

TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS AND EMERGING TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

The genesis for the paper is the declaration in the Upanishads “*Atithi Devo Bhava*” meaning, the visitor is God, which has encouraged me to investigate into traditional scriptures. It is found that words and vocabulary related to hospitality are found in extensive quotations in the Vedas and Upanishads. These scriptures defined visitor, guest, tourist and traveller which match international terminology including that of the WTO. They have also stated that the visitor (*Atithi*) is God and the guest (*Abhyagati*) is Vishnu himself. This is stressed on by prescribing an extensive variety of services under the heading *Shodasopacharas*. These services encompass the whole process from welcoming to seeing off the visitor with a caution of ill-effects of non-compliance in attending to these services. Emerging trends in hospitality codified some of the traditional services and stated that the guest has to be served with zero defects since the guest experience cannot be undone. Tradition, which involves psychology and technology for growing the culture of the service, is also studied for the promotion and integration of hospitality concepts. Demography dimension and change in lifestyles as a result of globalization polarised the hospitality industry towards greater safety and security with a difference bearing on traditional approaches.

Key words: *Vedas, Upanishads, Shodasopacharas, Psychological Motives, Globalization.*

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INTRODUCTION

“*Atithi Devo Bhava*” the motto line of the Department of Tourism, Government of India from the *Upanishads*¹ that form a part of the ancient Indian scriptures stimulated the author to go in-depth into the traditional scriptures for the study of available words and vocabulary related to the word ‘hospitality’, and its concept. It is well-known that hospitality means the reception and entertainment of a guest, a visitor or a stranger with liberality and goodwill. The word ‘hospitality’ is derived from the word ‘hospice’, the term for a medieval house of rest for travellers and pilgrims. Hospitality is the performance expressed by the host of people or an organization towards the guest and experienced instantaneously by the guest. Therefore the essential part of hospitality is the service provided to the guest and the prime motivation for it in traditional Indian minds lies in the belief that serving the guest is equivalent to serving God. Hospitality services are in general influenced to a great extent by cultural values and norms of different societies.

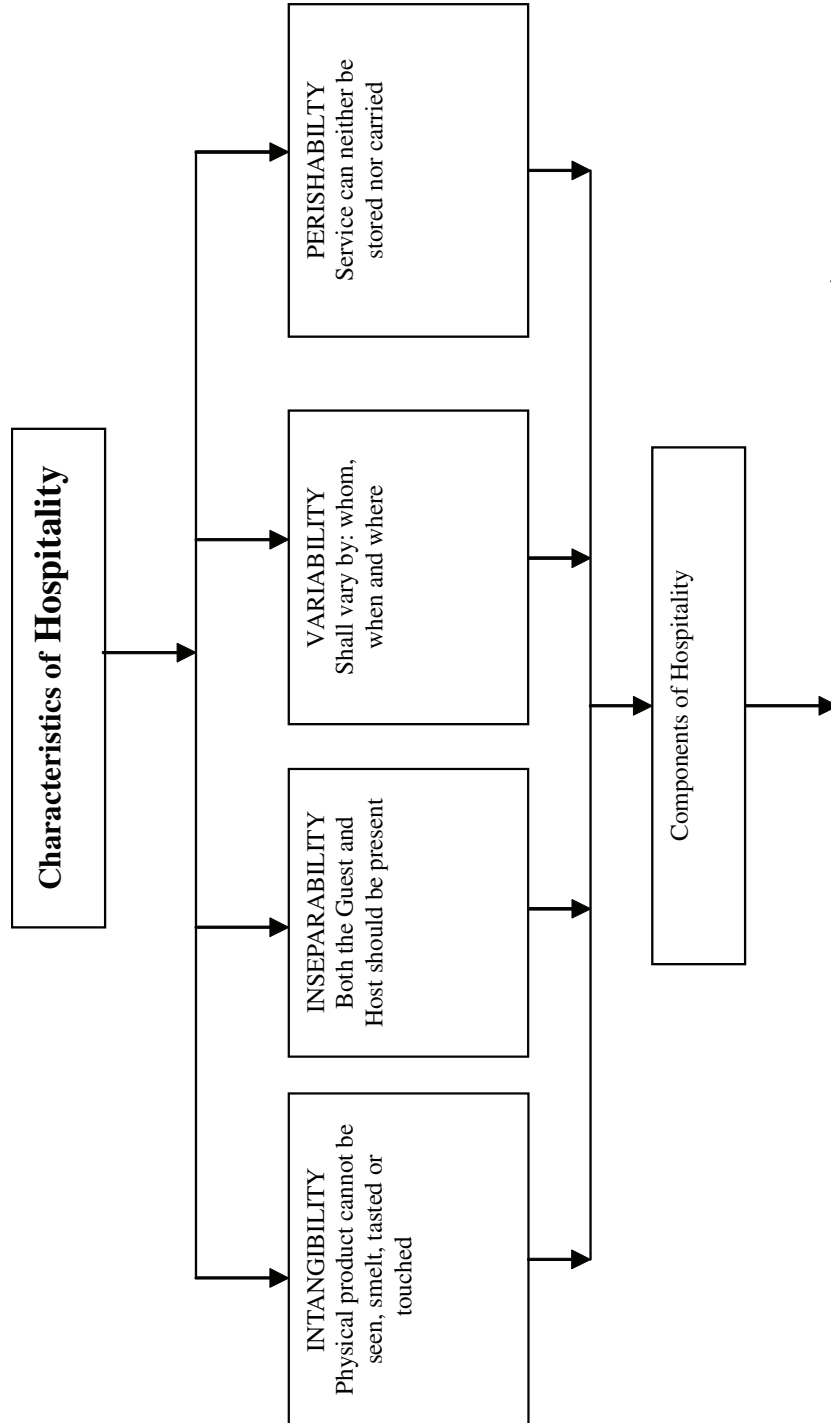
Culture is the way of living built or shared by a group of people and passed on from one generation to another (Brady and B. Isaac 1975). The shared ways of life consist of beliefs, knowledge, law, customs, institutions, and artefacts. The essence of a culture is its value system upon which a society’s norms are established and justified (Charles W.L. Hill 1994). Values are the beliefs that a society holds with regard to right or wrong, good or bad, ethical or unethical. Norms are social rules and guidelines that prescribe appropriate behaviour in a particular situation. Larry Yu (1999) observed that values and norms are not static; they may change as the political and economic orientation shifts, or as education improves. As per Indian scriptures based on which Indian culture emanated, hospitality is a sacred and serene activity, always to be undertaken with passion, compassion, sentiment, and concern and is observed as a religious duty towards the visitor/stranger or guest. Hospitality is a way of life for most Indians and is ingrained in their ethos. It is these traditions, beliefs and the unique family

structure and values constructed around hospitality, with different elements of services towards satisfying the guest/visitor, which made India incredible.

According to modern texts, service is a personal performance and is an experience for both the guest and the performer of the service (Tom Powers & Clayton 2006). Therefore both the guest and the serving person (performer) are intricately involved in the process of hospitality. Because, once the event of the service has taken place, there is no possibility of undoing the experience of the guest. Hence the performer must be perfect without any defects during service operations towards the guest. Philip Kotler et al (2003) described four characteristic qualities of hospitality namely: intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. Each of these characteristics is associated with different components of hospitality elements which covers food service, lodging and transportation. A conceptual diagram is designed for presenting these characteristics for ready comparison with the different components of hospitality discussed in ancient scriptures and the same is presented in Figure 1.

Karma *et. al.* (2000) classified hospitality in modern terms as social, private, public and commercial hospitality. He clarified that social hospitality is to facilitate ancient hazardous travel for trade where as private hospitality is in a private setting between individuals towards individuals. Karma et al further stated that the public hospitality is extended to those who brought news of welfare as also gifts from loved ones, whereas commercial hospitality corresponds to hospitality provided for commercial purposes as in the modern times. Mohinder Chand (2009) dealt with the roots of the hospitality concept from various civilizations.

He observed that the composition of the word 'Hospitality' remained same over the centuries though the meaning and significance varied from continent to continent. Mohinder further stated that the traditional concept of hospitality in almost all world regions was socially defined as the spirit, practice of receiving and



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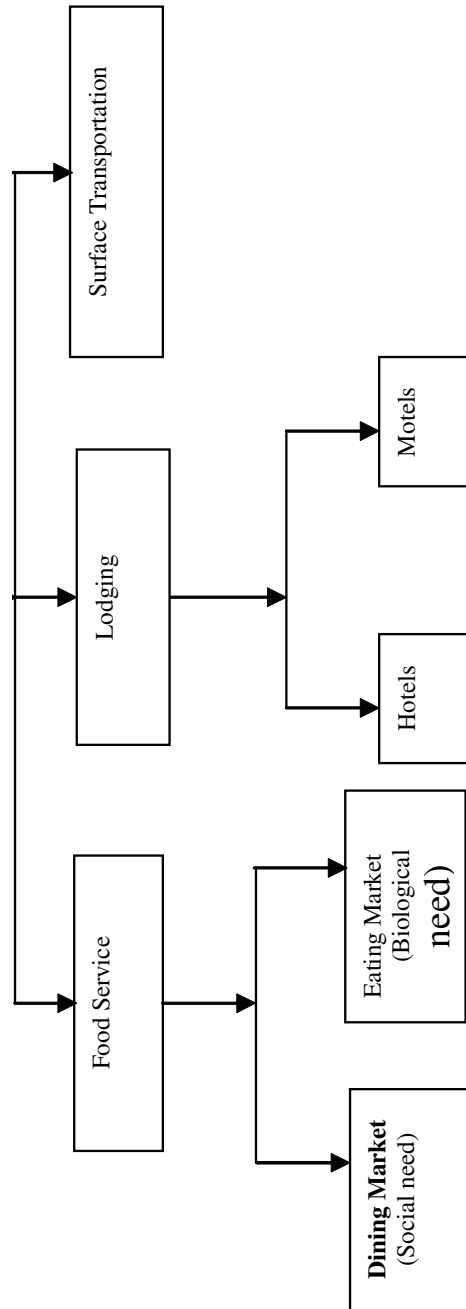


Fig. 1: Conceptual Diagram on Emerging Characteristics and Components of Hospitality

treating the visitors, guests or strangers in a warm, friendly and generous way without any monetary/reward consideration. The emergence of globalization and the integration of world economy brought a sea change in the perception of traditional hospitality services and it is viewed in a new way. There has been a paradigm shift from hospitality being a social obligation to a commercial proposition meant for marketing. The economy started thriving and increased marketing opportunities in India acted as a stimulus for Indian hospitality industry (Planning Commission, 2002). Populations have also been becoming more culturally diverse as improved communications, increasing wealth and mobility encouraged people to explore/understand other cultures. This has enhanced the scope of growth in tourism-related occupations, including hotels and restaurants employing 10.8 per cent of workers globally (Weaver David 2002), compared to only 5.6 per cent in India, providing a large scope for development. The Planning Commission estimates that more than 20 million additional employment opportunities will be generated in tourist related business within a decade by the development of infrastructure such as roads, airports and medium priced hotels combined with modifications in air and hotel pricing and tax policies.

Thus, in India, the traditional services which are of a routine nature and confined, inbuilt and inherent within the family culture as one's own tradition, have transformed to promising professional activity demanding marketing. The basic ethos of ancient age old tradition spread over several thousands of years is found to be a resourceful ingredient to be studied and integrated to meet these demands. It is the scenario of commercial hospitality poised to promote a service "with a difference" that led to detailed investigations into the traditional concepts to provide a competitive edge for the hospitality industry in the 21st century to meet the requirement what it is looking for.

TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS ON HOSPITALITY

The Vedas², ancient Indian scriptures, described reception/hospitality as *Atithyam*. The etymology of the

word *Atithyam* is derived from the following, meaning the hospitality required towards a person.

अतिथेः भवः

Atitheh bhavah, which means a thing or an item related to visitors.

The scriptures enumerated various categories such as *Atithi*, *Abhyagati*, *Yatrik* and *Paryatak*, known in modern times as Visitor, Guest, Traveller and Tourist, respectively. Various services are prescribed that are to be extended towards them. These words, along with their meaning, Sanskrit word and source of reference from ancient scriptures, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Hospitality related terms, meaning & their traditional references

(a) Traditional references of hospitality related terms

S.No.	Item	Sanskrit Equivalent	Devanagari Equivalent	Scriptural Reference
1	Visitor	<i>Athithi</i>	अतिथि	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
2	Guest	<i>Abyagati</i>	अभ्यागति	<i>Ramayana</i>
3	Traveller	<i>Yatrik</i>	यात्रिक	<i>Skanda Purana</i>
4	Tourist	<i>Paryatak</i>	पर्यटक	<i>Mahabharata</i>
5	Tourism	<i>Paryatana</i>	पर्यटन	<i>Mahabharata</i>

(b) Meaning of hospitality related terms

Item	Sanskrit Equivalent	Meaning
Visitor	<i>Atithi</i>	A person who visits a person or place (without appointment)
Guest	<i>Abhyagati</i>	A person who has been duly invited (with appointment)
Traveller	<i>Yatrik</i>	A person who is travelling or who often travels
Tourist	<i>Paryatak</i>	A person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure
Tourism	<i>Paryatana</i>	The business activity connected with providing accommodation, services and entertainment for people who are visiting a place of pleasure (OED)

The traditional scriptures also stated certain category of persons for whom the reception is a mandatory and where as for the others is on demand. The broad classification of these categories of hospitality services is presented in the Fig. 2.

It can be observed from the figure that *Atithi* (Visitor) and *Abhyagati* (Guest) are classified, under mandatory category, wherein the hospitality provided is of a traditional nature and on a non-commercial basis. On the other hand, the *Paryataka* (Tourist) and *Yatrika* (Traveller) are classified under the category of the reception on demand. The services provided under this category are of a commercial nature and are in marketing mode.

In modern books 'visitors' are classified into two categories (i) Visitors of the same day, who do not spend the night, and (ii) Tourists, who stay for at least one night, with both of them in a collective or private accommodation in the place (country) visited. (Seth P, 2006).

The word *Atithi* finds its etymology as follows:-

तिथि अनपेक्षया आगतः
“*Tithi anapekshaya agatah*”

Which means that a person who arrives without any consideration to date, time or week. Infact, one of the *Manu Smriti(s)*³ (Anonymous) declares that *Atithi*, the visitor does not stay permanently at a single place, all the time, as follows:

यस्मात् अनित्यं हि स्थितः तस्मात् अतिथिः उच्यते ।- (*Manu Smriti*, 102)
“*Yasmat anityam hi sthitah tasmata atithih ucyate*”

Which means that the stay is for very short duration and of very temporary nature, he is called as *Atithi*? Further, the other category, viz., *Abhyagati* (Guest), is the one who arrives by an invitation/appointment and such a person is declared as Lord Vishnu⁴ Himself as follows:

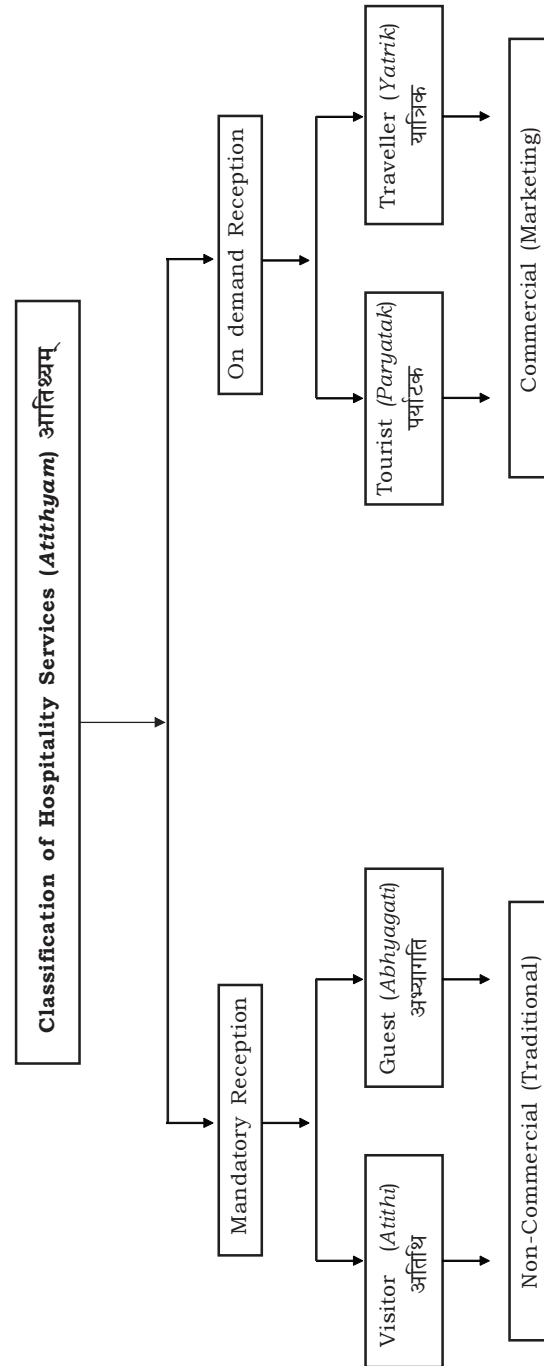


Fig. 2: Traditional classification of Hospitality Services towards different categories of people

अभ्यागतः स्वयं विष्णुः
“*Abhyagatah svayam vishnuh*”

Which means the guest is Lord Vishnu Himself. While it was stated that a person of unscheduled visits, *Atithi* (Visitor), who arrives without any appointment, is to be given treatment at par with God, it emphasizes the need for even better treatment (hospitality services) towards a person of scheduled visits, *Abhyagati* (guest) who arrives by an invitation/appointment.

The word *Paryatak* that stands for tourist is basically derived from the root *Ata* which means movement. The aphorism given by Panini⁵ (Gopal Reddy 1986) in his grammar is as follows:

अट गतौ (Dhatu Pathavali: 8)
“*Ata gatau*”

Meaning that the root *Ata* is associated with movement

In hospitality literature, the word “tour” (*Ata*) is related to ‘tourism’ which is derived from a Latin word ‘Tornos’ which was first used in 1643 A.D. in the sense of going around or travelling from place to place (Negi J 2004). In ancient texts the verbal form of *Ata* in its true sense of *Paryatak* is found in *Skanda Purana*⁶ (Shastri P 1995) while referring to the travel of the Sage Narada⁷ to several worlds as follows:

एकदा नारदो योगी परानुग्रहकांक्षया
पर्यटन् विविधान् लोकान् मर्त्यलोकमुपागतः॥ (Skanda Purana, 1.4)
“*Ekada Narado yogi paranugraha kankshaya*
Parytan vividhan lokan martyalokamupagatah”

This means that Sage Narada, while touring several worlds (*lokas*), arrived on this globe, with a desire, due to extreme compassion, to help people.

Traveller in the modern sense is defined as “any person on a trip between two or more countries or between two or more localities within his/her country of usual residence.” (WTO, 1993).

Travel may be considered as tourism, if it is temporary, voluntary, and does not have remunerative employment as its aim. The modern concept of tourists, propounded by WTO, as a person who stays at least for one night at one place is revealed in an ancient text of India as follows:

एकरात्रं तु निवसन् अतिथिः - Manu Smriti, 122
“Ekaratram tu nivasan Atithih”

Which means a person is an *Atithi* where he stays for one night only.

Therefore *Atithi* (the visitor) is a tourist who does not stay permanently at a single place, but at the same time, travels to visit person/places without any regard to date, time or week. Such a travelling visitor is to be welcomed and received with full honours as a guest signifying him as God himself. All aspects of services to be attended to such a visitor are covered under ‘*Athithyam*’. *Taihtriya Upanishad* (Anonymous) declares that the visitor is God.

अतिथि देवो भव - *Taihtriya Upanishad*
“Atithi Devo Bhava”

Which means “Visitor is God”

The Tourism Department of Government of India adopted the declaration of the *Upanishad* as their motto in the Logo for the publicity campaigns and it is followed by all the states in India. The *Katha Upanishad* (Anonymous) further declared that such a visitor/tourist is like a fire and has to be dealt with all caution and care while extending reception services.

वैश्वानरः अतिथिः - *Katha Upanishad* 1.7
“Vaisvanarah Atithih”

Which *Atithi* is to be treated as fire by himself

The narrations from the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* clearly brought out the variety of forms of services that are attached to these categories. It is also stated that if one fails to treat the guest/visitor as God,

as enumerated in the scriptures, there is every chance of losing all the wealth and riches possessed by the individual house holder for the sin of not attending towards the guest. This is clearly stated in the following testament:

सर्वं सुकृतं आदतः अनर्चितः - Manu Smriti, 100.
“*Sarvam sukrutam adathaha anarchitah*”

Which means that if guest is not properly worshipped (served); the host will eat away the outcome of all his holy deeds as a result of it.

While describing the hospitality services to be provided to the guest/visitor, the Smritis enumerate three basic components that are to be offered to the guest: offering a seat, offering water, and offering food.

आसनोदके अन्नं अतिथये प्रदद्यात् - Manu Smriti, 99.
“*Asanodake, Annam, Atihthaye pradadhyat*”

Which means that the seat, water and food are to be given away for the visitor.

Analogous observations are made in the modern texts by Tom Powers & Clayton (*ibid*). stating that a performer in the hospitality services must keep in mind the three objectives, namely, welcoming the guest personally, making things work for the guest and finally making sure that the operation will continue to provide service.

The procedures prescribed in ancient scriptures ‘*Vedangas*’ (वेदाङ्गः) (VrataRatnakaram 1955), for serving God are codified under 16 specific services, known as *Shodasopacharas* (षोडशोपचार). The list of these services is presented in Table 2.

However in the modern text some of the above 16 services included for hospitality services are presented in Table 3.

It can be observed from the table that they are broadly categorized into three services which are focused on ‘Welcome’, ‘Stay’ and ‘Send off ’ for the visitors.

Table 2: Items of Hospitality services to be offered to the Godly visitor

S.No.	Scriptural word in Sanskrit	Transliterated word in English	Meaning
1.	आवाहन	<i>Avahana</i>	Reception / Inviting
2.	आसन	<i>Asana</i>	Comfortable seat
3.	पाध	<i>Padya</i>	Water to wash feet
4.	अर्घ्य	<i>Arghya</i>	Water to wash hands
5.	आचमनीय	<i>Achamaniya</i>	Water for sipping
6.	स्नान	<i>Snana</i>	Bath/ablution
7.	वस्त्र	<i>Vastra</i>	Clothes/Garments
8.	यज्ञोपवीत	<i>Yajnopavita</i>	Holy thread
9.	गन्ध	<i>Gandha</i>	Sandal paste/Perfume/scent
10.	आशरण	<i>Abharana</i>	Decorating with Ornaments
11.	पुष्प	<i>Pushpa</i>	Offering flowers
12.	धूप	<i>Dhupa</i>	Incense/Aromatic smoke
13.	दीप	<i>Deepa</i>	Lighting lamps
14.	नैवेद्य	<i>Naivedya</i>	Food offering with devotion
15.	ताम्बूल	<i>Tambula</i>	Betel Leaf & areca nut (pan)
16.	नीराजन	<i>Nirajana</i>	Best wishes

Table 3: List of services as per emerging trends in hospitality

I	Welcome	Reception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Pick up ❖ Receiving with bouquet ❖ Making comfortable (offering a seat) ❖ Refreshing with offering drinks/beverages
II	Stay	Allotting appropriate accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Arrangements in Room <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Complimentary items ❖ Setting bed ❖ Linen – towels – napkins etc. ❖ Hot & cold beverages ❖ Fruits ❖ Air fresheners (b) Bath/Toilet provisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Clean toiletry ❖ Soaps ❖ Towels (c) Personal Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Promptly attending to room service requests (d) Food/Prompt service of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Breakfast ❖ Lunch ❖ Dinner (e) Recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Arrange tours/Sight seeing (on request)
III	Send off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Services for checking out ❖ Dropping at the departure point

EMERGING TRENDS IN HOSPITALITY SERVICES

Globalization has brought about changes in the lifestyles of people while the demography itself is changing continuously with an annual growth rate of 1.6%. Population projections at intervals of 5 years up to 2020 (Mari Bhatt, 2001) are presented in Table 4 along with growth in GDP.

Table 4: Population Projections along with growth in GDP, Service Sector, Per Capita Income in India

(a) Population Projections (millions)					
Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Total	1010	1093	1175	1256	1331
Under 15	361	368	370	372	373
15-64	604	673	747	819	882
65+	45	51	58	65	76

(b) Growth in GDP, Per Capita Income, Service Sector					
S.No.	Particulars	Amount in Rs. Crores		Growth	Percentage
		2003-2004	2006-2007		
1	GDP	2222591	2844022	621431	27.96%
2	Services Sector	76671	133447	56776	74.05%
3	Per Capita Income	20936	29074	8138	38.88%

It is observed from the Table that the GDP has grown nearing 30% over 3 years between 2003-04 and 2006-07 resulting in enhancement of per capita income by 70% during the same period which is mostly attributed to growth in the service sector. It can be observed from the table that the elderly population constitutes a meagre percentage (around 5%) while the younger and middle age population are around 70% specifying their distinct demands. Further, the sex ratio of females for every 1000 males is 933. The increase in multiple income due to growth in service sector with both partners earning has resulted in women having an increasing say in their needs and preferences for outside hospitality.

The changes in psychological aspects due to globalization and demographic growth are further impacted by the revolution of Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) that has greatly benefited worldwide integration through Global Distribution System (GDS) for younger and middle age groups. There are four main GDS systems today: Sabre (www.sabre.com), Galileo/Apollo (www.galileo.com), Amadeus (www.amadeus.com), and World Span (www.worldspan.com). From the above websites visitors can view their booked reservations and itineraries in various hospitality establishments and this has contributed to visual and virtual marketing of the aspirant generations. It is estimated that 137 million Americans are now equipped with some type of wireless service (Zhou Zongqing 2004), whereas in India it is increasingly growing to 50 millions covering about 5% of the total population (<http://www.internetworldstats.com>)

The hotel and restaurant industry is witnessing an average growth rate of 12% competing with industrial sectors and consistently keeping far ahead of the agricultural sector (CSO 2006). To meet the growing demands of the people who prefer eating outside the fast-growing segment of food service emerged as a business endeavour and many engage in setting up a catering operation. The above psychological and technological advancement has resulted in the classification of initiatives into six categories in terms of the hospitality business. These are presented as emerging trends in the following paragraphs.

Psychological Motives

Family structures in India are changing fast with higher per capita incomes and the availability of discretionary incomes. Lifestyles, social interactions, family bonding, relaxation, self discovery and prestige are some of the needs and wants of an individual. These psychological determinants are inducing people to spend their disposable income on eating out or dining as against other purchase alternatives.

Technological Environment

The most dramatic force shaping the destiny of the industry is technology. Computer based technology is

applied in the areas of management information and decision support systems, such as property management, yield management, database marketing, and management accounting systems. It has given us access to internet, with ability for instant, real time and 24/7 communication to send documents around the globe electronically relatively inexpensively. Further, technology is helping in food production refrigeration areas in the back office along with guest ordering through handheld computers and guest payments through social technology by credit and debit cards.

The Element of “Service with a Difference”

In the world of today and tomorrow, service will be the difference between barely serving to survive and serving with a difference to achieve success in hospitality service. Internet tools are facilitating the personnel element to feel the “pulse” of online visitors and immediately respond to some extent as a part of technology. But some of the traditional hospitality establishments such as Udipi restaurants and woodlands are most sort after, where a personal element from the traditions is drawn from, which is to be enumerated.

Polarisation in Hospitality Service Organisations

In food service, simpler operations specializing in off-premises service to guests have contributed greatly to the growth in hospitality establishments in recent years. Fast food also continues its healthy growth trend with International chains such as Pizza Hut, Mc Donald’s and Subway. As a result, hospitality companies are grouping themselves either as limited service organizations or as service intensive operations including leading hotel chains Taj Group, Oberoi Group and ITC Hotels.

Concern with Safety and Security

As a result of September 11, 2001 the tourism and hospitality sector security has become a commodity in every establishment. People are willing to pay more for that and one must be ready to provide adequate security. The WTTC’s (2003) made an approach for forging partnerships between the private sector and Governments

and stated that security cannot be an area for commercial rivalry. A new vocabulary including phrases such as “risk management”, “destination recovery” and “crisis management” (Bierman 2002) are coined for safety and security which are helping combat recent attacks, threats in India and natural hazards like Tsunami and earthquakes.

Concern with Sanitation

The level of food safety demanded by consumers and regulator agencies such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) alike has escalated the concerns for sanitation from production to packing. World Tourism Organization issued the Djerba Declaration on Tourism and Climate Change (WTO 2003b) urging Governments to: Implement sustainable water use practices and ecological management of sensitive areas, and raise consumer awareness on these issues.

Thus emerging technologies are observed to be the consequence of persons, societies, cultures and their traditions. Therefore hospitality has a decisively distinct bearing on psychological aspects for serving the visitor with values which brought traditional scriptures to play a significant role. Both the terminology and service aspects are abundantly found in Indian scriptures which are matching with emerging concepts propounded by WTO and other international organizations and individuals all over the globe. The need of the hour is only to translate and codify these values in the true spirit and sense in the language of emerging technologies.

CONCLUSION

Taihtriya Upanishad declared that visitor is God by the line “*Atithi Devo Bhava*” and prescribed *Shodasopacharas* or sixteen varieties of services to the visitor. Further, it declared that the guest is even greater than the gods and equated him to Lord Vishnu, one of the holy Trinity. Traditional scriptures revealed hospitality related terminology/vocabulary including words like tourist and traveller by specifically providing their etymology. *Manu Smriti* defined that the visitor is a person who stays

overnight; a term which is adopted by modern texts and international organizations including the WTO. Globalisation with enhanced per-capita incomes and GDP brought about a perceptible change in the lifestyles of the people with independent women being the prime driving force in the growth of hospitality services. The hospitality that was inbuilt in tradition and culture has a paradigm shift to commercial establishments resulting in the building of a marketing identity. The beliefs and customs which are the prime motivation for providing service are the key elements for the emerging technologies. Scriptural definitions and declarations are of great relevance because of the acceptable terminology by international organizations including WTO and WTTC. These concepts will provide an insight for providing better service and achieve better competitive advantage. The ill-effects of non-compliance of the services prescribed towards the visitor and guest are cautioned with the ultimate possibility of the loss of wealth of the host.

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Note

- (1) *Upanishad*: The *Upanishads* constitute the end part of the Veda (i.e. Vedanta). They deal with philosophical and spiritual aspects of Vedas.
- (2) *Vedas*: The Vedas are considered to be sacred and revealed knowledge. Rigvedic hymns are considered to be at least 5,000 years old
- (3) *Manu Smriti*: It is a recollection of rules related to various aspects of piety, dharma, according to the sage Manu of the hoary past.

- (4) *Vishnu*: One of the Gods of Trinity, who looks after sustenance of the universe
- (5) *Panini*: One of the outstanding grammarians of the world, author of Sanskrit grammar, *Ashtadhyayi*, 8th century B.C. (approx)
- (6) *Skanda Purana*: One of the 18 Great Puranas, said to be authored by Sage Veda Vyasa
- (7) Sage *Narada* who plays a prominent role in a number of the Puranic texts and portrayed as a traveling monk with the ability to visit distant worlds or planets.
- (8) *Vedangas*: Literally mean the limbs of the Vedas. They deal with different aspects of knowledge for understanding the Vedas.

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