

Article

Perceptions of Hospitality and Safety are Two Sides of the Same Coin

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Abstract: Entering a building is a ‘moment of truth’ and may invoke feelings of hospitableness. Physical environments and staff behaviour deliver ‘clues’ that may result in the experience of hospitality. The focus in a reception area may be on mitigation of risks, or on a hospitable atmosphere, with either a host or a security officer at the entrance. However, the division of tasks to either the pleasing host or the controlling security officer to a certain extent disavows the overlap between perceptions of hospitality and safety. This exploratory qualitative study combines a group interview with three managers responsible for hospitality and security in reception areas and Critical Incidents by staff and visitors (N = 51). Thematic coding was based on The Egg Aggregated Model and the Experience of Hospitality Scale. Results show that hospitality and safety are indeed two sides of the same coin. Usually people do accept security measures, provided that staff act in a hospitable way. A lack of security measures may seem ‘inviting’, but also decreases the perception of care for your visitor, and may cause uncertainty and therefore decrease comfort. A correct risk perception, flexible appliance of security measures, and a friendly approach connect aspects of ‘safe’ and ‘hospitable’ sentiments.

Keywords: perceived hospitality; perceived safety; risk perception; safety culture; reception; building entrance

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1. Introduction

Hospitality is a broad concept that originates from the Latin ‘hospes’, meaning host, guest, and stranger [1]. The offer of hospitality recognises the mutual obligations of the host and guest [2]; hosts need to ensure the well-being of their guests, while guests need to respect the rules of the host and to reciprocate. Derrida and Dufourmantelle [3] point out that hospitality encompasses the impossible pairing of the necessary openness to the other and the equally essential exclusionary sovereignty.

Hospitality may be used to control strangers and outsiders [4]. This control perspective particularly applies to building entrances and receptions. The reception may invoke feelings of hospitableness in guests but may also be perceived as a barrier. Depending on an organisation’s risk perception and risk aversion, or on a positive image of humankind, the focus of a receptionist is more on either the benign or the harmful aspects of guests, resulting in the use of either a host or a security officer at the entrance. This division of tasks to either the pleasing host or the controlling security officer to a certain extent disavows the overlap between the perception of hospitality and perception of safety. So, the question arises: when is a reception perceived as being hospitable and safe by both hosts and guests? In literature and (academic) models, hospitality and security are worlds apart, whereas in practice, they operate in the same area and mutually influence each other. This paper aims to develop a conceptual model that captures both domains as a starting point for better understanding of their interrelatedness.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hospitality

Defining hospitality is not easy, as different disciplines and sectors frame hospitality in quite distinct ways [5]. In its pure form, hospitality involves selfless giving; however, in practice, hospitality emerges through transactions and reciprocal arrangements of giving and receiving [3]. Hospitality is about gestures of welcoming and the creation of inclusive physical and symbolic spaces [6]. Burgess [7] describes hospitality as “the social relationship fostered by the warm, friendly, welcoming, courteous, open, generous behaviour of the host, creating the hospitable social environment”. Aspects that contribute to a guest’s feeling of being welcome are friendliness, being inviting, warmth, being home-like, openness, sincerity, and generosity [8–10].

Brotherton and Wood [8] identify two dominant perspectives on hospitality in social science: as a form of social and economic exchange and as a means of social control. Hospitality as a form of exchange is typically related to a business context, especially the hospitality industry. Lynch et al. [5] state that such a definition of hospitality reduces the interactions between hosts and guests to commercial exchanges and hospitality elements to commodities. Lugosi [11] argues that it is crucial to avoid conceptualising hospitality only in positive actions, as hospitality may also be used to ascribe status, reinforce hierarchies, and (re)construct relationships of power, fitting the perspective of hospitality as a means for social control.

According to Hemmington [9] and Brotherton and Wood [7], the guest’s sense of safety is one of the most important responsibilities of a host. Pitt–Rivers highlights the mutual implication of power and a welcome: the guest is necessarily at the mercy of the host, on a knife-edge between suspicion and trust (cited in [4]). Many authors emphasise the reciprocity whereby the host strives to protect and keep the guest safe, and at the same time, the guest is ‘obliged’ to behave safely and not do any damage to the host [3,5,12,13]. Thus, hospitality is used as a mean of controlling “people who are essentially alien to a particular physical, economic and social environment” [8]. The act of giving and receiving offers a way to negotiate potentially harmful relationships between individuals and groups [4]. Transactions of hospitality may help create liminal spaces where transgressions are possible and alternative values, and norms can be created [14,15]. In this way, studies on hospitality highlight how hospitality acts as a powerful mediating social control mechanism [5]. In practice, facility management providers may deliver hospitality services and/or security services, which should lead to a hospitable and/or safe environment.

2.2. Security

Security services are focused on protection against danger or loss. This is achieved by the mitigation of adverse consequences through a broad spectrum of acceptable practices, procedures and principles [16,17]. In this context, a stable, relatively predictable environment is created in which an individual or group may pursue its goals without disruption, harm, and fear [18]. Security is a dynamic and versatile concept [19]. Two paradigms prevail: negative security versus positive security. Both paradigms are rooted in the Latin word ‘securitas’. Securitas is made up of ‘se’ (sine, ‘without’), ‘cura’ (‘care’). ‘Cura’ has a double meaning. First of all, ‘being without care’ refers to living ‘without restlessness’ or ‘without fear’. In line with the negative security paradigm, people are only safe when they know no ‘pain’ or ‘danger’. However, ‘cura’ can also be interpreted positively in terms of ‘vigilance’ and ‘zeal’. It is a form of ‘care’ that you spend on something or someone. This interpretation collides with the positive security paradigm [19]. This so-called positive security represents something that is positively valued, that is good or desired. It refers to security that is the result of a secure condition and refers to softer principles of ‘connectedness’, a ‘safe-haven’, ‘care’, and ‘recovery’ [20–22].

Security measures can be clustered according to organisational measures (i.e., policies, procedures, security staff), behavioural measures (i.e., creating awareness, training), technical measures (i.e., security cameras, metal detection gates), and physical measures (i.e., locked doors, entrance barriers). Other commonly used classifications are visible versus non-visible, and obtrusive versus non-obtrusive measures.

2.3. Safety

Differences between security and safety lie in nature of threats (security: deliberate external threats; safety: unintentional, occupational hazards); emotional (safety) versus physical (security) aspects; and coverage (security: narrow, safety: broad). The underlying concepts of safety and security are complementary [23]; safety cannot be achieved if security is not guaranteed.

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices are defined as the science of the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, and control of hazards arising in or from the workplace that could impair workers' health and well-being or harm surrounding communities and the environment [24]. OSH management systems help companies accept and administer the building and maintenance of a culture of health and safety as their prime responsibility [24]. A safety climate is the degree to which employees perceive that safety is a priority in their company [25]. According to Cabrera et al. [26], the safety climate may be apparent in policies and practices, but the underlying schemata have far more impact than merely the willingness to follow policies. For example, Huang et al. [27] studied the effects of safety climate perceptions on lone working employees' job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover rate. They distinguish between an organisational level safety climate (OSC) and a group-level safety climate (GSC). Their study showed that safety climate perceptions occur at both OSC and GSC levels, and both directly and indirectly impact employee outcomes beyond those regarding the safety of the work environment. In line with positive and negative security, one could argue that negative safety is the absence of work-related accidents and injuries, whereas positive safety points at wider-ranging positive effects on organisations. Based on an extensive literature review, Guldenmund [26] concludes that safety climate can be interpreted as denoting attitudes to safety within an organisation, with safety culture being the (broader) convictions or dogma's underlying safety attitudes.

Schein and Schein [28] (p. 21) define culture as "the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. Accumulated learning is a system of beliefs, values, and behavioural norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness." They identify three layers of culture: an inner layer consisting of basic underlying assumptions (system of beliefs), a middle layer of ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies, and rationalisations, and an outer layer of artefacts (visible and tangible structures and processes and observed behaviour) [28] (pp. 28–29)). Vierendeels et al. [29] apply Schein and Schein's layers of culture to define safety culture. Their 'The Egg Aggregated Model' (TEAM) of safety culture encompasses three related domains. The inner layer ('air') consists of underlying basic assumptions and values. The middle layer ('protein') encompasses both the organisational domain (leadership, trust in the organisation, management commitment, and communication—leading to a safety climate) and the human domain (individual attitudes, skills and ability, personal characteristics, and knowledge—leading to the intention for safe behaviour). The outer, easily visible domain ('yolk'), the artefacts, is called the technological domain (technology, procedures, training, and behaviour of people—leading to observable safety outcomes). Although this model stems from OSH, it is applicable in our study as it points out that safety not only depends on procedures, but also on people's perceptions and underlying paradigm of what safety means to them, as represented by the inner layer of 'The Egg Aggregated Model'.

2.4. Perception

So, safety is more than absence of harm. It also refers to the perception, the anticipation, of being in an environment where one will not be harmed. Consciously and subconsciously our senses provide us with information about the environment. These sensory clues are filtered and interpreted by our brains using prior experience, knowledge, and expectations. Perception is closely related to experience and satisfaction. Hospitality and security services take place in an environment with both physical and social dimensions [30,31]. Following Berry et al. [31], the experience of a service is based on three types of clues: functional clues (e.g., performance of the reception and security services); mechanical clues (sensory perception, e.g., of the physical environment of the entrance); and human clues (behaviour and appearance of employees and other guests). The mechanical and humanic clues may be interpreted as the middle layer, and the functional clues as the outer layer in Schein and Schein [28] or the TEAM model [29]. The resulting individual experience of hospitality and safety is internalised and therefore not easy to investigate [32]. Though on the level of artifacts in Schein and Schein, or the 'yolk' in the TEAM model, these experiences are intangible. Experience can, however, be measured.

Another important model that explains human-environment interaction in services processes is Bitner's servicescape [33]. The servicescape refers to the non-human elements of the environment in which service encounters occur. It is the complex mix of a service's environmental features (inputs or stimuli) that exert influence on people's responses and behaviours (output). Environmental inputs are sensory (ambient conditions), spatial (space and function) and symbolic (signs, symbols and artefacts). According to Maslow, the perception of safety is a basic need that people are highly motivated to achieve, surpassed only by the desire to meet first meet physiological needs. Nonetheless, safety has been regularly omitted from servicescape studies [34].

2.5. Perception of Hospitality

Both the design of the physical environment and staff behaviour deliver 'clues' that together conjure an image of hospitality. Experience is the interaction between the individual and its environment, containing functional, mechanical, and human clues, and the inner responses to this interaction [35]. From a host perspective, frequently mentioned concepts associated with hospitality-experience are: 'desire to please' [36–38]; 'understanding needs' [12,36,37,39]; 'welcoming' [7,8,36]; 'friendly' [7,8,40]; 'security' [7,9,39]. Amongst others, the offer of hospitality leads to 'comfort' [7,8,36,37] and 'pleasure/being happy' [8,12,37,40].

Research into the guest's hospitality experience is scarce [35–37,40]. Pijls et al. [35] have developed a holistic scale for measuring a guest's hospitality experience. Its underlying dimensions are 'inviting', 'care', and 'comfort'. Inviting relates to openness and experience of freedom during a visit. Care is associated with providing support, taking care of a person, relieving him/her of tasks or worries, and taking an interest in them. Comfort is associated with feeling at ease, relaxed, and comfortable. In two previous qualitative studies exploring the meaning of hospitality experience from the viewpoint of professionals offering hospitality and from a customer's perspective, safety and security were both found to be attributes of the experiential dimension 'feeling at ease'. Likewise, Groen [41] concluded that the value of facility management in hospitals might concern realising a functional, pleasant, and comfortable environment, and behaviour that makes patients feel at ease and valued as an individual. This will reinforce the feeling of safety, an important aspect of hospitality in a hospital.

2.6. Perception of Safety, Feeling Safe

Comfort, connection, knowledge and control, interaction, as well as feeling at home and in a trusted environment, contribute to a positive feeling of safety [19,42,43]. Based on participant-led photography, Pijls et al. [44] identified eight experiential dimensions of

hospitality out of 438 images, among which ‘safety’ was included. Images of safety include access gates, security personnel/equipment, remaining waiting time, a well-organised entrance, and open architecture.

But what are the effects of visible security measures on the perception of feeling safe? Could it be that these evoke fear by making people aware of security risks? Research on fear of crime in the school setting related to environmental characteristics helps us to better understand the mechanisms through which fear is created and maintained. Multiple studies into safety in schools in the USA show that visible security measures harm students’ feeling of safety, although the type of security measure matters. For example, Schreck and Miller [45] found that metal detectors, locked doors, supervised hallways, and drug education were predictive of increased worry about being a victim of school crime, but they found no significant effect for security guards, visitor sign-in, locker checks and passes. Perumean-Chaney and Sutton [46] performed a secondary data analysis using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (NLSAH; 5785 students, 112 schools). Their study suggests that metal detectors and the use of at least two physical security measures may decrease students’ perception of being safe. However, environmental factors and previous experiences mediate the effect. Male, white students with higher Grade Point Averages that feel safe in their neighbourhood were more likely to report feeling safe at school. At the same time, those who experienced prior victimisations had larger class sizes, and those who attended schools that had disorder problems were more likely to report not feeling safe at school. This finding aligns with the social constitution of fear approach, which suggests that fear experiences should be seen in relation to wider social and geographical context, social relations, and power structures [47].

2.7. The Experience of Hospitality and Feeling Safe Combined

As the first point of contact, the building’s entrance is considered important in providing hospitality to end-users and external clients. It is also a crucial element in keeping a building safe and secure. Reception services and entrance security potentially belong to bespoke products according to Katchamart’s product-process matrix, as they directly influence the end user’s perceptions and experience [48]. These products require a strategic approach to add value to the client company, yet these services are often perceived as commodities and are commonly outsourced.

Services, like hospitality and security services, are performed and consumed simultaneously, and they are intangible. In choosing and evaluating the provision of these services, it is therefore common for guests to use tangible clues to judge their quality [49]. Functional clues from a provider-perspective are related to services offered, procedures, scripted behaviour, and physical measures. The host (receptionist) provides for the guest’s security, psychological, and physiological comfort [50] and is part of the security management system that protects an organisation and its assets against external threats. According to Schuilenburg and Van Steden [20], Bigo [42], and Akalin et al. [43], comfort, interaction, and feeling at home contribute to a positive feeling of safety. These attributes of positive security relate to the experiential dimensions of hospitality ‘care’ and ‘comfort’ [51]. The common denominator is the absence of stress. On the other hand, the presence of visible and intrusive security measures to ensure negative security may cause stress in a person, triggered by his/her expectations and previous experiences, which harms feelings of being safe and at ease, that are also part of the perception of hospitality [45,46].

Because security and safety are not explicitly considered to be part of hospitality, nor part of the servicescape in the literature [34], it is worthwhile to explore to what extent the constructs ‘safe’ and ‘hospitality’ can be recognised in people’s perception of (entrance) areas in utility buildings.

3. Methods

This exploratory qualitative study aims to deliver a conceptual model that captures both the experience of hospitality and safety. The starting point was a 2-h pilot group interview with three client managers working for one of the major facility management suppliers in the Netherlands (December 2019). Together, these managers are responsible for entrance management services in a large number of properties. The pilot interview aimed to investigate how professionals envision the interrelatedness of the perceptions of safety and hospitality. Next, the critical incident technique (CIT) was used to explore underlying experiential factors further. Front-line staff, managers of front-line staff, and visitors/workers were interviewed by telephone regarding their experiences with entrance management in buildings and their perceptions of safety and hospitality; 51 descriptions of situations were collected between January–February 2020. Respondents were asked to describe a situation that was both hospitable and safe, hospitable but not safe, safe but not hospitable, and neither hospitable nor safe. A number of situations described did not fulfil the criteria for a ‘critical incident’; these were all observations by front-line staff managers. But because these observations provided useful information on the perception of hospitality and safety, they were included in the analysis as narratives. In total, 46 situations could be labelled as Critical Incidents, and five were narratives. Tables 1 and 2 show an overview of critical incidents and narratives.

Table 1. Characterisation of the critical incidents and narratives.

Characteristics	Hospitable and Safe	Hospitable	Safe	Not Hospitable, Not Safe
Critical incident, host perspective	8	6	9	9
Narrative, host perspective	4	1	0	0
Critical incident, guest perspective	3	2	5	4
Total	15	9	14	13

Table 2. Initial coding into themes, based on The Egg Aggregated Model and Experience of Hospitality Scale.

Theme	Description	In-Text Code
Air *	Beliefs, basic assumptions, values	Air
Protein—Human Domain *	Personal Psychological Factors that influence individual intention to behave (skills and ability, individual attitudes towards the behaviour, personal characteristics)	Human
Protein—Organisational domain *	Perceptual factors that lead to shared perceptions on safety, safety climate (leadership, trust in the organisation, transparency of communication, management commitment)	Org
Yolk—Technological domain *	Observable safety outcomes (technology, training, procedures, behaviour of people)	Tech
Perception of Safety		PSaf
Perception of Hospitality **	Inviting (openness, freedom, feeling invited), Care (experiencing involvement, effort, interest, relief, and support)	PInv PCare
	Comfort (feeling at ease, relaxed and comfortable)	PComfort

* The Egg Aggregated Model and ** Experience of Hospitality Scale.

The pilot interview was coded using open coding, amongst others, using the themes presented in Table 2. Coding of the CITS and narratives was based on The Egg Aggregated Model (air, protein-organisational domain, protein-human domain, yolk-technical domain) [2] that is based on the work of Schein and Schein [28]. To this model, we have added the perception of safety (2B). Next, the situations were coded using and the Experience of Hospitality Scale (inviting, comfort, care) [3]. Table 2 represents the initial coding on themes.

4. Results

First, the cases were briefly described in four categories: hospitable and safe; hospitable; safe; neither hospitable nor safe (see Table 3). Next, the cases were labelled using the in-text reference codes presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Critical Incidents (CIT) and Narratives (Nar).

Cluster	Case	Host/ Guest	Description
Hospitable and safe	CIT (n = 8)	Host	A hospitable response by the receptionist to unauthorised parking.
			A positive experience of entrance management during a visit of team members in a multitenant building.
			Strict but kind sticking to access protocol when a known worker forgets their badge.
Hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 3)	Guest	Taking care of a visitor (coffee) while at the same time responding to an urgent situation.
			Hospitable alternative for visitor access without ID.
			Receptionist taking time to calm-down a stressed-out student over a cup of tea.
Hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 6)	Host	Bending aggressive client behaviour to warm customer relationship.
			Ensuring that the restrooms are included in security-inspection in preparation of a VIP-visit.
			Exclusive and at the same time high-security entrance at a private bank.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 9)	Host	A combined security/receptionist function at a large wholesaler.
			Rigorous but respectful access control at the Central Bank.
			Altering staff-dress codes at the unemployment office to make visitors more comfortable.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 2)	Guest	Taking off your shoes and belt upon entering a maximum-security facility; patient and respectful guards soften discomfort.
			A group visit to a company's headquarters, with a personalised welcome sign and smooth check-in procedures.
			A visit to the Hermitage in Russia, with free WIFI and apps in the waiting room before a security check, followed by the security check, and a welcome by classical music in the monumental hall upon the entrance.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 1)	Host	A mystery visitor using an obviously fake name that was warmly welcomed without any identity check.
			A receptionist that has to wait a long time for back-up while dealing with a confused and aggressive person, but in the meantime, she tries to comfort and calm the person trying not to show that she is very scared.
			A visitor greets the receptionist but walks past her to meet a welcoming host, ignoring standard registration procedures.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 2)	Guest	In a multitenant building, a company occupies the 5th-10th floors, with no security check at the ground level and the reception area on the fifth floor doubling as a company restaurant.
			Due to understaffing, a receptionist regularly is the only person to welcome guests, which causes her to feel unsafe.
			An agitated, aggressive person that does not speak a shared language is calmed down and helped out.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 2)	Guest	At the reception desk visitors receive a beeper that will notify the guest when the host arrives, so they can relax and enjoy a coffee while waiting.
			Three students were locked-in after the departure of a group-visit, as they attended the restrooms unnoticed.
			A person is allowed to wander around in a hotel unsupervised and talk to any member of staff she encounters.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 9)	Host	Too strict enforcement of procedures occurs, causing a massive traffic jam in the garage and stress in the visitor.
			An unstaffed reception desk in a multitenant building while security staff is instructed not to guide visitors.
			High-security environment, all visitors are approached and questioned about their reason for being there.
Safe, not hospitable	CIT (n = 9)	Host	A safety drill that involves external visitors with OHS-officers responding irritated to their questions.
			High-security facility with security staff acting repressively, intimidating visitors.

Not hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 5)	Guest	A non-registered visitor and a security guard refuses entry without offering any further help.
			A terrorist attack in the neighbouring area, the manager finds safe space for the employee to stay for a few hours but forgot to check if the employee could use the bathroom and for the availability of F&B.
			Blood bank with so many safety protocols that hospitality is no longer the focal point for the receptionists.
			Surveillance to prevent vandalism with the aim to make people feel noticed, not to feel welcome at a campus.
Not hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 9)	Host	A reception desk positioned at 14th floor (the first floor they occupied), whereas they rent from 2nd floor onwards.
			A visit to a coworking space with a doorbell nobody answers, reception desk visibly unstaffed.
			Holidaymakers that do not know where to report and are forced to stay in the hall until the landlord arrives.
			A visit to the security unit of a national museum, the door opens, but the tourniquet does not and no intercom is available.
Not hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 4)	Guest	A person arrives at a building to attend a meeting, the receptionist asks her to wait but never comes back.
			In an asylum centre, a receptionist is left alone and cannot leave her post, while at the same time a client becomes increasingly angry as he cannot explain what he wants due to language barriers.
			A situation where the receptionist is distracted by her phone all the time, not noticing visitors at all.
			An employee that does not dare to leave work because of the unsafe neighbourhood after-hours.
Not hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 9)	Host	An employee that is stalked leading to unsafe work environment for all reception staff, solved by safety glass barriers.
			A panicking student that seemed like he was high on drugs that later committed suicide.
			An employee that opened safety doors and set off the alarms to find out what would happen.
			An employee that forgot badge demands access, but before the receptionist has the opportunity to correct him, a colleague of this person lets him slip through the gate.
Not hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 4)	Guest	Higher management not willing to participate in safety drills as 'they are busy earning money'.
			A private bank with mostly Turkish clients; some clients only speak Turkish, but the receptionist does not speak Turkish
			Shopper in supermarket is repeatedly unpleasantly approached by a man, the security guard does not act upon her signals.
			A person visiting an open office floor where employees are supposed to welcome visitors, but everybody is so engaged in their work that this person has to disturb people for obtain help.
Not hospitable, not safe	CIT (n = 4)	Guest	Due to a visiting employee being denied access to the visitor parking, multiple cars have to park on a steep slope in reverse.
			A club-style banking concept without privacy is set up and people can overhear private conversations there.
			After office hours, hotel guests are requested to check-in at a pub. The guests felt out of place and had to find their way around the hotel by themselves.

The critical incident technique is a research method in which the research participant is asked to recall and describe a time when a behaviour, action, or occurrence impacted (either positively or negatively) a specified outcome. Thus, it is no wonder that all cases refer to the yolk-technical domain in The Egg Aggregated Model. This domain encompasses the observable factors: technology, procedures, and behaviour of people. The protein-human domain describes personal psychological factors that the drivers for the observable behaviour in the yolk-technical domain, as the following quote from the pilot-interview illustrates:

"Some of our clients are very hierarchical. We pay you; you just have to run and get it in order. It's friendly, but it's straightforward. Conversation? Why? We pay you, and it just has to be good. If you don't do it right, you have to work on it. A different way of

thinking. You notice that towards the hosts, too. Those high-paid expatriates see our employees as their servants. That's nasty."

The majority of situations describe procedures, followed by the behaviour of people. Only some refer to technology and none to training. Underlying beliefs ('Air') were not mentioned. From the experiential dimensions of hospitality, the 'inviting' dimension applies most (N = 9), followed by care (N = 6), and comfort (N = 5). This is not unexpected, considering the context of entrance management for the CITs.

Two visitors and two hosts described situations involving more-than-average security measures (Tech). These measures undoubtedly trigger the risk perception of visitors. One interviewee said:

"Focus on security brings focus on unsafety. Whether it is the presence or absence of danger, you become aware that there is danger in the world. You can't go in carefree." (PSaf)

"The funny thing is that if you want to increase safety by putting up security guards, people become aware of the risk, and they feel less safe because of the association with risk." (PSaf)

Even though visitors may understand that these measures are necessary, they may be considered unpleasant and especially uninviting (PInv) and uncaring (PCare), and they induce stress and thereby decrease comfort (PComfort). However, by compensating for the required procedures with hospitable humanic clues (a friendly, relaxed attitude), the visitor becomes forgiving towards the organisation and accepts the measures as being necessary for the organisation's safety (Human).

"When you enter the bank, they scan you, but in a friendly way; you feel you are being treated respectfully."

"When you're dressed up for the occasion, it's not very pleasant to have to take off your belt and shoes, but the friendly approach makes up for the inconvenience."

In situations with the usual entry procedures (Tech, procedures), frustrations may arise when people come unprepared, and the standard procedure cannot be completed as prescribed (10 critical incidents), e.g., because they did not bring an ID or the registration number of their car was not provided upfront, there is no parking space, or they try to park their car where they should not. These are awkward situations because the host has to refuse entry (Tech), which feels inhospitable (PInv). However, good communicative skills and understanding for the visitor may solve the problem without causing too much frustration (Human). The trick is to be flexible and think of alternative solutions (Tech), e.g., by letting the contact person identify the guest. Without this flexibility, the situation will escalate unnecessarily. The visitor/worker will sense (s)he is heard ('caring'), which will lessen their negative response (PCare).

"Then we explained to the employee that it's also about hospitality and that his way of dealing with the situation leads to unnecessary frustration".

Or, as a manager said in one of the narratives:

"The guest perceives the situation as safe because of our clear protocols, but also because our people can apply these protocols without being too blue" [as in the Dominance-Influence-Steadiness-Conscientiousness (DISC) personality colours].

Quite another situation arises when there is no procedure for visitors entering a building. There is nobody to receive the visitor, especially when this is not what the visitor expected or when the staff has no overview over the area (13 critical incidents).

"I observed a visitor entering the building where there is no procedure to register visitors; you are free to go to your appointment. The receptionist hardly notices the visitor and does not take any action".

The visitor does not consider this 'inviting' (PInv), but rather not 'caring' (PCare), as the receptionist's attitude is interpreted as uninterested: "Not hospitable as we felt lost".

Also, this is not a comfortable situation for receptionists, as they are quite aware that they may not notice unwanted visitors (Tech); this situation may be characterised as 'too inviting' (PInv).

This may lead to unwanted situations:

“A group of students on an international excursion visits a building site of a major contractor. Upon arrival, the contact person invites them into the building. No check, no registration. Just before the group leaves, three students need to go to the restroom without informing the host. Result: the incomplete group leaves the site, and the three remaining students are locked-in, and there is nobody to help.”

The hospitable hassle-free welcome leads to a rather uncaring departure, and apparently nobody, neither the host nor visitors, saw any harm in not checking who entered and who left. The experience was possibly ‘inviting’ (PInv), but not safe (Tech).

In five situations, workers or visitors ignored or even sabotaged safety instructions (Tech, behaviour). In one case, a worker pushed the emergency button “to see what happens”. A worker demanded to enter without showing an entry pass and thereby violating entry protocol in a second situation. This may indicate their underlying beliefs regarding safety and security (Air).

In two situations, people complained about an emergency drill or even refused to take part. In these cases, the worker lacks safety perception (Org) and deliberately violates safety protocol. Staff reciprocates by rebuking the visitor, showing a lack of ‘care’ (PCare). The workers claim that the visitor was asking for hospitality, especially ‘inviting’ (PInv), beyond what is considered safe (Tech). The worker’s risk perception is low, whereas the host rebukes the worker because (s)he does feel responsible and is aware of the risks taken. In a fifth situation, a visitor ignores the receptionist and immediately approaches his host. The receptionist, somewhat flabbergasted, lets this happen but feels confused. Should she address the visitor about this behaviour? The visitor feels happy and ‘invited’ (PInv) and seems quite unaware of this breach of the protocol (Tech). What about a situation where somebody, when addressed in a friendly way by the receptionist (who wondered what this person was doing there), immediately leaves? Apparently, he thought he would not be noticed and, in the meanwhile, enjoyed the inviting factor of the hospitality of the organisation (PInv).

Fourteen situations are not primarily about procedures, but are focused on (strong) emotions of visitors (Human). Angry, frightened, or confused people trigger the risk perception of the host (PSaf):

“Because of prior experiences, the receptionist is worried about what the visitor might do.”

“I had a very bad feeling about this situation.”

The hosts try to calm down the visitor by airing their anger or fear (PComfort). To do this, they need the skills and attitude to deescalate the situation while, at the same time, complying with procedures (Tech). In one situation, a mystery visitor deliberately used a fake name, which was not noted by the receptionist (Tech). In this case, it was the risk perception of the host that was too low.

During the pilot-interview, it was mentioned that:

“One of our customers has a security status as a fair percentage of clients show aggressive behaviour (Tech). In a successful pilot, we have deployed some hostesses to kindly welcome people (PInv), send them to the counter, give them a cup of coffee and to quieten them down” (PCare, PComfort).

If necessary, security will be called for:

“The confused person is restless, screams, and the hostess calls for help from security by walkie.” (Tech)

While experiencing negative emotions themselves (fear, pity), they control their feelings (emotional labour [52]), but show typical ‘caring’ behaviour by supporting the visitor (PCare), making them feel heard, and relieving their worries (PComfort) [35]. Hochschild [52] has defined emotional labour as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’. It is a person’s response to an emotionally stressful situation, where the employee’s task requires that (s)he displays emotions different from this/her actual feelings. This so-called surface acting may be required, e.g., when handling

incivility by clients or confused and angry visitors [53]. Communication is crucial; language barriers may decrease both safety and hospitality perceptions for employees and visitors. The dress code is also an issue: one of the interviewed hosts explains why they do not wear uniforms:

“When people approach the desk, and the security staff is in uniform, and the hostess is formally dressed, they feel even less at ease” (Tech, PComfort).

The last aspect that needs to be discussed is the balance between hospitality and safety.

Quoting the group interview:

“The extent to which you are threatened as a person or organisation determines the emphasis on the visible security side of the visible hospitality side.”

In five situations, the safety aspect prevailed, e.g., because there was an emergency call while the visitor approached the receptionist, or because surveillance cameras were deemed necessary. In these cases, hospitality perceptions decrease, but the question is whether this could have been avoided. The group interview revealed that visible security measures might trigger a feeling of unsafety in visitors, which has a negative impact on the comfort dimension of perceived hospitality, especially ‘feeling at ease’. However, context and previous experiences seem to be important mediating factors. However, when a person feels unsafe on entering a premises, physical security measures may have a positive effect.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

A quote from one of the pilot-interviewees nicely describes what prompted this research, namely the situation where organisations employ both security staff and hospitality staff and consider them to have separate functions, instead of being two sides of the same coin:

“I’ve been to many clients, and what I’m really wondering is why there should be a certain level of security when in my experience it should have been hospitality much more often. First, you meet six security people, and then you come to a desk with two ladies and a queue of four people there. And then I ask myself, to what extent are all those security guards needed? They don’t make me feel very comfortable, do you need that? I think it has to do with higher management wanting much security, and then there’s a facility manager who thinks, it’s also useful when people are offered a cup of coffee and so let’s add a host. I think it would be much better to have receptionists there, and then we’d add security, or we’d solve that with technical measures.”

The incidents and narratives presented in this research mostly concern situations where the visitor has no intention to harm the organisation. In these cases, as part of the entry protocol, there is no breach in hospitality for safety, as visitors often expect an entry procedure. Visitors understand that such procedures are necessary to avoid risks, and the procedures induce a perception of safety. These procedures, in fact, add to the perception of ‘inviting’. Entry procedures also add to a feeling of ‘care’, as it means that the organisation pays attention to you, ‘sees’ you, and acknowledges your presence. Whether it was a host or security staff did not seem to matter in our results.

The perception of ‘caring’ even compensates for rather strict entry protocols: a hospitable human approach softens the impact of rigid procedures, and safety and hospitality complement each other.

However, strict enforcement of protocols that ensure safety, without an understanding attitude, not only creates annoyance—so no feeling of inviting and caring—but also causes stress—no perceived comfort—and lack of understanding from the visitor and stimulates evasive tactics. The host or security employee now has to enforce procedures on an unwilling visitor, whereas a more understanding approach might have induced compliance in the visitor. In these cases, safety may be ensured, but the lack of hospitality leads to unwanted behaviour and stress in both visitor and host, leading to a negative evaluation of both hospitality and positive security.

No entry protocol also does not lead to the desired effect. Although there will be visitors who do not mind (or even enjoy the lack of security measures), quite a number of visitors will start to feel insecure, and become quite aware of the risks the organisation might be taking. A lack of procedures diminishes the perception of safety, also there is no perception of care, and both inviting and comfort feelings are compromised. Based on these reflections, we may conclude that in cases where visitors pose no real threat to an organisation, security measures carried out by (hospitality or security) staff that has a hospitable attitude will not be perceived as decreasing the hospitality of an organisation as the visitor will feel safe as well as treated in a hospitable way. Also, that perception of safety (and possibly also hospitality) might be added to the TEAM model, at or beyond the yoke level.

In some cases, hospitality and/or security staff were confronted with emotional visitors, who were or became frightened, angry and/or confused. In these cases, employees will need to perform emotional labour; the staff looks for support and the protocols provide assistance, but staff also face emotional labour. To perform their tasks well, and be as hospitable as possible given the circumstances, they need to stay calm and not respond with anger, fear, or confusion. In those cases, it is beneficial to provide human support to the host, e.g., by having both two members of staff present, preferably hospitality as well as security staff, as this will alleviate the anxiety of the person confronting the emotional visitor. Language plays a crucial role in under these circumstances, as without a common language, it is hard for people to understand each other. Lack of understanding will increase the feeling of not being safe and being in an inhospitable environment. However, a strong safety climate is a means to directly and indirectly, increase job satisfaction and staff engagement, and to reduce staff turnover [26].

So far, the cases in this exploratory study have shown that perception of hospitality and safety go very well together, asking for alignment of measures to ensure each of the two. However, it remains to be seen whether this still is the case in other situations, e.g., when either risk perception is very high, people feel rather unsafe, or in situations where hospitality needs to be very prominent, not to forget situations where people's behaviour is extreme, or when hospitality and security staff need to deal with crowds instead of individuals.

For now, we conclude that within the positive security paradigm, safety and hospitality do act like two sides of the same coin, where one needs the other.

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