

Paradigmatic Barriers to Innovation in Hospitality Provision: The mismatch between theory and practice

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Background

Recent challenges within the hospitality industry highlight a critical need for research and innovation to inform management practice. Surprisingly, however, a comprehensive review of literature has found that innovation research within the industry is scant and that innovative practice lags behind many other industries.

Aims

The authors' argue that the current hospitality management paradigm presents a barrier to innovation, which is compounded by a failure to recognise that hospitality and tourism experiences have important emotional dimensions.

Much of the hospitality and tourism academic literature implies that the sector represents one more facet of the service industry.

Marketing of services, for example, applies the same concepts to hotel and restaurant customers, as those applied to marketing to laundry and financial service customers (Lovelock, 1999).

In addition, the hospitality and tourism management paradigm is informed by Taylorism which originated in the manufacturing sector.

Under this regimen corporate pressure to increase control, calculability, predictability and efficiency is central (Ritzer, 2006). When transferred to services, however, these systems minimise human discretion and personal initiative resulting in standardised and scripted service interactions.

In the food and beverage sector, for example, performance is monitored on the basis of a series of metrics, for instance, food cost percentage.

Many of these metrics are inconsistent with genuine hospitality and acts of hospitableness and ultimately lead to ‘inhospitable hospitality’.

Moreover, the rigid adherence to systems and processes, many of which originate overseas, removes creative management dimensions and the industry then presents a mundane and stressful career option.

This then limits the appeal of the industry as a career option for university graduates,

The nature of the relationship between those offering hospitality experiences in bars, hotels and restaurants and the recipients of those experiences is of key importance to an analytical understanding of the commercial domain of hospitality.

The goal, after all, is to create memorable experiences and enable guests to feel a bond of friendship, hosting behaviour needs to reflect the traditions of hospitality and hospitableness

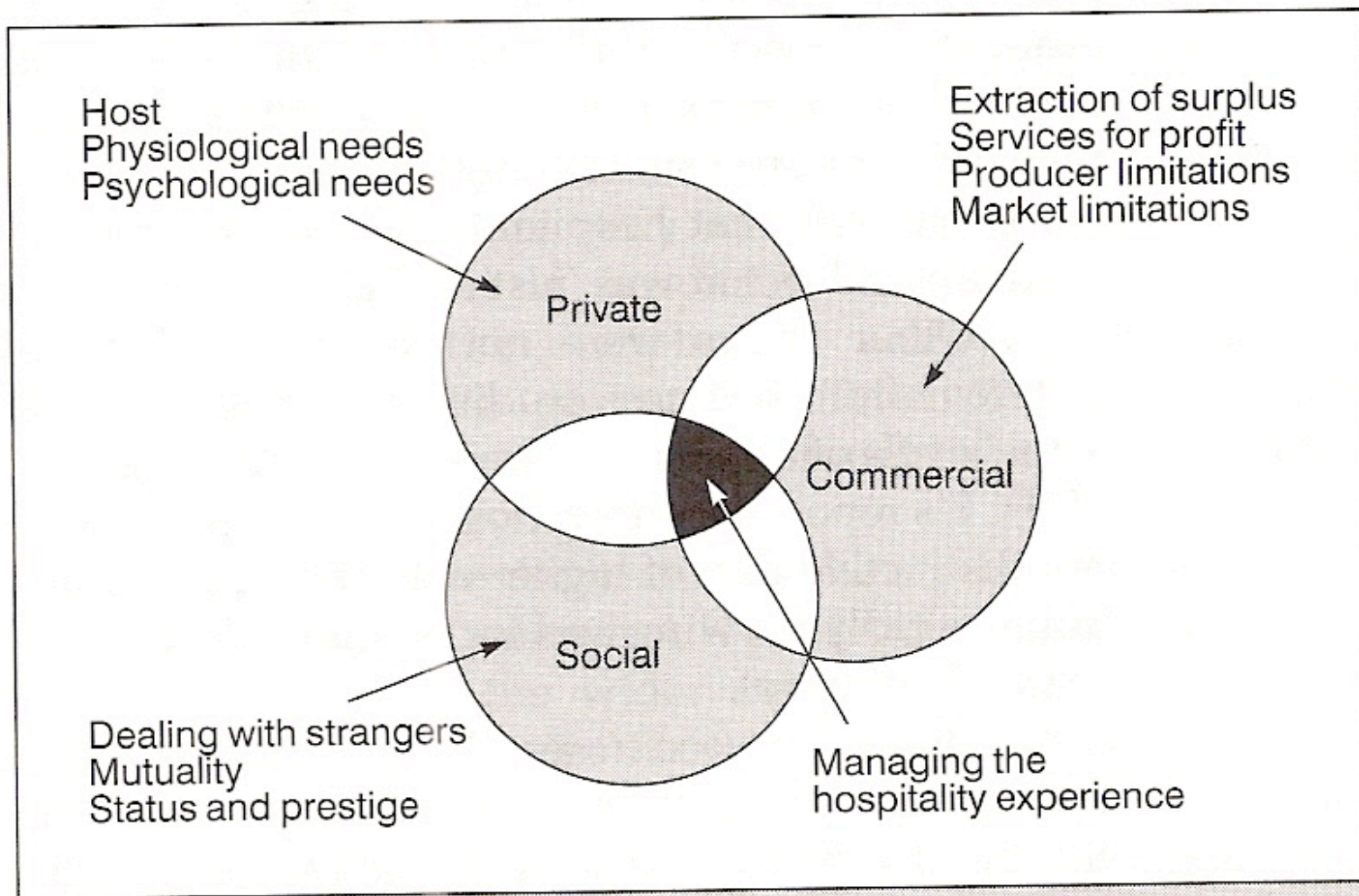
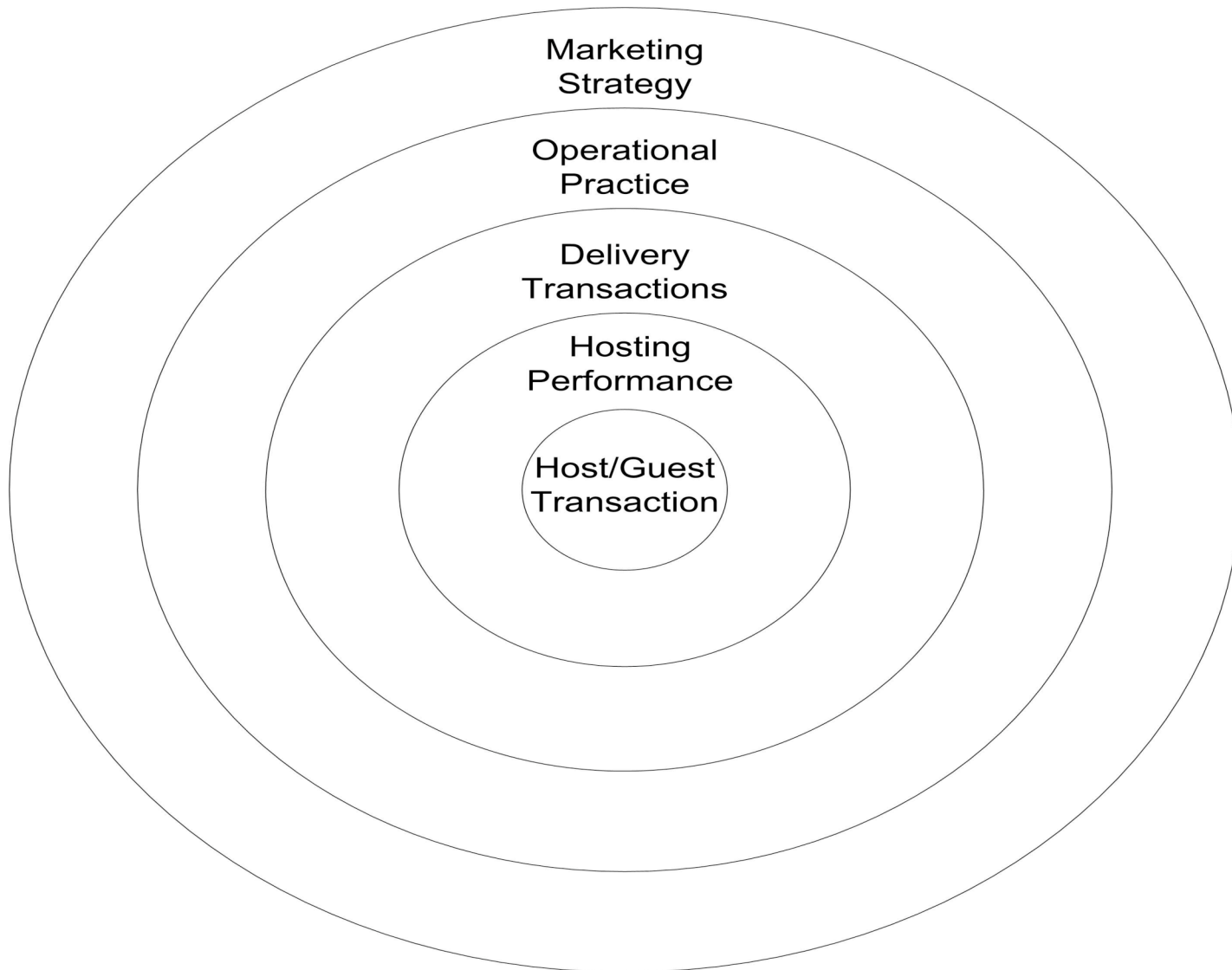


Figure 1.1 Hospitality activities.

By providing hospitality experiences that are delivered by individuals who are welcoming and hosting guests in a way that converts ‘strangers into friends’ it is possible to develop a loyal base of ‘customers who are friends’.



Indeed, making traditional hospitality and the emotional dimensions of guest experiences the heart of commercial hospitality and tourism marketing is, in principal, advocating a business strategy which aims to gain competitive advantage through the uniqueness of the service quality (Kotler, 2003)

A quality strategy is likely to develop more loyal customers and will be less susceptible to competitor pressures. The approach advocated here adds a further dimension to this because traditional hospitality suggests that good hosting leads to strangers becoming friends. In a commercial context the approach suggests that making customers into friends intensifies the levels of loyalty because of the emotional attachment of the relationship.