change my occupation now.</td>
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<td>71.</td>
<td>There are no pressures to keep me from changing occupation.</td>
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<td>72.</td>
<td>Changing occupation now would require considerable personal sacrifice.</td>
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<td>73.</td>
<td>I feel that my job is valuable.</td>
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<td>74.</td>
<td>In my job, I feel that I am doing something worthwhile.</td>
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<td>75.</td>
<td>I feel that my job is interesting.</td>
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<td>76.</td>
<td>I feel that my job is satisfying.</td>
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<td>77.</td>
<td>If I had to do it all over again, I would choose another job.</td>
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**Customers**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career working with customers.</td>
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<td>79.</td>
<td>I really feel as if customers’ problems are my own.</td>
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<td>80.</td>
<td>I do not feel a strong obligation to provide customer service on behalf of my organisation.</td>
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<td>81.</td>
<td>I do not feel “emotionally attached” to customers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>82.</td>
<td>I do not feel that providing customer service is central to my job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>Working with customers has a great deal of personal meaning for me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>84.</td>
<td>Right now, working with customers is a matter of necessity as much as desire.</td>
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<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td>It would be very hard for me to stop working with customers right now, even if I wanted to.</td>
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<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>Too much of my career would be disrupted if I decided not to work with customers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>87.</td>
<td>Working with customers here provides me with a marketable set of skills to find another job.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
88. If I had not already put so much of myself into servicing the customers of this organisation, I might consider working elsewhere.

89. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the loss of the opportunity to work with customers.

90. I am better than average at the technical requirements of my job.

91. I often generate significant return business from customers.

92. I am better than average in identifying and working with customers.

93. I am better than average in providing service to customers.

94. I often exceed the targets and objectives that are assigned to me.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
Appendix 3: In-depth interview questions - Company A

Training Coordinator

1 What are your sources of recruitment?
2 How do you select employees? What is the process?
3 What about the supervisors? How have they been selected?
4 How does your promotion process operate?
5 Is your staff promotion a formal process?
6 What are the main issues concerning retention? And how are they addresses?
7 The company has decided to offer permanent employment to current casual employees. Is it a strategy to retain those employees?
8 Is job satisfaction measured? How do you know employees are happy?
9 Tell me the history of the company
10 How changes in management have affected employees?
11 Redundancy is happening now in the company. It is part of the strategy to reduce the number of casual jobs?
12 Is this strategy (downsizing) because of major problems that the industry is facing such as War and SARS? Or is it towards the development strategy (future goals)?
13 What are the main goals of the company at the moment?

General Manager

1 How do you train employees from the other sites? (eg. Melbourne)
2 What are the sources of recruitment at the other sites?
3 What are the main problems/challenges faced by UWW at the moment?
4 Employees Agreement 2002 covers Australian companies (Mooloolaba and Melbourne) only. Do Shanghai, Korea and Melbourne sites have employee agreements?
5 What about flexi-employment (the multi-skilling approach)? Do Korea and China accept it?
6 Tell me about the history of the company.
Appendix 4: First in-depth interviews - Companies B and C

HR Assistant Manager (Company B) and the CEO (Company C)

1. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
1.1 Can you please tell me about the staff training that is carried out at your company?
   1.1.1 What about training regarding professional development or other future training related to building employee skills?
   1.1.2 What about online training?
1.2 Which type of training is available to full-time staff and part-time/casual staff?

2. COMMUNICATION
2.1 What forms of communication between management and staff are most used at your company?
2.2 What is the frequency for the various modes of communication such as meetings?
   2.2.1 What about news letter and emails?
   2.2.2 So I guess that all staff have access to computers.
2.3 What do you perceive as the most effective means of communication with employees.
2.4 Does consultations take place over:
   - the right way to do the job
   - serving the customer better

3. COMMITMENT
3.1 What is your opinion about the level of staff commitment in general at your company?
3.2 What factors are influencing the level of commitment?
3.3 What strategies do you use to enhance commitment of full-time employees and part-time casual employees?
   3.3.1 Are these incentive programs for all employees, including full-time and part-time?
3.4 Is servicing customer a focus for commitment?

4. PROFESSIONALS
4.1 How many staff do you have altogether?
   4.1.1 What about relation to this site?
4.2 At Sea World who are the professionals and what are their occupations?
4.3 Do you perceive any difference between marine professionals and other professionals?
4.4 What proportion of the total workforce is classified as professionals?
4.5 What proportion of professionals is full-time?
4.6 What are the main strengths of your staff?
Appendix 5: Second In-depth interviews - Companies B and C

Education Coordinator (Company B) and Senior Marine Science Staff (Company C)

1. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
1.1 Can you please tell me about the staff training that is carried out at your company?
   1.1.1 What about training for new employees such as marine science professionals?
   1.1.2 After the orientation program, what type of training is available?
1.2 Which type of training is available to full-time staff and part-time/casual staff?

2. COMMUNICATION
2.1 What forms of communication between management and staff are most used at your company?
2.2 What is the frequency for the various modes of communication such as meetings?
2.3 What do you perceive as the most effective means of communication with employees.
2.4 Does consultations take place over:
   - the right way to do the job
   - serving the customer better

3. COMMITMENT
3.1 What is your opinion about the level of staff commitment in general at your company?
3.2 What factors are influencing the level of commitment?
3.3 What strategies do you use to enhance commitment of full-time employees and part-time casual employees?
3.4 Is servicing customer a focus for commitment?

4. PROFESSIONALS
4.1 Do you perceive any difference between marine professionals and other professionals?
4.2 Is there much competition to get a job here?
4.3 What are the main strengths of your staff?
4.4 Although you don’t have degree, do you perceive yourself as a professional in your area?
4.5 Do all marine science professionals at your company have degree?
4.6 What professional bodies do marine professionals belong to?
4.7 Do any marine professionals belong to trade union?
4.8 What type of occupations do you have within the marine professionals?
4.9 What proportion of marine professionals has a degree?
4.10 Do most marine professionals perceive themselves as professionals in their area?
Appendix 6: Focus group questions – Company A

First focus group discussion: Managers/Supervisors

1. WORK DESIGN AND CONDITIONS
   1.1 Do your staff principally work in teams or individually?
   1.2 Do you want your staff to be multi-skilled?
   1.3 If so, on average how many jobs each person is competent for?
   1.4 Do staff generally avail themselves of the opportunities to do different jobs, or are they resistant to take on more skills?
   1.5 Does the company have any policies that pertain to job rotation? Within department? – between departments?
   1.6 Are all jobs governed by operations manuals?

2. EMPOWERMENT & MOTIVATION
   2.1 What would an employee do if they discover a better way to do a job?
   2.2 How easy is it for a staff member to get an idea heard by management or to have a problem dealt with?
   2.3 Are your staff well-focused on providing excellent customer service? All the time? Most of the time? Sometimes?
   2.4 Do you reward people for good ideas?
   2.5 How do you reward staff?

3. DEVELOPMENT
   3.1 How long does your induction program last?
   3.2 What types of training do you usually adopt for new and existing staff? (on-the-job, class, online)
   3.3 What does your training focus on? (technical skills, customer service, career development).

4. RECRUITMENT & SELECTION
   4.1 What methods do you use to recruit staff?
   4.2 What do you do to keep your staff? Is it pay? Conditions? Job satisfaction? Good management?

5. GENERAL QUESTION
   5.1 What are the major issues confronting staff at the moment? In the future?
Appendix 7: Focus group questions – Company A

Second focus group discussion: Employees

1. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
   1.1 What type of training did you have when you started working at your company?
   1.2 Was the training sufficient to enable you to do good quality work?
      1.2.1 Does that act as a sieve? Do people get sorted out in the process?
   1.3 Do you have the opportunity to develop specialist skills?
   1.4 Do you get much training on customer service or does it happen naturally?

2. WORK DESIGN AND CONDITIONS
   2.1 Do you like the system of multi-skilling?
   2.2 Do the curatorial staff work in the food and beverage area?

3. EMPOWERMENT & MOTIVATION
   3.1 Do you enjoy customer contact and providing top quality service?
   3.2 What factors detract from you providing top quality service?
   3.3 Do you find it easy to get your ideas heard by management or to have a problem dealt with?
   3.4 Typically if you have a problem how do you resolve it?
   3.5 Is there a difference between management and workers?

4. RECRUITMENT & SELECTION
   4.1 Is there much competition to get a job here? (If yes, what makes it attractive?)
   4.2 Is your company regarded as a top, middle or low payer of wages in the local industry?

5. GENERAL QUESTION
   5.1 What are the best aspects of working around here?
   5.2 What are the worst aspects of working around here?
   5.3 What do you think are the big issues for you and your colleagues working at your company at the moment? In the future?
### Appendix 8: Description of Participants

Focus Group Discussions in Company A

#### Focus Group Discussion with Supervisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Area of Work</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Manager</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Supervisor</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Manager</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Supervisor</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Manager</td>
<td>Marine Science</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Supervisor</td>
<td>Marine Science</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Focus Group Discussion with Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Employment</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Full-time</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Tertiary - Marine science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Full-time</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Tertiary - Marine science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Part-time</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Degree - Marine science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Casual</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Tertiary - Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Casual</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Degree – Environmental science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9: Key themes from the qualitative data from companies A, B and C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Related issues/Influencing Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Training             | Induction/On-the-job  
|                      | Skills development/Technical skills  
|                      | Customer service  
|                      | Marine science employees/Other employees  
|                      | Professional development  
|                      | Casual/Permanent employees  
|                      | Commitment  
|                      | Communication                                                                                     |
| Communication        | Notice boards; meetings  
|                      | News letter  
|                      | E-mails  
|                      | Face-to-face; phone                                                                               |
| Commitment           | Marine science employees/Other employees  
|                      | Casual/permanent employees  
|                      | Commitment to the organisation  
|                      | Commitment to the occupation  
|                      | Commitment to customers                                                                             |
| Marine professionals | Types of occupations  
|                      | Education level  
|                      | Relationship with other staff  
|                      | Customer service  
|                      | Trade union  
|                      | Professional bodies  
|                      | Perception of professionalism                                                                        |
| Employee related issues | Nature of employment: casual/permanent  
|                       | Recruitment  
|                       | Labour turnover  
|                       | Selection process  
|                       | Work-life balance  
|                       | Job competitiveness                                                                                 |
**Appendix 10: Types of occupations within the marine science area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of occupation</th>
<th>Main Job Duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animals trainers (Dolphins; Seal)</td>
<td>Trainers maintain a healthy environment for show animals by cleaning holding and performance areas, preparing food, documenting health, diet, and behavior records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarian</td>
<td>Responsible for all medical programs and procedures, including collecting blood and urine samples; conducting physical exams, treating injuries; and performing surgery and sonograms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquarists</td>
<td>Take care of the aquariums and fish quarantine which include: preparation and distribution of food to animals; monitor animal health and maintain careful records on nutrition, behavior, and water quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education officers</td>
<td>Narrate and answer questions at animal exhibits and during special animal presentations. They also provide guided tours for the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolphin trainer shows</td>
<td>Perform in shows for both private and education groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display animal keepers</td>
<td>Animals that do not do shows: penguins, dolphins and seals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polar bear keepers</td>
<td>Responsible for the daily care of polar bears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research rescue</td>
<td>Respond to calls to rescue ill, injured, or orphaned marine mammals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divers</td>
<td>Cleaning passage exhibits or sorting out some of drainage problems; snorkeling in shark bay with customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curator of fishes/sharks</td>
<td>Acquires new animal specimens, maintains an inventory of the collection, and monitors dietary habits of the animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record keeper</td>
<td>The registrar maintains extensive records on the animal collection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Professional Bodies related to Marine Science Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMATA</td>
<td>The International Marine Animals Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARAZPA</td>
<td>The Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASZK</td>
<td>The Australasian Society of Zoo Keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAZA</td>
<td>World Association of Zoos and Aquaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZE</td>
<td>International Zoo Educators Association</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Appendix 13: Reliability Analysis for Affective Commitment (to the organisation, to the occupation and to customers), Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance.

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| Affective Commitment Occupation | 1     | 4.87       | 1.72         | -.01                   | .79                   |
|                                 | 1     | 6.52       | 1.02         | .49                    | .62                   |
|                                 | 3     | 6.05       | 1.40         | .60                    | .56                   |
|                                 | 4     | 6.29       | 1.26         | .51                    | .61                   |
|                                 | 5     | 6.16       | 1.36         | .48                    | .57                   |
|                                 | 6     | 5.95       | 1.52         | .57                    | .57                   |

| Affective Commitment Customers | 1     | 3.95       | 1.68         | .51                    | .73                   |
|                                | 2     | 3.54       | 1.59         | .48                    | .73                   |
|                                | 3     | 6.00       | 1.39         | .34                    | .77                   |
|                                | 4     | 4.03       | 1.76         | .50                    | .73                   |
|                                | 5     | 5.58       | 1.64         | .54                    | .72                   |
|                                | 6     | 4.54       | 1.55         | .66                    | .69                   |

| Job Satisfaction             | 1     | 5.87       | 1.44         | .71                    | .91                   |
|                              | 2     | 5.97       | 1.34         | .89                    | .88                   |
|                              | 3     | 6.4        | 1.18         | .85                    | .89                   |
|                              | 4     | 5.91       | 1.35         | .82                    | .89                   |
|                              | 5     | 5.76       | 1.57         | .72                    | .92                   |

| Employee Performance         | 1     | 5.4        | 1.15         | .44                    | .78                   |
|                             | 2     | 4.69       | 1.36         | .53                    | .76                   |
|                             | 3     | 5.34       | 1.11         | .70                    | .70                   |
|                             | 4     | 5.60       | 1.04         | .66                    | .72                   |
|                             | 5     | 5.61       | 1.17         | .52                    | .76                   |