

UNDERSTANDING HOSPITALITY ACTIVITIES: SOCIAL, PRIVATE, AND COMMERCIAL DOMAIN

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Abstract: Hospitality is commonly defined as something related to the friendliness, kindness and hospitableness. But, there are still some debates regarding to the exact definition of hospitality. Therefore, the understanding of hospitality provision can be more sharpened by acknowledging the hospitality activities into 3 (three) domains which are social, private/domestic, and commercial. The manner of the private and social domains can inform commercial hospitality practice. When applied appropriately, it could lead to an improvement in commercial operation.

Keywords: Hospitality, social domain, private domain, commercial domain.

The term ‘hospitality’ is often used in a wider community and organisation in order to describe something related to the friendliness, kindness, and hospitableness provided by the host. However, Jones says, indeed, the term ‘hospitality’ conveys an image that reflects the tradition of service that goes back over many centuries to the earliest days of inn-keeping (1996, p.1).

In fact, there are still some debates regarding to the exact definition of ‘hospitality’. Therefore, Lashley (2000) states that there is a need for a breadth of definition, which allows analysis of hospitality activities in social, private, and commercial domains in a wider context. This is caused by the nature and motives of providing hospitality, which have changed over time and broadly reflect the evolution of different society (Bob, 1999). It can be discerned further that the applications of both social and private domains into a commercial operation can lead the commercial hospitality provision. Later, it can improve and ultimately assist the successful business operations in the future.

THE CONCEPT OF HOSPITALITY

Before discussing the three hospitality activities, a major distinction between the concept of hospitality and the commercial hospitality industry needs to be made. Importantly, it lies in the money involved and the host-guest relationship in those practices. According to Telfer (1996), the nature of hospitality refers to the sharing of food, drink, and accommodation to people who are not regular members of a household. People here can be strangers, neighbours, outsiders, etc. Basically, hosts provide food, drink, and shelter in their own house and share them with their guests without concern for financial payback

(King, 1995). Furthermore, King emphasises that the main aim of providing hospitality is naturally a private quality and generosity. As a result, the relationship between host and guest is equal. It is elaborated further by King (1995) that the guest has a social obligation to contribute to the relationship by being good company, and to reciprocate to the host in some way (p.229). On the other hand, the commercial hospitality industry refers to food, drink, and accommodation provided for profit and money exchange (Lashley, 2000). So, the relationship between host and guest is reciprocal in that the host has an obligation to deliver the best service and make the guests feel satisfied. Conversely, it is a compulsory for the guests to pay for the service they get. Because of this money exchange, as stated by King, if the guest is not satisfied with the service served by the host or the product offered, he/she is always free to withdraw patronage (1995). In addition, Jones (1996) mentions that in essence, hospitality is made up of 2 (two) distinct services, which are the provision of overnight accommodation for people staying away from home and the provision of sustenance for people eating away from home (p.1). In other words, both of those services meet the very basic human needs; the need to sleep and the need to eat.

While, Brotherton and Wood (2000) offer the definition of hospitality industry as follows: “*The hospitality industry is comprised of commercial organizations that specialize in providing accommodation and/or, food, and/or drink, through a voluntary human exchange, which is contemporaneous in nature, and undertaken to enhance the mutual well being of the parties concerned*”. Similarly, Selwyn (2000), states that the basic function of hospitality is to establish a relationship or to promote an already

established relationship. In other words, hospitality converts:

- strangers → familiars,
- enemies → friends,
- friends → better friends,
- outsiders → insiders
- non-kin → kin

SOCIAL DOMAIN

Lashley (2000) divides hospitality activities into three domains, which are social, private, and commercial. This is done in order to establish a width of definition of hospitality. Social hospitality can be defined as the social setting in which hospitality and acts of hospitableness take place together with the impacts of social forces on the production and consumption of food, drink and accommodation.

Furthermore, Lashley (2000) states that the social context has an important role in the cultivation/production, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food and beverage because food habits are culturally formed. In other words, in different cultures, there are different considerations as well as different sets of rules to be performed. For instance, in a typical wedding party, the food, decoration, and wedding-dress are chosen to fit with the culture of the host. If the bride and groom adhere to Chinese culture, all things related to that party would be designed with the “Chinese touch” such as a tea ceremony. In Indonesia, Chinese descendants are more likely to follow this Chinese tradition, even though they perhaps do not know what originally the Chinese rite or ceremony is and how it supposes to be done. Sense of belonging to the Chinese culture makes Chinese Indonesians incline to attach to the traditions, even to the choice of the food for the wedding.

Later, according to Lashley (2000), it is said there is a strong correlation between social bonds and social needs. Hospitality activities assist in the development of social bonds with others and the subsequent satisfaction of social needs. In Javanese culture, there is a phrase “mangan ora mangan asal kumpul”. It means that whether there is a meal or not, being together is the most important thing. Togetherness is seen as a knot to tighten the relationship among the members of the family, relatives and friends closer. Here, it is very clear to see that the needs of social gatherings play an important role to build the social bonds and create the satisfaction of social needs.

Lashley (2000, p.9) adds that in hierarchical societies, social class differences between people are frequently expressed in the way different groups

consume food and drink, and accommodation. People from upper class will have different preference in consuming food and drink, and accommodation with people from lower class or middle class. People from upper class will consume food and drink, and search for accommodation without considering the price as long as the food and drink and accommodation can satisfy and indulge them. While people from lower class, mostly, they do care about the price of food, drink, and accommodation. Therefore, they will choose the food or drink as cheap as possible just in order to survive. The price here is not only used to indicate the power of money in return for self-satisfaction, but also used to label the social needs of those of upper class.

PRIVATE/DOMESTIC DOMAIN

Private domain is the nurturing and altruistic motives of those who cook, serve beverages, make beds, and create a safe environment. It shapes to some extent the expectation of the non-domestic provision of hospitality activities (Lashley, 2000, p.10). In the private domain, the provision of food, drink, and accommodation represents an act of friendship. The friendship is meant to create a symbolic tie between people, which establishes bonds between those involved in sharing hospitality (p.11). Since the term friendship involves in this private domain, it brings another consequence. The guest who has received the hospitality from the host has an obligation to return the hospitality to the host on another occasion. In other words, the individual hosts one another without considering for financial reimbursement. When someone invites us to have dinner in his/her house or give us a gift/present as a birthday present, there is a moral obligation for us to invite and give him/her back someday in order to return the hospitality he/she already gave.

COMMERCIAL DOMAIN

According to King (1995), commercial hospitality is ‘a specific kind of relationship between a host and a guest in which the host understands what would give pleasure to the guest and enhance his or her comfort and well-being and deliver it generously and flawlessly in face to face interaction’ (p.229). In commercial hospitality, there is a reciprocity based on money exchange. Therefore, the guest is free to use the facilities offered because of the money he/she pays, and the host has an obligation to give the best service that meets his/her needs and expectations.

The final goal of serving the guest satisfactorily is that it will generate a return visit while providing a

profit for the host (Lashley, 2000). In addition, there is no obligation for the guest to return the hospitality to the host as well as to repeat the visit because it is the guests’ decision what and when they are going to stay, eat, or drink (Lockwood and Jones, 2000). For example, when we eat in the restaurant, because we pay for the food and drink, we have no obligation to be friendly to the host as well as clean the table after eating or return our visit. Nevertheless, the host should behave friendly, and warm, and serve satisfactorily since they expect us to return and make profit for them. There is a cause and effect relationship in this commercial domain, while in private/domestic domain is more like a mutual relationship.

Basically, social hospitality has the same spirit as private hospitality. Therefore, Lashley (2000) tends to consider that the social aspects of hospitality all involve private hospitality. While, King (1995) and Brotherton (1999) consider the private/domestic hospitality includes the social activities. Thus, King and Brotherton distinct hospitality only into 2 (two) activities namely private/domestic hospitality and public/commercial hospitality.

Lockwood and Jones (2000, p.161) distinct social/private hospitality and commercial hospitality into some characteristics as shown below:

Table 1. Comparing Social/Private and Commercial Hospitality

Social/private hospitality	Commercial hospitality
1. Supply led	1. Demand led
2. Occasional	2. Continuous
3. Small scale	3. Large scale
4. Self administered	4. Administered by others
5. Non-dedicated facilities	5. Dedicated facilities
6. Unique experience	6. Repeatable experience
7. Personalized activity	7. Economies of scale
8. Social experience	8. Service experience
9. Not for profit	9. Financial sustainability

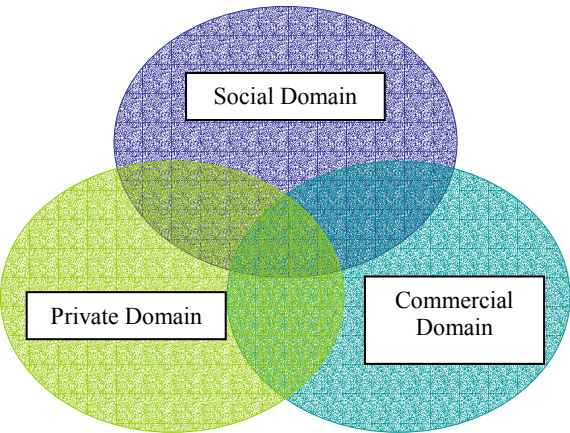
* Source: Lockwood & Jones (2000)

Social/private hospitality is essentially supply led. It is the host who has the initiative to invite their guest to come or stay and to decide the food to cook and the drink to serve (Lockwood and Jones, 2000). Thus, social/private activities are not conducted for any profit and money payback. On the other hand, in commercial hospitality, it is largely demand led. The guest/customer has the privilege to choose where they want to eat or drink as well as what they want to eat or drink. Consequently, the customer has a wide range of choices and control, which should be provided and satisfied by the commercial operator. In the end, it creates return business and sustains the profitability.

In social/private hospitality, it would create a unique experience since the host is more likely to customize the occasion in order to please and satisfy the guest. On the other hand, in commercial hospitality, the experience is repeatable and not provided on an occasional basis. The experience would be continuing all times.

INDEPENDENCE and OVERLAPPING

It seems that social, private, and commercial aspects are completely three separate domains that stand independently towards each other. In fact, the practice of the social, private, and commercial aspect of hospitality activities are both independent and overlapping each other. Showing both independence and overlapping, Lashley (2000, p.4) shows in the figure 1 below.



* Source: Lashley (2000)

Figure 1. Hospitality Activities

It can be said that each domain is independent because each one has its own definitions and characteristics in order to explain how the hospitality activities take place in society. According to Lashley (2000), there are several independent characteristics of those domains. Social domain is dealing with strangers, mutuality, status, and prestige with the impacts of social forces on the production, consumption, sharing of food, drink, and accommodation. Next, the host, physiological and psychological needs is the characteristic of the private hospitality provision. While the commercial provision concerns the hospitality as an economic activity with profit-oriented matter. In addition, King (1995) states further that in commercial relationship, the guest’s only obligation is to pay and to behave reasonably. The guest has the privilege to go elsewhere they want, if the hospitality provided by the host is not satisfactory. While, in private or social hospitality

assumes an equality of power for both host and guest, and the guest has a social obligation to contribute to the relationship by being good company, and to reciprocate to the host in some way (King, 1995, p.229). Clearly, it can be said that the domestic setting in the provision of hospitality related activities could be the forum for the inter-relationship between the domestic and the social arenas (Lashley, 2000).

In spite of independence, for some cases the three domains are also overlapping in its practice since the social, private, and commercial provision have the same aim of providing hospitality which makes guests happy and satisfied by providing the three main services of food, drink, and accommodation. For instance, in the private provision, the hosts themselves always serve and cater the guests as a service provider by providing food, drink, shelter and make sure that the guests get what they want. Similarly, in the commercial hospitality activities, it sometimes happens as well particularly for a small commercial operation such as a restaurant or small motel, which the host and the members of the family themselves serve the guests in the operation. In this case, this small commercial operator takes the similar role as the host in private activities by providing and serving the food by themselves.

INCORPORATION PRIVATE AND SOCIAL DOMAIN INTO COMMERCIAL HOSPITALITY PRACTICE

There is a strong relation among social, private and commercial domains. The success of a commercial hospitality operation relies on how the management uses the private and social domain manner into commercial hospitality practice (Lashley, 2000). The social and private attitudes would be useful if applied in the commercial operation, because in the social and private hospitality, the host generally treats and serves the guests in a better way with a more genuine motive rather than in the commercial hospitality sense. Therefore, Lashley suggests to 'treat the customer, as though they were guests in our own home'. (2000, p.13).

The manner of private activities can be applied in commercial hospitality in order to deliver service to the guest such as calling the guest by his/her name. People are more likely to be appreciative if he/she is called by the name because the guest will feel as part of a group rather than as an outsider. Therefore, it is suggested to the service provider to remember as many guest names as possible. The hotel, for example, celebrates its guest's birthday or wedding anniversary by giving a surprise gift such as a cake

tart, voucher, souvenir, and the like. Similarly, the social activities can be performed for the guests in the commercial domain by delivering a greeting in the arrival area or public area to make a favourable impression. According to King (1995), this social ritual in conjunction with the hospitality process is also expected in commercial hospitality because welcoming guests at the gates in their arrival converts the status of the guest from outsider to insider as well as defines the guests' status which recognises his/her importance to the organization. This action will become more important if the guest has a higher social status in the community such as a president, minister, widely known people, and so forth. In addition, welcoming and greeting guests in their initial stage is as important as delivering thanks and acknowledgement upon their departure (King, 1995). In other words, the higher the social status, the higher the need to be recognized and acknowledged by the community.

Some activities mentioned above, indeed, would be appropriately applied in commercial hospitality provision. When the service provider in commercial hospitality performs those manners above, guests can be satisfied, impressed and hopefully 'word will get around'. As a result, more people will come and help make a profit for the commercial business. Reuland, Choundry and Fagel (1985) view that the hospitality process involves 3 (three) elements. These are the provider (waiter, receptionist, etc), the receiver (guests), and the transfer (starts when the receiver comes to the provider of hospitality). This hospitality process comprises 3 (three) elements: product (meal, beer, or bed), behaviour and attitudes of employees, and environment (lay-out, furniture). The hospitality offered to the guests how their needs and expectations should be fulfilled that they expect to be realized in the transaction. If guests' needs and expectations are realised in the commercial provision, they will be satisfied. These satisfied guests can result in a return visit. King states that by knowing what guests' needs and expectation are and what makes guests happy, the providers can avoid offering what the guests do not want and deliver exceptional services and products to them (1995). The key to be successful in commercial hospitality is having some knowledge of what would invoke great pleasure in the guest and delivering it flawlessly and generously (p.229).

By incorporating the private and social provision attitude of the host into a commercial hospitality provision, it can lead the commercial business to improve by increasing its quality of services and products. As Worsfold (1999) states, it is generally acknowledged that quality improvement can lead to

increased productivity, performance, and profit. Since commercial hospitality underlies its business on money exchange, it is compulsory for commercial hospitality to deliver its best services and products quality to guests who pay for it. In other words, the aim of the commercial hospitality provision to generate return visits can be achieved when the management of the commercial provision applies the essence of both social and private domain in its operation. Lashley (2000) mentions that initially hospitality is essentially a relationship based on host and guest. The attitudes such as being hospitable, caring for a stranger, concern with guest's status and so forth is "an additional and fruit line of enquiry" (p. 15). Similarly, in the private setting, the relationship between host and guest, which is revealed in commercial operations, has grown from the early domestic setting. Therefore, in order to be effective in running a commercial operation, 'hospitality requires the guest to feel that the host is being hospitable through feelings of generosity, a desire to please, and a genuine regard for the guest as an individual' (p.15).

CONCLUSION

The meaning of hospitality can be defined simply as the idea of being friendly, kind, and hospitable. Being friendly, kind, and hospitable to someone is an intangible activity that can be transformed into a tangible one when the actions of inviting and providing food, drink, and accommodation involve. In fact, the idea being of hospitable in our society has been known since human beings interact with each other in their community or society. However, as the time changes, the understanding of hospitality provision develops and evolves. It comes along with the changes in complexity of the social-interactions in the community.

The understanding of hospitality activities can be more sharpened by acknowledging the hospitality activities into 3 (three) domains. Those three domains, basically, are social, private and commercial domains. As hospitality is associated with the meeting of guest's needs and expectations and entertaining with giving pleasure, it is the commercial hospitality provision. It challenges the activities to make the guest feel satisfied and impressed with its services and products by applying the essence of social and private hospitality manners effectively in its operations. By implementing the essence of social and private hospitality, knowing what pleases and satisfies the guests, hospitality operators might avoid what the guests do not like and want which ultimately

will enable the hospitality business to perform exceptionally well in delivering the product and service.

A further question might be asked is that whether it is possible for the commercial hospitality to genuinely apply the attitudes of the social and private domains in its operation by being hospitable with the generosity feeling and a genuine motive to the guest. The answer is YES, IT IS POSSIBLE.

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