
The Role of FM in (Students') Images of Hospitality

Brenda H. Groen¹, Ruth Pijls², Hester van Sprang³, and Xander D. Lub⁴

¹ PhD, Research Center Hospitality, Hospitality Business School, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Handelskade 75, 7417 DH Deventer, The Netherlands; PH (+31(0)645594501; email: b.h.groen@saxion.nl

² MSc, Research Center Hospitality, Hospitality Business School, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Handelskade 75, 7417 DH Deventer, The Netherlands; PH (+31(0)630408335; email: r.pijls@saxion.nl

³ MSc, Research Center Hospitality, Hospitality Business School, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Handelskade 75, 7417 DH Deventer, The Netherlands; PH (+31(0)645594392; email: h.vansprang@saxion.nl

⁴ PhD, Research Center Hospitality, Hospitality Business School, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Handelskade 75, 7417 DH Deventer, The Netherlands; PH (+31(0)645594484; email: x.d.lub@saxion.nl

Abstract

In the Netherlands, hospitality is increasingly seen as a soft FM service that adds value to core business; it is included in the European FM standard, NEN-EN-15221-1. However, the scope of 'hospitality' is topic of an ongoing academic debate spanning much more extensive conceptualizations than this code. Conceptual frameworks may include tangible and intangible elements: behavior/attitude, service, building-related aspects, and ambiance. A number of these aspects are also part of FM. Field work is needed to determine the interrelationship between FM and hospitality. Images may provide richer information than purely verbal methods. Though image-based methods like participant-led photography (PLP) are being used in e.g. tourism research and anthropology/sociology, they are uncommon in FM research. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between hospitality and FM, using PLP. Students were invited to submit images representing 'hospitality' and 'no hospitality', taken during field trips, with a short explanation. Few images focused on behavioral aspects. Design-related aspects dominated the images of 'hospitality'. 'No hospitality' often showed poor FM performance, like inadequate cleaning and maintenance. Furthermore, work-in-progress and restricted entrance were unanimously labeled 'inhospitable'. PLP, a new methodology in FM research, proved practical and may be used by facility managers to obtain insight in end users' perception of the (in)hospitableness of their buildings.

Keywords: design, hospitality, maintenance, participant-led photography, services.

Introduction

The European NEN-EN 15221-1 standard for facility management recognizes 'hospitality' as being part of facility management, in its section "people and organization". It categorizes hospitality in terms of human behavior (to welcome visitors), primarily in the context of service (registration of visitors, providing food & beverages and meeting rooms, as well as taking care of work wear and laundry). In the NEN code, hospitality is defined as "Providing a hospitable working environment making people feel welcome and comfortable" and includes:

- Welcome, registration and guidance of visitors.
 - Provision of food and beverage to personnel and guests
 - The deliverance of support in arranging meeting rooms and events
 - The deliverance, cleaning and keeping in good order of work wear for the staff, for instance security people, chauffeurs, room keepers, management and front office workers and other textiles
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- The laundry of textiles (clothing, curtains/doormats/carpets, table linen, bed linen and towels (e.g. hotels, hospitals) including logistics and planning/organization" (NEN-EN 15221-1, 2006).

However, this description of hospitality is rather limited when compared to the discussion on the nature of hospitality in academic literature.

What is Hospitality?

First, it is not uncommon in academic literature to adhere to such a rather vocational description of hospitality. The word ‘hospitality’ is often used to describe a rather broad field, including lodging, food service, leisure, conferences, travel, and events (Ottenbacher et al., 2009). Cassee (1983) refers to it as "a harmonious mixture of food, beverage, and/or shelter, a physical environment, and the behavior and attitude of people". Reuland et al. (1985) defined hospitality as "a balanced combination of (1) the material product in a narrow sense, (2) the behavior and attitude of the employees who come in direct contact with the guests, and (3) the environment (the accommodation)". Hepple et al. (1990) state that it is conferred by a host on a guest who is away from home, it is interactive, involving the coming together of a provider and receiver, comprising of a blend of tangible and intangible factors, whereby the host provides for the guest’s security, psychological and physiological comfort. Brotherton & Wood (2000: 142) call it "a contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual well being of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation, and/or food, and/or drink". These definitions all include products (food and beverage), place (accommodation), and staff behavior, and are suitable to describe hospitality in a business-sense.

Other authors focus more on the human side of hospitality, on interpersonal behavior, and are less linked to commercial hospitality. The etymology of ‘hospitality’ shows it’s Latin root, "hospes", meaning guest, host as well as stranger (O’Gorman, 2007). It refers to the old responsibility of inviting travelers/strangers into your home, offering them shelter and food, and safety, for a limited time-span. It is a social exchange, and both host and guest need to abide the unwritten rules of hospitality. Indeed, the philosopher Derrida defined hospitality as inviting and welcoming the “stranger” (O’Gorman, 2006). Lashley (2000: 54) states, “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”. According to Morrison and O’Gorman (2006) "it represents the cordial reception, welcome and entertainment of guests or strangers of diverse social backgrounds and cultures charitably, socially or commercially with kind and generous liberality, into one’s home space to dine and/or lodge". Telfer considers hospitality even be a moral virtue (Telfer, 2000). Given the description of hospitality in NEN-EN 15221-1, we might conclude that it is rather focused on the tangible aspects of hospitality, the facility service quality, whereas the intangible aspects - the interaction with the service provider - seem undervalued.

Considering the service aspect, be it facility services or hospitality services, in the present competitive world the quality of services is important, but it may be the experience rather than the service itself that counts (Gronroos, 1984). Service encounters are “a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service” (Shostack, 1985). Authors like Wong (2004) indeed focus on the interaction between customer and service provider. Other authors include more tangible elements. The concept of “servicescape” encompasses the service itself, the interaction but also the service environment (Bitner, 1992). Kim and Moon (2009) have added seating comfort

and facility aesthetics as elements of servicescape. Also Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009) emphasize the importance of both humanware (employee characteristics that impact on interaction with customers) and hardware (design and ambiance). And Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2009) state that “atmosphere” consists of interaction but also ambience and design, each influencing the emotional experience of a customer. Berry, Wall and Carbone (2006) add the influence of the senses. They distinguish three kind of service clues, namely functional, mechanic, and humanic, stating that “in interacting with organizations, customers consciously and unconsciously filter experience clues and organize them into a set of impressions, some more rational or calculative and others more emotional”. An experience clue is “anything in the service experience the customer perceives by its presence or absence. If the customer can see, hear, taste, or smell it, it is a clue” (Berry et al., 2006). The overview in Table 1 shows three dimensions of service, namely interaction, ambience and design.

Table 1. Overview of Dimensions of Service Experience

Dimension	Elements	Authors
Humanic	Behavioral	Shostack (1985), Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009), Bitner (1992), Slatten and Mehmetoglu (2009), Ariffin (2013), Lucas (2003), Wong (2004), Berry et al. (2006), Pullman and Robson (2007)
Ambiance	Mechanics	Berry et al. (2006)
	Ambient conditions	Bitner (1992), Lucas (2003), Pullman and Robson (2007), Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2009), Kim and Moon (2009)
	Sensory input	Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009)
Design	Interior design	Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009)
	Signs, symbols and artifacts lay-out	Bitner (1992)
	Architecture	Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2009)
	Amenities, design (signage, furniture fixture and equipment, lay-out)	Pullman and Robson (2007)
	Facility aesthetics, lay-out and seating comfort	Kim and Moon (2009)
	Seating comfort, decor, lay-out; cleanliness	Lucas (2003)

Therefore, the abovementioned dimensions of service quality may be applied to hospitality, as both tangible elements such as accommodation, ambience, design, and intangible (behavioral) elements are included. However, which elements of behavior, ambience and design matter according to the guest? Field research into hospitality-as-experienced is not abundant. Examples are e.g. Brotherton (2005) and Brotherton and Wood (2008), who researched which words customers associate with hospitality in the traditional hospitality industry.

Image-Based Techniques for Hospitality and Service Quality Research

Verbal techniques, however, require people to phrase their impressions. This is easier for quality of operational services, objective clues and manifest meanings that we consciously observe, than for subjective clues, underlying latent meanings, and emotions. To explain the distinction between objective and subjective clues, Bakic-Miric (2008) used the metaphor of an iceberg: “It can be seen as an iceberg with the tangible expressions of culture and behavior above the surface of the water and the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values and meanings below the surface”. Subjective clues are not only less tangible than objective clues; people are also unaware of most of these subjective clues. They are stored in our subconscious memory. People are able to tell

how they feel, express preferences or indicate what they would decide in a particular situation. However, people do not know why they feel the way they feel, cannot explain why they prefer something to something else or why they make a particular decision. People often *think* they know why they think or behave in a certain way, but their arguments are often incongruent (Dijksterhuis, 2007). Therefore, surveys and interviews do not necessarily deliver a complete description of hospitality.

Observations can be used to investigate what people do, but more generative techniques are needed to uncover feelings and emotions, tacit and latent knowledge (Sleeswijk Visser et al., 2005). The use of images instead of words offers such an alternative. In the world around us visual media play a key role in social and psychological activities (Reavy & Johnson, 2008), and modern technology enables us to produce and share images. Warren and Vince (2012) state that we have "a cultural predisposition towards "the aesthetic" in contemporary advanced consumer society that generates an image-saturated society".

Photo-elicitation, the use of photo's or pictures as a tool in interviews, has become a widely employed method within the area of sociology, and has also been used for food and health research (see Justesen et al., 2014). Pijls and Groen (2012) have shown the value of research based on images for the elucidation of the concept cleanliness. Respondents provided richer feedback when using images than when asked for a verbal description of clean or dirty. Furthermore, verbal responses related often to functional clues, direct manifestations of dirt, whereas images had a stronger connection with underlying and latent meanings of dirty and clean.

Few articles use images or photos in research into the nature of hospitality, even though this method may be used to explore a more complete conceptualization of hospitality experiences including emotional and tacit evaluations of services. Therefore, the aim of this research was to add to the research into the nature of hospitality, and elucidate the meaning of hospitality for facility management, by exploring the concept of hospitality through photo-elicitation.

Research Methods

Using the method of participant-led photography, first year students from a Hospitality Business School (bachelor in Facility Management, Hotel Management and Tourism Management) were invited to send in images representing 'hospitality' and 'no hospitality', taken with their cell phones during field trips in the first month of their program, with a short explanation regarding the content and meaning of the images. These field trip took place the first month of the year. Lecturers involved in these field trips briefed the students about the assignment, and instructed them to send their pictures to a university mailbox, including a short motivation why they choose these particular images representing (no) hospitality.

A total number of 626 pictures, taken at 49 different organizations throughout the Netherlands were analyzed; internet images and texts without images were excluded from the analysis. Analysis of photos is more subjective than analysis of closed-ended questions in surveys and requires content-based analytical methodologies. In this research, the researchers devised a set of descriptive labels for the images, taking into account the descriptions and motivations that the students added to the photos. These texts support the labels, and are essential for interpretation of the images. Labels were developed in two independent rounds, each by two researchers.

Categorizations by both Berry et al. (2006) and Pullman and Robson (2006) were used to develop the labels that were consequently used to code the visual data.

Results

The Participant-Led Photography delivered 626 photo's, taken at 49 different organizations. Examples of organizations are hotels, hospital, a soccer club, a hospital, a nursing home, a flower exhibition, a city hall, and a sports centre. Table 2 shows that the majority of the students that sent in photos was female, from the bachelor Tourism Management. Almost two-thirds of the respondents sent in two pictures, but numbers for individual respondents ranged from 1-15 photos; 357 pictures (57%) represented 'hospitality', 246 pictures (39%) represented 'no hospitality', 23 pictures could not be interpreted.

The labeling of the photos can be viewed in Figure 1. Sensory aspects included mainly visual aspects, and were coded under design. One student sent a comment about stench (without a photograph), sounds and touch were not mentioned, taste was not mentioned separately but is represented by the aspect "F&B".

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents: Gender and Bachelor Program

Gender	Facility Management	Tourism Management	Hotel Management	Total
Female	15	139	15	169
Male	5	48	4	57
Unknown		1	0	1
Total	20	188	19	227

A relatively small number of photos were labeled 'behavior/attitude', within the dimension 'humanic' (Table 3-4); 22 photos (6%) of the 357 photos that represented hospitality and 17 photos (7%) of the 246 photos that represented 'no hospitality'. Examples are helpful and friendly staff (Table 4, photo 1, 'hospitality'), or staff at the reception that ignored the guests (Table 4, photo 2, 'no hospitality'). Noteworthy are photos that refer to inhospitable behavior of other guests, like littering (Table 4, photo 3). The aspects regarding staff could be interpreted as belonging to the "Welcome, registration and guidance of visitors" aspect (NEN-EN 15221-1).

A second humanic aspect is service performance (Table 3; Table 5-7, photos 4-11). Approximately 10% of the 'hospitality' photos showed an aspect of service performance. Students associated preparedness with hospitality: well-prepared rooms, ready to use for the guest (Table 7, photo 10). A large number of photos represented service performance that was lacking hospitality, namely 180 photos, being 73% of the total number of 'no hospitality' photos.

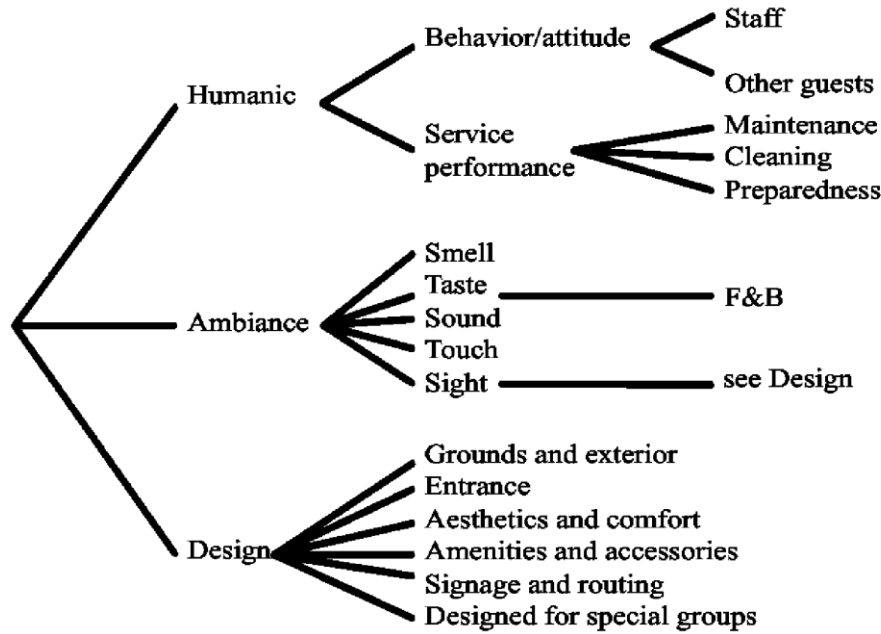


Figure 1. Dimensions (Humanic, Ambiance and Design) and Labels, Based on Pullman and Robson (2007) and Berry et al. (2006).

Any evidence of work-in-progress, be it cleaning equipment in sight, building materials, or dishwashers or open stockrooms were considered inhospitable. The implication is that students do not want to be confronted with back-office work, they want service to look “effortless”. Furthermore, dirt/untidiness and inadequate/deferred maintenance was considered not hospitable (Table 5, photos 4-6). This is a clear indication of the importance of adequate facility management for hospitality.

The well-prepared meeting rooms are covered by NEN-EN 15221-1 in “deliverance of support in arranging meeting rooms and events”, and the dirt/untidiness is partly covered by “laundry of textiles”. However, the other aspects are not categorized under hospitality, but as “cleaning” or “maintenance an operations”.

Ambiance, in the form of F&B (taste) was very much appreciated by the students (Table 8, photos 12-13), especially a (free) cup of coffee. A total of 49 photos (14%) of F&B referred to hospitality, 9 photos (4%) referred to lack of hospitality regarding F&B. This is part of “Provision of food and beverage to personnel and guests” in NEN-EN 15221-1.

The third and last dimension is 'design', which is especially suitable to capture in photos (Table 9-12; photos 14-22). 78% of the photos representing 'hospitality' showed design-related images. These positive images often referred to welcome signs (Table 10, photo 16), comfortable seating (Table 10, photo 15) and reception desks. Decor and accessories were also appreciated as signs of hospitality. Furthermore, students appreciated small presents, extras like bathrobes in hotel rooms and goody bags. However, also 40% of the photos that represented 'no hospitality' were design-related. Students associated e.g. turnstiles, hard seats, and uncomfortable beds with lack of hospitality (Table 11, photos 17-18). These pictures cannot be categorized under ‘hospitality’ in NEN-EN 15221-1, even though many could be labeled as “outdoors” (parking, grounds), “space”

(waste disposal utilities), “workplace” (furniture, plants and flower arrangements, decorations), “health, safety, security and environment” (turnstiles), “logistics” (routing and way finding, storage).

A special category was "design for special groups", such as check-in and toilet especially designed for children (Table 12, photos 20-21), and availability of wheelchairs (Table 12, photo 22) as well as entrances suitable for wheelchairs. This item does not receive special attention in NEN-EN 15221-1.

Table 3. Numbers of Photo's That Represent the Labels 'Behavior' and 'Service Performance' Within the Dimension 'Humanic'

Dimension	Label	Sublabel	Hospitality		No hospitality	
			Frequency	Examples of students' comments	Frequency	Examples of students' comments
Humanic	Behavior	Staff	22	Helpful, friendly staff	9	Inattentive staff
		Other guests or other users	0		8	Other guests have left garbage
		Total Behavior	22		17	
	Service performance	Cleaning	2	Clean environment	74	Dirt, untidy
		Maintenance	2	Sustainable maintenance	22	Insufficient maintenance, broken equipment, worn-out materials
		Work-in-sight	-		41	Building materials, building equipment
		Prepared for visitors	11	Everything ready for visitors	26	Room not ready, beamer not ready, queue, waiting for presenter
		Total Service performance	14		163	
	Total humanic		36		180	
	Humanic, Ambiance and Design		357		246	

Table 4. Examples of Photos Representing 'Behavior' Within the Dimension 'Humanic'




	Photo 1:	Photo 2:	Photo 3:
Photo:			
Dimension:	Humanic	Humanic	Humanic
Hospitality?	Yes	No	No
Label:	Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Sublabel:	Staff Behavior	Staff Behavior	Guest/user behavior
Student's comment:	"I associate the picture with hospitality, because the man is welcoming you and he is showing you where you can park".	"the employees at the front desk did not greet us when we arrived; that's a pity, the front desk really offers the first opportunity for contact with the guest"	"The dressing room had trashcans, so it would seem logical to throw your garbage away. They did not do that"

Table 5. Examples of Photos Representing 'Service Performance' Within the Dimension 'Humanic'.



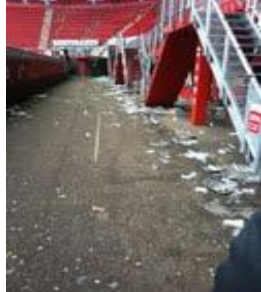
	Photo 4:	Photo 5:	Photo 6:
Photo:			
Dimension:	Service performance	Service performance	Service performance
Hospitality?	No	No	No
Label:	Maintenance	Maintenance	Cleaning
Student's comment:	"Worn-out equipment"	"Stains in the carpet"	"There was a lot of garbage. There had been a soccer match the day before, and I do understand that they couldn't tidy everything before 9 a.m., but they might have cleaned those areas that we would cross, because it was known for quite some time that we would visit. Other parts of the arena had been cleaned. I do want to mention that the host did apologize"

Table 6. Examples of Photos Representing 'Service Performance' Within the Dimension 'Humanic'.




	Photo 7:	Photo 8:	Photo 9:
Photo:			
Dimension:	Service performance	Service performance	Service performance
Hospitality?	No	No	No
Label:	Work-in-progress	Prepared for visitor	Prepared for visitor
Student's comment:	"I did not find it very hospitable that people were working on something within sight of the guests. I would do that after hours"	"We had to wait for the tour, outside, and it was cold; that is not very hospitable, why didn't they let us wait somewhere inside?"	"When we arrived in the meeting room, they were still working on the beamer, they were not well-prepared"

Table 7. Examples of Photos Representing 'Service Performance' Within the Dimension 'Humanic'.


	Photo 10:	Photo 11:
Photo:		
Dimension:	Service performance	Service performance
Hospitality?	Yes	Yes
Label:	Prepared for visitor	Prepared for visitor
Student's comment:	"Room is ready for use"	"Everything had been well-prepared before we entered, that gives me the feeling that I'm welcome"

Table 8. Examples of Photos (Including Comments) Representing the Dimension 'Ambiance'.

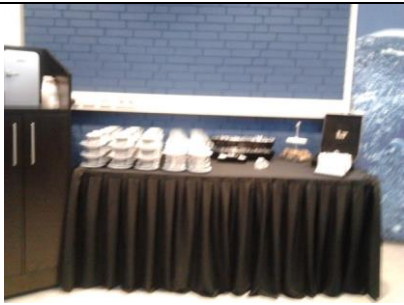

	Photo 12:	Photo 13:
Photo:		
Dimension:	Ambiance	Ambiance
Hospitality?	Yes	Yes
Label:	F&B	F&B
Student's comment:	"coffee, tea and cookie's, that's hospitable"	"During several visits they had prepared something to drink for us. This gave me the feeling that I was very welcome and that had taken time to prepare"

Table 9. Numbers of photo's that represent the various aspects within the dimension 'design'. The total number of photos representing

Dimension	Labels	Hospitality		No hospitality	
		Frequency	Examples of students' comments	Frequency	Examples of students' comments
Design	Grounds and exterior of building	11	Attractive building	36	Ugly
	Entrance/reception	23	Check-in desks	16	Turnstile
	Signage and routing	121	Welcome signs, clear signage on premises	6	Wrong information
	Aesthetics and comfort of space and furniture	62	Pleasing and/or comfortable spaces and furniture	35	Boring
	Amenities, accessories	32	Free samples, extra towels, flower arrangements, nice details	4	
	Designed for special groups	29	Wheelchairs available, suited for children	2	Entrance not suitable for wheelchair
	Total Design	278		99	
Humanic, Ambiance and Design		357		246	

Table 10. Examples of photos (including comments) representing the dimension 'Design'.




	Photo 14:	Photo 15:	Photo 16:
Photo:			
Dimension:	Design	Design	Design
Hospitality?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Label:	Entrance	Aesthetics and comfort	Signage/routing
Student's comment:	"The man who plays the piano stands for me for hospitality, it gives you a warm and happy welcome"	No comments added	"It is a very simple sign with 'welcome Saxion', it is simple and small but you immediately notice it. Gives you the impression that they have thought about us and we are welcome"

Table 11. Examples of photos (including comments) representing the dimension 'Design'.







	Photo 17:	Photo 18:	Photo 19:
Photo:			
Dimension:	Design	Design	Design
Hospitality?	No	No	No
Label:	Aesthetics and comfort	Entrance	Grounds and exterior
Student's comment:	"I thought the chairs were not hospitality. They were uncomfortable and then sitting for two hours seems a very long time"	"This is not hospitable"	"Ugly and unkempt"

Table 12. Examples of photos (including comments) representing the dimension 'Design'.

	Photo 20:	Photo 21:	Photo 22:
Photo:			
Dimension:	Design	Design	Design
Hospitality?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Label:	Designed for special groups	Designed for special groups	Designed for special groups
Student's comment:	"The hotel is primarily a business hotel; still, for the kids they have a special check-in"	"A childrens' toilet"	"Rentable wheelchairs which I find very hospitable"

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this research was to elucidate the meaning of hospitality for facility management, by exploring the concept of hospitality through an image-based research method. The research delivered a large number of photos, taken during field trips to 49 different organizations. Interpretation of many photos was aided by students' comments. The three dimensions in Table 1 were present, most both in positive and in negative images, representing 'hospitality' and 'no hospitality'. The labeling, based on Pullman and Robson (2007) and Berry et al. (2006) proved to be useful to label the photos. This implies that the dimensions identified by these authors also apply to hospitality, which supports the idea that hospitality is more than the limited description in the European NEN-EN 15221-1 standard. Students associated a number of visual clues with hospitality: hospitable behavior, but also a clean, tidy, comfortable environment, a cup of coffee, a pleasing exterior and interior of the building, a welcome sign, and a room ready for use. One might argue that these are clues with the latent meaning of thoughtfulness. The photos were taken during field trips to organizations; any (visible) proof that these organizations were aware that the students were coming seems to be synonymous to hospitality for the students, whereas 'hospitality' was most often associated with being unprepared, careless and therefore apparently not interested in the guests' wellbeing.

According to the CEN (European Committee for Standardization, 2009) "Facility Management is the integration of processes within an organization to maintain and develop the agreed services which support and improve the effectiveness of its primary activities". According to Friday and Cotts (1995) these are e.g. accommodation, maintenance, cleaning, security and reception, utilities, internal decoration, signage, and catering. Each of these elements are represented in the photos sent in by the students, showing that many of these aspects that represent hospitality are delivered by the facility manager and his/her staff. The results of this research may be influenced by the purposive sample, namely students of the Hospitality Business School. However, most of these students had been studying Tourism Management, not Facility Management, for only one month, and no significant differences were found between photos sent in by students from Hotel Management, Tourism Management and Facility Management. Furthermore, we may conclude that the photos show that hospitality is not limited to the tangible aspects of hospitality in the

European NEN-EN 15221-1 standard for facility management. Our current understanding of hospitality in FM is too limited and future research could further elucidate the impact of emotional and tacit evaluations of the environment management by FM.

The photos represented behavior, service performance, ambiance and design, which are both tangible and intangible elements of hospitality. Notably, many of these elements fall under the responsibility of the facility manager, showing that facility management plays an essential role in creating an environment that conveys a feeling of hospitality. The results indicate that - at least in a European/Dutch setting - current FM standards underestimate the importance of FM for hospitality, and we argue that further research is needed in the interrelationship between FM and hospitality. Future research will be needed to determine whether the results can be replicated with other participants, in order to generalize the results. Age and cultural backgrounds might influence peoples' perceptions of hospitality, and will be considered in future research projects.

Furthermore, we conclude that participant-led photography is a suitable tool: cameras on cell phones provide a unique opportunity for end-users (employees and guests alike) to provide feedback on aspects of (no) hospitality, on a continuous basis. Once suitable labels have been determined, a framework like the one in Figure 1 may be used to obtain quick and continuous insight in the status quo of the hospitality of a building or an organization. Furthermore, the pictures representing (no) hospitality make intangible aspects of hospitality, such as aesthetics and design visible. This might help Facility Managers to create a hospitable environment, containing both tangible and intangible hospitality characteristics.

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