HOSPITALITY THEORY

Application of hospitality theory in the work environment

Brenda Groen, Ruth Pijls and Hester van Sprang*

It's not the service, it's not the needs, it's the way you deliver the service.

1 Background

There is no single definition of hospitality, nor is there a single model or theory. This is understandable, as researchers from various academic fields have been discussing the topic, each from their own perspective. For example, philosophers and theologians focus on ideal hospitable behaviour (e.g. Derrida, 1998; Levinas, 1987; Reynolds, 2010), historians emphasise the development of the concept over time (e.g. O'Gorman, 2007) and sociologists and anthropologists explore the hospitality exchange of peoples, countries and cultures (e.g. Burgess, 1982; Selwyn, 2000). Furthermore, psychologists study the individual perspective of either the host or the guest (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012; Pijls et al., 2017; Tasci & Semrad, 2016) and the researchers related to the hospitality business focus mainly on directly applicable knowledge for the hospitality industry (e.g. Lashley, 2009; Lugosi et al., 2009). Although the business and managerial sector has thus far dominated the literature on hospitality (Lynch et al., 2011), the understanding of the relevance of the concept for other service sectors is growing. This chapter argues how the existing knowledge on hospitality can be also applied to the work environment. The chapter will start by further introducing the topic. What is hospitality?

Hospitality is an exchange process: it involves a host and a guest. The host provides for the guest and the guest reciprocates, in commercial environments by payment, in non-commercial environments by some form of gratitude or by returning the favour in the future. Hospitality is not unconditional: both host and guest are bound by implicit rules, such as one shall not harm the other. It is not a new phenomenon. It has existed since the beginning of humankind and has always played a role in human societies as private, social, and commercial phenomena (Lashley, 2015). Hospitality is studied from many perspectives, ranging from anthropology, philosophy, history and religion, to sociology, environmental psychology, to business. So where to start when explaining what hospitality is? As the focus of this book is on workplace research, this chapter will take a rather practical view on hospitality.

*Corresponding author: b.h.groen@saxion.nl

Hospitality is both practical and experiential; it can be offered as a product (by the host), and it is experienced (by the guest). It may be understood as the offer of certain products and services that fulfil Maslow's lowest levels, by offering a place to stay when you are away from your home, and by taking care of basic physiological needs such as food and drinks (e.g. Cassee & Reuland, 1983; Reuland et al., 1985; Brotherton & Wood, 2000). It may also be understood as a much more holistic concept, describing an experience that fulfils psychological needs by making people feel liked and esteemed (e.g. Tasci & Semrad, 2016; Pijls et al., 2017), and ultimately letting them thrive, as in Maslow's highest level, self-fulfilment. On this experiential level, hospitality involves the experience of personal attention which is expressed by experiencing inviting, care and comfort (Pijls et al., 2017), heart-warming, heart-soothing and heart-assuring (Tasci & Semrad, 2016) or personalisation, warm welcoming, special relationship, straight from the heart and comfort (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). Considering both the practical and the experiential level of the concept, hospitality therefore concerns both the physical and social environment, both environmental dimensions and employee behaviour, and is expressed in functional, sensory, and behavioural service clues (Berry et al., 2006).

Definitions of hospitality (Table 17.1) are often from the perspective of the provider of hospitality, the host, who may offer products/services, delivered by hospitable staff, in a hospitable environment, and to a lesser extent the perspective of the receiver, the guest, describing the actual experience of hospitality. To be hospitable, the definitions from the perspective of the guest should be the starting point. Once the desired hospitality experience has been defined, guests' needs can be met by offering the right accommodation and services, both on a practical and experiential level.

2 Applicability to workplace studies

Over the last decade, hospitality transgressed beyond the boundaries of the traditional hospitality industry, as many organisations found that the application of aspects of hospitality enables business success in an experience economy. The care and cure sector were among the first industries to acknowledge the importance of hospitality, as a pleasant and comfortable environment can reduce stress and enhance patients' well-being (Fiset, 2006). Moreover, patient satisfaction is the result of the quality of the medical treatment and of the way patients and their relatives feel treated in the process by all staff involved. Hospitableness and a hospitable environment evidently improve patient satisfaction (Groen, 2014; Suess & Mody, 2018) and thus contribute to a better market position of care and cure institutions.

Following the experience economy trend, other organisations started to see the benefits of paying attention to hospitality too. Staff that behaves hospitably to clients contribute to client satisfaction and customer loyalty (Heskett et al., 1997). Heskett's Service Profit Chain depicts the cause-and-effect relationship between employee experience, customer experience and profit and turnover. His research showed that employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction are strongly linked, as are customer satisfaction and growth and profit.

In the workplace, hospitality towards own members of staff gained importance in markets that are characterised by a war for talent. It is generally recognised that intellectual and human capital is the foundation of competitive advantage in the modern economy (Berthon et al., 2005). The human capital of an organisation, i.e. highly skilled employees, is one of its most important resources for production and as such leads to its success and performance (van der Voordt et al., 2017). In this context, hospitality is a means for employer branding, staff retention and staff productivity. As Knoll (2016) notes, workplace becomes an experience and starts providing value to customers through flexibility, community and shared resources. Harris (2015)

Table 17.1 Definitions of hospitality

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Description of hospitality</i>	<i>Offer</i>	<i>Perspective</i>
Cassee and Reuland (1983, p. 144)	"A harmonious mixture of food, beverage, and/or shelter, a physical environment, and behaviour and attitude of people."	Product/service, environment behaviour,	Provider/host
Reuland et al. (1985, p. 142)	"A process involving a provider (offering hospitality) and receiver (consuming hospitality). This process involves the transfer of three elements: product (meal or bed), behaviour of employees, and environment of the restaurant."	Product/service, environment behaviour,	Provider/host
King (1995, p. 229)	"Hospitality in a commercial or organizational setting is a specific kind of relationship between individuals – a host and a guest. In this relationship, the host understands what would give pleasure to the guest and enhances his or her comfort and well-being, and delivers it generously and flawlessly in face-to-face interactions, with deference, tactfulness and the process of social ritual."	Staff behaviour	Provider/host
Brotherton and Wood (2000, p. 142)	"Hospitality is a contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual well-being of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation, and/or food, and/or drink."	Product/service, staff behaviour	Provider/host and Receiver/guest
Brotherton (2005, p. 150)	"The notion of hospitality is being viewed as something closely associated with being made to feel 'welcome' by 'warm' and 'friendly' staff within an environment that is 'comfortable, pleasant and relaxing.'"	Staff behaviour, environment	Receiver/guest
Ariffin and Maghzi (2012, p. 192)	"Commercial hospitality in the context of hotel services, is defined as acts of entertaining the guests to create memorable and friendly staying experiences by meeting their physiological and emotional needs selflessly."	Product/service, staff behaviour, environment	Provider/host
Blain and Lashley (2014, p. 8)	Hospitalableness is "an individual's concern to offer genuine hospitality which is essentially altruistic."	Staff behaviour	Provider/host
Tasci and Semrad (2016, p. 32)	"Taking care of needs by serving by hospitableness (heart-warming, heart-assuring, heart-soothing)."	Staff behaviour	Provider/host
Pijls (2020, p. 172)	"Hospitality can be defined as providing an orchestration of environmental, service, social and technological service cues, in such a way that customers experience an optimal mix of inviting, care and comfort."	Product/service, staff behaviour, environment	Receiver/guest

signals a paradigm shift in workplace management; from a focus on bricks (managing buildings) to a focus on the impact of buildings on users (managing people): “In their quest to deliver a positive workplace experience, workplace executives homed in on a few particular attributes that describe these environments . . . creating a warm, welcoming environment.” In short, “we want people to be super comfortable” (Knoll, 2016).

The traditional employer–employee relationship is evolving. Workers are more demanding today and have a greater ability to be footloose in their choice of employer. These dynamics have led to a situation in which workplace design and management is increasingly focused on meeting workforce expectations (Harris, 2016). Workplace management focuses amongst others on “creating and managing a memorable experience to attract talent” (Harris, 2016, p. 13). The workplace might be considered to be a service. In fact, ‘workplace as a service’ is a new concept in the FM world (Petrulaitiene et al., 2018), even though a workplace does not fit the traditional characterisation of a service, namely being intangible, perishable, inseparable and heterogeneous (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004).

2.1 Host and guest, provider and receiver of hospitality in the workplace

The employer is responsible for the health and safety of the employee during working hours and provides a work environment that will enable the employee to be productive. As such, the employer is seen as the ‘host’. As workspace management is an FM responsibility, as are hospitality services, in many situations the providers of hospitality will be facility management operational staff.

But who is the guest? FM has many customers to serve. On a strategic level this concerns an organisation’s top management, on a tactical level the heads of departments and on an operational level the end users (workers, visitors, external customers). The EN 15221 FM model refers to these different customer groups as clients, customers and consumers, respectively.

Ultimately, the majority of receivers of hospitality are the facility manager’s customers. Gremler et al. (1994) suggest that interactions among internal customers and service providers (i.e. internal service encounters) are similar to those between internal and external customers, in terms of their expectations, perceptions and evaluations of the service encounter. In practice, like in the traditional hospitality industry, the hospitality relationship is transaction-based, although the exchange with this type of users is more implicit. In exchange for feeling valued by an organisation, employees will add to the productivity of the organisation and behave like loyal members (do no harm to the organisation). As the employee usually works for the organisation for a longer time, satisfaction with workplace and job, loyalty and commitment to productivity for the employer are the preferred outcomes (see e.g. Batenburg & van der Voordt, 2008; Groen et al., 2019; Bakker, 2011).

So, there is a clear parallel between the hospitality industry and the workplace. The guest/employee stays at the premises of the host and experiences both the physical and the psychological environment the host provides. The guest reciprocates by being satisfied, and loyal, the employee by being satisfied with workplace and services, committing to his/her work and being productive for the organisation.

2.2 Hospitality as a product and hospitality as an experience

Furthermore, we need to distinguish between ‘hospitality offered as a product’ and the ‘hospitality as experienced as a result of products offered’. The facility product hospitality covers,

among other things, catering, reception and meeting rooms (EN-15221–4). FM is responsible for the provision of services and the way in which these services are delivered. FM contributes to an experience, the feeling of welcome (parking and reception services), care (service desk, reservation system, janitorial services) and comfort (food services, furniture and amenities) of the consumer (employee). And whether it concerns reception services, janitorial services or service desk, analogous to the hospitality industry, it is the interplay of accommodation (space) and workplace services and the behaviour of hospitable service staff that results in an experience of hospitality by the user (employee, visitor).

A model that can help illustrate this distinction is the FM Added Value Map developed by Jensen (2010). This model expresses the added value of FM to the overall performance of organisations. One of the ways to add value is by improving employee satisfaction. Furthermore, FM contributes to the image of an organisation and supports the organisational culture, which are factors that enhance the attractiveness of an organisation for potential employees (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). The perception of hospitality adds to the employee satisfaction (outcome level). Although hospitality is not explicitly mentioned in the model, the EN-15221–4 defines the hospitality product as part of both the space aspect (e.g. meeting rooms) and services (e.g. reception services and food services). Likewise, the Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers (CIBSE) model supports the relevance of hospitality for the work environment (Mawson, 2002). In the CIBSE model, it is assumed that, in addition to many other variables, psychological factors (personality, expectations and experiences) have an effect on satisfaction, job satisfaction and consequently on performance and productivity. Thus, experiences, including the experience of hospitality, is linked to other workspace-related outcome variables.

However, literature on workplace satisfaction focuses rather on tangible aspects – the products offered – than on experience (see e.g. Leesman, 2017; WODI in Groen et al., 2019). A strict focus on tangibles, with a purely functional and technical view on workspace, ignores that *how* you deliver something may be at least as important as *what* you deliver, and the implications/inferences people constantly make about the world around us. What does it mean to me, how does it make me feel?

Literature in other disciplines, such as marketing, recognises both the what and how of products and services. The ‘servicescape’, developed by Bitner (1992), explicitly recognises both tangible aspects (ambient conditions, layout/equipment/furnishing, signs symbols and artefacts) and intangible aspects (interactions between service providers and users). Likewise, Berry et al. (2006) distinguish between functional clues in services (the offer), mechanical clues (the sensory perception of the environment) and humanic clues (directly referring to other people’s behaviour). Furthermore, they state that only the functional clues are fully objectively measurable, the perception of the other clues is strongly coloured by how individual users consciously and subconsciously experience the clues.

An example: most workplaces have some form of reception service. In terms of Berry et al. (2006), the welcoming and registration of visitors belong to the functional clues. The reception area is the service environment, which is seen as a mechanical clue by Berry et al. (2006) and as environmental conditions by Bitner (1992). Aspects that influence the user’s perception are, for example: the ease of navigation, the visibility of the reception desk upon entry of the building, the indoor climate, the acoustic quality, the colours and the materials used. In Bitner’s servicescape model, these environmental conditions are a moderator for the social interaction, as these evoke a response in both the host and the guest. The behaviour of receptionist and security staff, as well as the behaviour of other users of the area, belong to the humanic clues following Berry et al. (2006). In Bitner’s model, ‘social interaction’ includes the behaviour of the guest/customer and the host/employee.

These models show that in the overall perception of the workplace, both tangible and intangible aspects play an important role and that the aspects that influence the user perception show overlap with the experiential dimensions inviting, care and comfort as identified by Pijls (2020).

2.3 Hospitality and the perception of the work environment

In workplace research, many papers have been written about workplace satisfaction, or satisfaction with facilities and its relationship with outputs like (perceived) employee performance and/or productivity. Other chapters deal with this topic. What is interesting is how the workplace affects you on a deeper level, the psychological effects of workplace. Does it affect the ties that you form with your colleagues (Khazanchi et al., 2019)? How does the workplace make you feel? Happy (Fisher, 2010), or enthusiastic because you are treated respectfully (Sirota et al., 2005)? Healthy and vigorous? Is it, like Newsham et al. (2009) say, an indicator of the appreciation of the organisation for its employees? In the hospitality industry the experience of the guest is referred to as ‘experience of hospitality’, in the work context there are references to several other psychological outcomes, such as employee satisfaction, well-being, commitment, engagement and psychological comfort, but not to hospitality. Would ‘hospitality’ be a valuable addition to the manifold of constructs used to measure how employees perceive their workplace?

As already explained, hospitality encompasses the physical, psychological and social aspects of a workplace. It does not refer to specific aspects or to satisfaction, but it focuses on how the workplace is perceived and is therefore suitable for all kinds of organisations and jobs. The effect of the hospitality offered is the hospitality experienced. One of people’s fundamental psychological needs is to feel connected to other people, as stated in Deci and Ryan’s Relational Motivation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2014). This implies giving and receiving personal attention. As personal attention is the core element of hospitality, hospitality at the workplace is likely to be an important factor for the physiological and psychological well-being of employees at work. It is related to ‘psychological comfort’, as introduced by Vischer (2008), and is related to research by Newsham et al. (2009), who argue that the workplace is an expression of the attitude from the organisation towards its employees. It exceeds satisfaction with the work environment, as it is not limited to the functional/instrumental evaluation of the workplace.

This chapter argues that the construct ‘hospitality’ is valuable in workspace research, as it describes how the employees experience their workplace holistically. So far, there is little attention for experience of hospitality in workplace research. The next section will dive into operationalisation and measurement of the experience of hospitality.

3 Methodology/research approach

Although there is a large amount of literature on hospitality, empirical research on hospitality is limited, even within the hospitality industry. As a consequence, also instruments to measure hospitality are scarce. Only a few authors have developed instruments to measure hospitality or hospitableness, either from the perspective of the provider (the host), or the receiver (the guest) (see Table 17.2).

Tasci and Semrad (2016) approach hospitality as a socio-psychological phenomenon. They differentiate between different levels of hospitality, going from basic needs via sustenance/entertainment to services and finally to hospitality, ‘taking care of needs by serving with hospitableness’. Their Hospitableness Scale contains 10 stable items, assembling into Heart-warming, Heart-assuring, and Heart-soothing factors, that all refer to behavioural aspects of staff.

Table 17.2 Comparison of instrument to measure (aspects of) hospitality

<i>Paper</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Focus</i>
Pijls et al. (2017)	Experience of Hospitality (EH) scale	Guest; functional, sensory and humanic aspects of space and services
Pizam and Tasci (2019)	Scale for measuring experienscape	Guest; experienscape
Tasci and Semrad (2016)	Hospitableness Scale	Guest; human interaction
Ariffin and Maghzi (2012)	Dimensions of hospitality in hotels	Guest; mainly hospitable behaviour
Biswas-Diener et al. (2019)	The Brief Hospitality scale	Host; hospitable behaviour
Blain and Lashley (2014)	Scale for measuring hospitableness	Host; hospitable behaviour

Both the Brief Hospitality Scale by Biswas-Diener et al. (2019) and the measure for hospitableness developed by Blain and Lashley (2014) focused on behavioural aspects of staff, resulting in an instrument that measures the strength of genuine hospitality in individuals. Blain and Lashley (2014) distinguish three sub-elements, namely 'desire to put guests before yourself', 'desire to make guests happy' and 'desire to make guests feel special'. The Brief Hospitality Scale measures a person's tendency to hospitable behaviour as a whole, with four questions. Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) proposed a scale to measure commercial hospitality for hotel services, containing five sub-elements, namely 'personalisation', 'warm welcoming', 'special relationship', 'straight from the heart' and 'comfort'.

These instruments were developed especially for the hospitality industry. The following instruments are suitable for any service environment. Pizam and Tasci (2019) have developed an instrument to measure the experienscape, with three options: holistically (one question), as one factor, or differentiating between sensory, functional, social, natural, cultural and hospitality culture components. Pijls et al. (2017) have developed the Experience of Hospitality Scale that considers the experience of hospitality to be influenced by the whole package of services/product, environmental and behavioural factors, resulting in the experience of 'inviting', 'care' and 'comfort'.

This makes the Experience of Hospitality Scale by Pijls et al. (2017) the only instrument so far that specifically focuses on the measurement of hospitality, whereas it can be used in very diverse service contexts, even in VR. Pijls (2020) has shown that Virtual Reality experiments are suitable for evaluating reception areas, and the technique is promising.

It is suggested to measure both the experience of hospitality of employees (for example, by using the EH scale) and the perception of functional, environmental and social clues in order to be able to identify the relation between the clues offered in the service environment and the employees' experience of hospitality. In this way, employers will be able to create a hospitable workplace for their employees. Thus, a combination of instruments measuring employees' experience of hospitality (Table 17.2) and measurement of how employees experience the functional, environmental and social clues that the employer offers their employees will help to increase the hospitality performance of the organisation.

Instruments to measure hospitality should ideally be filled in by employees while experiencing the workplace. Improving hospitality and thereby increasing productivity will require controlled experimental before-and-after measurements in a blank and intervention set-up, as otherwise it will not be possible to determine whether increases in productivity are truly caused by the implemented improvements.

Furthermore, the focus may be holistic, and in that case, the results will not directly indicate what measures should be taken, though a before-and-after measurement will indicate whether

changes in products/services, environment or staff behaviour have resulted in a change in the experienced level of hospitality. The Experience of Hospitality scale has been used to test whether offering heated cushions and either hot or cold coffee/tea had an effect on how visitors of a theatre perceived its hospitality (Pijls, 2020).

In addition, though we have argued that hospitality is important for workplaces, not just for the hospitality industry, there is up to now no research into the effect of the level of perceived hospitality on employee productivity/performance, or knowledge exchange, though hospitality may well be a mediator between satisfaction with workspace and (perceived) productivity, or between satisfaction with workspace and person-level constructs like commitment, engagement, job satisfaction and affective well-being that may in their turn affect productivity/performance or knowledge exchange.

Until now, qualitative research has mainly been used to unravel the concept of hospitality and to develop quantitative scales (e.g. Brotherton, 2005; Pijls et al., 2017; Tasci & Semrad, 2016). Qualitative methods could also help in our understanding of hospitality-related service clues in the working environment. Furthermore, service design techniques could also be applied to create hospitality in the office. For example, customer journeys (e.g. Følstad & Kvale, 2018) are useful to map the relevant touchpoints for employees and to define the desired experience of hospitality and associated service clues at these touchpoints.

4 Limitations

Measuring the experience of hospitality might be of use in any kind of workplace. The EH scale, for instance, does not contain questions that limit its applicability to certain contexts. There is, however, up to now no to little evidence from the field that the measuring the experience hospitality is of added value to FM or to business in general, except for the guest experience in the hospitality industry.

5 Theory relevance to practice

Meng and Minogue (2011) found four leading indicators in their study among institutions and associations that represent the majority of qualified FM professionals in the UK and Ireland: (1) client satisfaction; (2) cost-effectiveness; (3) response time; (4) service reliability. Likewise, Van Sprang and Drion (2020) mention three main FM-performance indicators (independent of in-house or outsourcing): cost-effectiveness, (service) quality and satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction is one of the added values in the FM-value map (Jensen, 2010; Jensen & van der Voordt, 2017).

Measuring the experience of hospitality (EH) (Pijls et al., 2017) may be a valuable option to determine how employees experience their workplace. Especially when measured as a holistic construct, it is a measure of how people feel, irrespective of their specific job characteristics or workplace characteristics. It does not trigger complaining about details, or promise immediate response to requests, but describes the atmosphere in the organisation. The EH scale tells you whether employees feel cared for by the organisation; Pizam and Tasci's instrument (Pizam & Tasci, 2019) has an option to measure the experience of hospitality as a whole.

Pizam and Tasci (2019) would, however, also allow more detailed questions that combine workplace satisfaction questions with questions into the emotional experience of the workplace. FM will gain both detailed feedback and an impression of how people feel.

The instruments developed by Biswas-Diener et al. (2019) and Blain and Lashley (2014) are suitable in application procedures for frontline (hospitality) staff and give insight into people's skills to welcome visitors.

The EH scale is also suitable to determine how welcome the organisation feels, especially suitable for evaluating receptions areas where both employees and guests enter the building. The instrument may be used to measure the first impression that a building/organisation makes on new guests or new employees.

Instruments that measure hospitality are suitable for field research. Tasci and Semrad (2016), Pizam and Tasci (2019) or Pijls et al. (2017) can help evaluate improvements in services tested in mock-ups, or even Virtual Reality, allowing to test whether planned investments in the workplace will indeed improve the experience of the workplace.

6 Further reading

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