

The role of warmth in the experience of hospitality - an exploratory study

Aim

What service attributes result in an experience of hospitality? Research has shown that the experience of hospitality in service environments is represented by three factors: *inviting*, *care* and *comfort* (Pijls, Groen, Galetzka & Pruyn, 2017). These factors are expected to be triggered by mental concepts grounded in bodily sensations.

The current study explores the effect of cold versus warm furniture material and cold versus hot drinks on the on the experience of hospitality via the experience of mental warmth among customers of a theatre. The hypotheses are:

- H1 *Touching and drinking a hot drink will lead to the experience of hospitality*
- H2 *Touching and drinking a hot drink will lead to the experience of physical warmth, and subsequently mental warmth, which will result in an increased experience of hospitality, compared to touching and drinking a cold drink.*
- H3 *Sitting on furniture made of warm material will lead to the experience of hospitality*
- H4 *Sitting on furniture made of warm material will lead to the experience of physical warmth, and subsequently mental warmth, which will result in an increased experience of hospitality, compared to touching and drinking a cold drink.*

The Experience of Hospitality Scale (EH-Scale)*

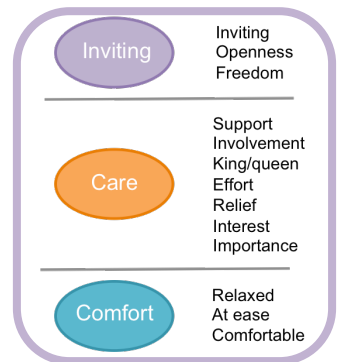
The PhD research project has already resulted in:

- Understanding what customers experience as hospitality
- A novel and compact assessment scale (EH-scale) for measuring customers' experience of hospitality at any kind of service organization.

The EH-Scale takes a broader perspective compared to existing scales, which predominantly measure hospitable behavior of service employees and are specifically developed for organizations in the hospitality industry. A thorough approach containing two qualitative and two quantitative studies resulted in the thirteen-item scale.

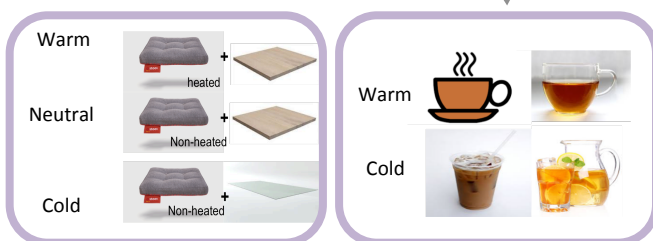
In the present study the EH-scale is used to measure the role of physical warmth in the experience of hospitality.

* Pijls, Groen, Galetzka & Pruyn (2017). Measuring the experience of hospitality: scale development and validation. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 67, 125-133.



Method

3 x 2 factorial design



Visitors to the theatre (n=196) were asked to fill in the survey, (13-item Experience of Hospitality Scale and the perceived physical and mental warmth), while holding and drinking either a warm or a cold drink, and while sitting either on warm, neutral or cold furniture.



Preliminary (main) results

- Warm furniture leads to higher ratings on the experience of *inviting* and *comfort* than cold furniture. This effect is mediated by the perceived temperature of the furniture.
- Warm drinks lead to higher ratings on the experience on *care* than cold drinks. This effect is **not** mediated by the perceived temperature of the drinks.

Embodied cognition may explain the effect of warm furniture, but not the effect of warm drinks. Why do warm drinks lead to an increased experience of hospitality? Is it the symbolic meaning of the type of drink (coffee and tea) that is associated with hospitality?

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