



Article Title

Defining the Hospitality Discipline: a Discussion of Pedagogical and Research Implications [Summary]

Citation

Ottenbacher, M., Harrington, R., & Parsa, H. G. (2009). Defining the Hospitality Discipline: a Discussion of Pedagogical and Research Implications. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 33(3), 263–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348009338675>

Abstract

Hospitality is one of the oldest professions and is regarded as a powerful economic activity that touches many aspects of human life. On the other hand, hospitality is a relatively new academic discipline that has no consensus on its scope and exposure. This obvious absence of consensus on the scope of the hospitality field has been a limiting factor in advancing the discipline-specific research agenda and teaching practices that affect this field. In response to this lack of clarity in definition or understanding of the field of hospitality, this article discusses a variety of definitions for hospitality and presents how a variety of researchers have classified hospitality in earlier research. The author argues that the term hospitality is a broad term or a construct, consisting of a diverse group of industries. This situation creates substantial issues in terms of the external validity of empirical studies in the hospitality literature, and raises the question of whether unique and identifiable dimensions of hospitality exist that separates it as an independent field of study from the other social sciences. In fact, it is argued that the lack of definitional consensus on the term hospitality significantly impairs the pedagogical integrity, thus, affecting the ability to establish the epistemological roots of the new and emerging hospitality discipline. In the current study, a conceptual classification of the term hospitality is suggested, and research issues in assessment of the multidimensional nature of the hospitality construct are described.

Keywords *hospitality, hospitality management, classification, hospitality research, pedagogy in hospitality*

Summary:

In summary, the field of hospitality has interesting and interdependent relationships with its constituent industries (lodging, foodservice, travel, leisure, attractions, and conventions). Each independent industry takes input from the hospitality field either directly or indirectly for its survival and success, and in turn they offer an output that promotes the field of hospitality. This relationship is very interdependent in nature, which results in the often quoted multiplier effect of tourism.

There is obviously no common shared paradigm of what is meant by hospitality.

If hospitality research and practice are to progress, hospitality research must develop a rigorous theory based on research that clearly defines hospitality. This would strengthen the aim toward establishing hospitality as a legitimate academic discipline of its own right.

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Conclusion

The authors argue that the term hospitality is a broad term or construct, combining a diverse group of industries. This situation creates substantial issues in terms of the external validity of empirical studies in the hospitality literature as well as whether or not unique and identifiable dimensions separate hospitality as a field of study from more general services. The answers to these basic issues have substantial implications as to how hospitality research contributes to the body of knowledge in business, management, and marketing.

Based on a review of the literature, it would seem that hospitality researchers should focus on specific segments within the hospitality field and not take the more global approach of including the diverse hospitality spectrum. The services marketing literature often only classifies the accommodation and food and beverage aspects of hospitality, ignoring other important components such as leisure, travel, conventions, and so on. Furthermore, the classification systems illustrate that services marketing scholars classify and view restaurants, hotels, travel, attractions, and leisure as separate categories with little or no commonality.

A further implication of this article is the potential need to not only classify restaurants, hotels, travel, attractions, conventions, and leisure separately, but also to recognize the diversity within these segments. A five-star hotel differs considerably from a budget hotel as a fine dining restaurant, which is unlike a quick-service restaurant. For example, fine dining includes much more intangible aspects than quick-service restaurant; a world famous attraction may be significantly different than a local festival attraction; community leisure activities are distinctly

different than individual leisure activities; whereas a five-star hotel stay involves more service encounters between frontline employees and customers, and here the servicescape might be more relevant than for budget hotels. Thus, it is also important to have appropriate classifications that reflect the variety of market segments or competitive groups within a service sector.

Although the hospitality field continues to grow worldwide, as academicians we have failed to concretely define hospitality both theoretically and empirically.

We argue that this arduous task is necessary to ensure that this field of study will make contributions into the future. The presented model is an effort to bring the diverse research areas of hospitality under one umbrella. This model is a conceptual presentation of the collaborative and interdependent nature of industries within the hospitality field.