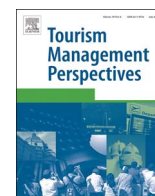




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Tourism Management Perspectives

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tmp

Hospitality research: legacies and futures

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A B S T R A C T

An account is provided of hospitality research developments over the last two decades. The author offers a personal reflection of voyage travelled, knowledge discovery, and the evolution of what is referred to as hospitality studies, supported by illustrative examples. Activities of scholars from within the field of hospitality management, and those located in the wider social sciences are discussed. As the voyage progresses, it is apparent that the endeavours of academic communities have resulted in some legacies. The opinion piece concludes that a future beckons hospitality research that celebrates intellectual diversity and plural ways of knowing.

1. Introduction

In this opinion paper I adopt an autobiographic approach, to tell the story of my personal voyage of discovery into ways of knowing hospitality over the last twenty years. Conclusions are offered relative to legacies and futures for hospitality research. As I present my version of a 'reality' I am also cognisant, and respectful, of the extent and richness of literature, concepts and theories that frame hospitality in its myriad of guises, metaphors, and cultures. Further, as Ryan (2015) reminds, as an industry, hospitality has a history almost, one suspects, as long as human society has existed and people have welcomed friends, family and strangers.

I commence with an insight into the latest stage in the development of hospitality research, followed by charting point of departure and voyage taken to arrive at this current staging post. I have travelled in search of hospitality, looked through a kaleidoscopic social lens of hospitality, paused to take on board the essence of critical hospitality management research, and celebrated hospitality's place in society. My companions were scholars from the field of hospitality, and the wider social sciences: 'facilitating reciprocal travel of research and knowledge, and bringing together suitably qualified multidisciplinary teams to collaborate in the research process.' (Morrison, 2002:161).

1.1. Latest stage

I consider that the publication of *The Routledge Handbook of Hospitality Studies* edited by Lashley (2017) to represent a significant staging post in the hospitality research voyage. The editor describes the volume as: '... the latest stage in the emerging academic field of

hospitality studies. It encourages both the study of hospitality as a human phenomenon, and the study for hospitality as an industrial activity embracing the service of food, drink and accommodation in commercial and non-commercial settings' (1). The organization of this publication, in itself, demonstrates knowledge advancements. It includes: disciplinary perspectives of authors who are mostly informed by social science views; experiencing hospitality as host and/or guest; hospitality through time and space explores the worldwide human practices and obligations to be hospitable; and sustainable hospitality looks at the impact of hospitality in the future. The compilation consists of thirty-six authors from ten different countries spanning six continents. Lashley (2017:9) states that: 'If nothing else, this profile demonstrates the international interest in hospitality and hospitableness, further reinforcing Derrida's point that the means and rituals associated with receiving of strangers into a community are a defining feature of all societies.' I note with interest that the date of this publication is exactly twenty years on from where my voyage of discovery began.

1.2. In search of hospitality

In 1997, a debate began to develop in the United Kingdom (UK) among members of the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME). At that time I represented The Scottish Hotel School, University of Strathclyde, which was subsequently subsumed into a business school environment, an apparent trend internationally. I recollect that CHME sought legitimacy for the hospitality discipline by reflecting on the composition of the hospitality management curriculum, as well as the theoretical framework that supports it. It resulted in the publication of *In Search of Hospitality* (2000) co-edited by Conrad

DOI of original article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.11.026>

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.01.005>

Received 24 November 2017; Received in revised form 28 November 2017; Accepted 29 November 2017
2211-9736/ © 2018 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Lashley and myself. As a consequence, I was confronted by the realisation of my literal ignorance relative to the very existence of the literature, theories and concepts that lived outside the boundaries of hospitality management and industry as a field of study. Indeed, the closest encounter I had had at that time was through a then University of Strathclyde colleague, Roy Wood's publication *The Sociology of the Meal* (1995).

The publication's overriding theme was the need to broaden the definition of hospitality to include perspectives from the humanities and the social sciences, alongside those more commonly associated with hospitality management education. All contributing authors were located in UK higher education institutes. Of significance was the translation into Portuguese [*Em Busca da Hospitalidade*] in 2004, allowing linguistic access among Brazilian academic communities. According to Spolon, Panosso Netto, and Baptista (2015:66), 'This laid the ground for research in the subject and became a reference – in English and translation – for countless studies on the subject all over the world.' Further, the same authors highlight the direct influence of a French community of scholars interested in the theme of hospitality with their theoretical conceptions drawn from sociology, anthropology, and philosophy of Marcel Mauss, Emmanuel Lévinas and Jacques Derrida. For me, this highlighted that publications in languages other than English remained largely invisible or ignored by the majority of the Anglophone hospitality research community.

Another contribution was Lashley's Three Domain Model (Fig. 1). Whilst some have criticised the simplicity of this depiction, it offered an accessible starting point from which deeper critical analysis may occur drawing in hospitality research community, and stimulating new entrants. An example of the latter is that of Camargo's engagement (2003 cited in Spolon, Panosso Netto, & Baptista, 2015), following his role as technical reviewer for *In Search of Hospitality* when it was being translated into Portuguese. He expands the three domains by adding that of virtual space (Table 1), The horizontal axis represents social 'spaces' for hospitality, while the vertical accounts for 'times' of hospitality.

In Search of Hospitality provided a forum from which: healthy intellectual debate was stimulated; hospitality researchers in other arenas and continents were revealed; realisation of the existence of a broad literature emerged; and novel theoretical and conceptual ways of understanding hospitality evolved. It provides a good example of the enrichment that researchers can gain from involvement in such a project.

1.3. Hospitality: a social lens

The foregoing leant impetus to the publication of *Hospitality: a social lens* (2007). Paul Lynch joined Conrad Lashley and myself as co-editors on this project. Originally intended as a follow on text for *In Search of Hospitality*, we recognized that the world of hospitality had broadened

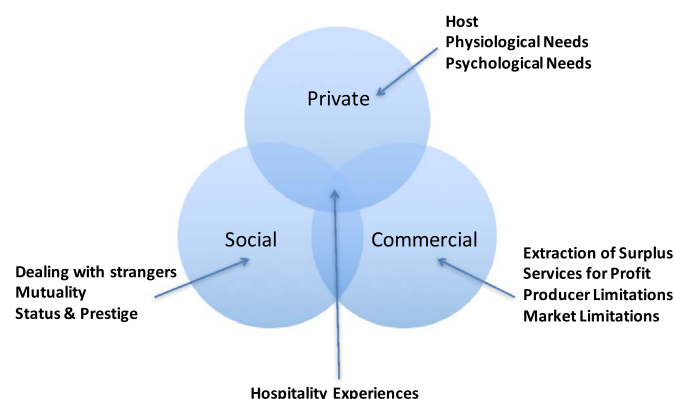


Fig. 1. Three Domains of Hospitality. (Lashley and Morrison, 2000).

in the intervening period. It had moved from being a topic simply for thematic investigation directly, or indirectly, for the study of management to one that also locates the study of hospitality as a significant means of exploring and understanding society.

Chapter contributors were leading academics drawn from hospitality management and education, human resource management, linguistics, modern languages, gastronomy, history, human geography, art, architecture, anthropology, and sociology. Of the thirteen chapters, five were authored by international academics. All aimed to lend their expertise to apply a social lens through which to view, critically analyse, and explore hospitality within a broad range of contexts. The final chapter presented our findings from content analysis of the chapters. It yielded nine robust themes (Fig. 2), the nexus being the human phenomenon of host/guest transaction. Of significance is the manner in which such a conceptual lens can potentially: 'challenge conventional wisdom and question accepted rhetoric by bringing to bear; 'multiple 'eyes' all focused on the same phenomenon that is hospitality but arriving from diverse intellectual starting points and ways of seeing the world' (Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007: 174). As a hospitality researcher this is what intellectually teased the brain, excited the intellect, and energised as the possibilities for new knowledge creation emerge and novel connections occur.

However, my viewpoint might not have been universally shared within the hospitality community. Various challenges were recognized including: a willingness by hospitality scholars to extend the conception of the hospitality subject boundaries; the promotion of multi-disciplinary perspectives accompanied by more inclusive literatures informing analysis; limited journal publishing outlets for more social scientific perspectives; and enticing researchers from within the hospitality management subject to engage with other disciplines to explore and deepen understanding of hospitality concepts and realities. Ryan (2015) reflects on the latter point viewing *Hospitality: a social lens* as an indication of willingness by at least some to examine wider sociological conceptualisations and understandings of hospitality, it is arguably ignored by many in academia and industry who are more concerned with functionality within the industry.

1.4. Critical hospitality

Involvement in *Hospitality: a social lens* continued the development of my profile as a researcher into the field of critical theory where we argued that: 'a critical understanding of hospitality is emancipating, enriching our collective understanding of the whole and thereby recognising a world of ideas that extend beyond mere pragmatism and functional mindsets' (Lashley et al., 2007:6). This line of thought was further stimulated by co-authors Peter Lugosi and Paul Lynch (Lugosi, Lynch and Morrison, 2009). We proposed that hospitality research may be represented as in (Fig. 3). It recognizes the three orientations of hospitality management and hospitality studies partially overlapping, creating the spaces for critically hospitality management, as well as their respective intellectually independent spaces.

A key finding at the core of critical hospitality management research was proposed as a redefinition of the notion of 'relevance': involving various degrees of separation from, in this case, management practice... to develop the ability to reflect differently on one's work, employing organization, industry or commercial product; separation may also facilitate a willingness to question normative assumptions and to challenge the status quo' (Lugosi et al., 2009: 1475). Thus, relevant critical hospitality management research may refer to outputs that help to develop moral and intellectual capabilities, as well as, applicable business techniques and practical competencies. Tangible indicators of the emergence of a critical approach to hospitality are, for example, CAUTHE Special Interest Group in Critical Approaches; CHME Research Conference main stream of Critical and Cultural Studies of Hospitality, Critical Tourism Studies Conference stream of Critical Hospitality Studies, Journal Special Issues, and appointment of a Professor of Critical

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