

PART 2



PERSONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

4

The Concept of 'Hospitableness'

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Learning objectives

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Understand the morality of hospitality and obligations on hosts and guests.
- Recognise an array of motives for offering hospitality to guests.
- Identify the qualities of hospitableness.
- Appreciate the value of guest/host relationship in building commercial competitive advantage.
- Evaluate different approaches to talent management suited to hosting commercial guests.

Introduction

Increased demand for eating, drinking and staying away from home over the last half century has resulted in a growth in the numbers of cafes, snack bars, restaurants, bars and hotels and other businesses organisations to meet these demands. Recognising that there are many similarities and overlaps in the service provided by these organisations, the word '*hospitality*' emerged as a collective noun to describe this whole sector.

As a consequence of the emergence of the word, many academics undertaking research and consultancy in the field began to question the nature of hospitality and hospitableness. This led to the study of hospitality from an array of social science perspectives and the publication of numerous books including *In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical perspectives and debates* (Lashley and Morrison, 2000) and *Hospitality a Social Lens* (Lashley, Lynch and Morrison, 2007). Some academics from social science disciplines concurrently began to explore hospitality as a human experience. The collaboration between these two groups of academics has resulted in, amongst other publications, the journal *Hospitality & Society*, and the upcoming *Hospitality Studies* (Lashley, 2017) in the Routledge Handbook series.

The study of hospitality engages the notion of *hospitableness*, that is the qualities demonstrated by hosts to their guests. The requirement for hosts to offer shelter to guests is a common feature of all religions and can be seen as a fundamental strand of human morality. In practice, the motives for hospitality to others can vary and this chapter highlights a range of reasons for offering hospitality, with altruistic hospitality being the most consistent with hospitableness.

Attempts to develop an instrument to measure the hospitableness, although at an early stage, do suggest that some individuals are more prone to be hospitable to guests, than others. This chapter features one instrument that was developed based upon thirteen questions, using a seven point Likert scale. The chapter provided insights into the instrument and its potential benefit in both academic study and in commercial organisations. The relationship between host and guest can, when genuinely offered, be the source of competitive advantage because it cannot be easily replicated.

Hospitality morality

The obligation to be hospitable to strangers has been a constant feature of human social existence through time and across the world. All societies have something to say about strangers; mostly there is a moral obligation to welcome those from outside, and to '*turn the stranger into a friend*' (Selwyn, 2000). That said, fear of the stranger could be a powerful strand in any society, particularly when times are challenging. Some find it easier to blame the outsider rather than look to the selfish and greedy ruling elite that causes most of the problem. Oxfam, for example, estimate that in 2016 the world's one per cent own 50 per cent of the world's wealth. In Britain, the Office of National Statistics report that the top one per cent own more than 55 per cent of the poorest citizens. At the same time, as consequence of neo-liberalism, many middle and low-income families have seen wage rates fail to keep in line with costs of living, leading to a decline in living standards (Lashley 2017a). These inequalities, particularly for those on the lowest incomes, can cause anxieties and anger that fuels a fear of strangers and anti-hospitableness.

Most religions have either consciously, or unconsciously, recognised these potential tendencies and make it a moral obligation of the faithful to be hospitable to strangers. Without wishing to deny the multi-faith nature of most Western societies, the dominant religions of the faithful are Abrahamic in origin; both Christianity and Islam are founded on the Judaic scripts of the 'Old Testament'.

The Old Testament advocates the customary sharing of meals and as a way of distributing excess to the poor and the needy. The practice of hospitality in settings where it was unlikely that the guest could repay the host was fundamental. Indeed, many of the biblical stories advocate generosity by hosts in contexts where they could not expect repayment (Casselberry, 2009). For example, Abraham generously received three strangers who turned out to be angels (Genesis: 18). At

another point, Lot was spared the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because he had offered hospitality and protection to two visitors who were later identified as angels (Genesis: 1). Through the stories of the Israelites, it is argued that through their experiences of movement and being strangers in foreign lands, they developed an intensive awareness of the need for hospitality and the need to offer food, drink and accommodation to strangers and those in need.

Several of the teachings of the New Testament also highlight hospitable treatment of Christ and the disciples. However, the requirement to be hospitable to strangers goes beyond the immediate treatment of Jesus and the disciples. It is claimed that the faithful demonstrate their faith when they honour the poor and the needy. Luke (14:13) advocates giving to the poor, the needy, lame and the blind as way of demonstrating faithful behaviour. In the gospel of Matthew the behaviour of those who will be most favourably blessed refer to their host behaviour, *'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me'* (Matthew 25:34-36). Luke says, *'When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed'* (Luke 14:13). Furthermore the faithful are instructed to *'love your neighbour as yourself'* (Matthew 22:39). At these and other points the scriptures clearly show that offering hospitality to strangers is a basic requirement of the Christian faithful. *'Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price'* (Isaiah. 55:1).

Those writing from an Islamic perspective (Meehan, 2013), for example, claim that only the Muslim faithful understand the need to be hospitable. It is claimed that non-believers will only offer hospitality with an expectation of worldly gain (repayment or reciprocity). The true believer offers hospitality to strangers to honour god (Jafar, 2014). Mohammed is quoted as saying, *'Let the believer in Allah and the day of judgment honour his guest'* (Meehan, 2013). It is required that all must be welcomed and treated with respect, whether they are family or non-family members, believers or non-believers. Stories are recounted concerning the behaviour of Mohammed as being hospitable to strangers, and never dining alone. One parable has Mohammed feeding three strangers who are angels in disguise, and reveal themselves after they have been shown generous hospitality by their host. Another popular story has hosts feeding guest with the hosts' own food because they have little to share (Schulman and Barkouki-Winter, 2000). These acts of generosity to either share, or to give all they have to the stranger, is claimed to be an exclusive perspective of the faithful, but in reality can be seen to be a feature of all these religions. Indeed, the story of guests turning out to be god, gods, or angels is a common theme to be found in all these religious parables. Either acts of extreme generosity to the stranger results in excessive reward, or in other cases the failure to be hospitable results in the hosts' goods being taken away.

Whilst the Muslim faith emerges at some time in the seventh century AD, and Christian teaching two thousand years ago, the writing of the Jews surface