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## Organizing Spheres of Privacy in the Hospitality Industry

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### Abstract

Increasingly, resort guests are asked to evaluate their resort experience based on the experience of privacy. This paper analyses how two different resorts organize spheres of privacy in different activities. It was found in the analysis that resort personnel redesign the designed servicescape in order to construct a livable/workable space for the guests. The study showed that the construction of the workable “sphere of privacy” follows similar patterns when an “isolated” privacy in terms of room and pool is requested, when an “intimate” private dinner is requested, and when private “day at the beach” is requested. The concept “organizing a sphere of privacy” is suggested to understand and account for the dual construction of privacy at resorts. The dual construction refers to the workable space accounted for in terms of broader organizational service perspectives like delivering service in an expedient manner, ensuring that all the different services of the resort can both be accessed and executed. The literature shows that guests also adapt, change, and negotiate the designed servicescape. It is argued that in order to account for both the organizations’ change and negotiation of the servicescape, as well as guest manipulation, resistance to and change of the servicescape demands a more fluid concept for these processes.

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### 1. Introduction

This paper seeks to analyze and develop a theory about how privacy is organized in resorts. Privacy in terms of data protection, consumer data, and surveillance is widely discussed both inside service management and in the broader discussions about the internet. However, privacy as something that are organized, setup and a service sold to guests have only received scarce attention in the academic literature. The lack of academic service management

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theories, stand in sharp contrast to both public discussions, complaints from guests at resorts, but also to evaluations at resorts at for instance trip advisor. In this paper the employees and managements actual organizing of privacy is at the centre of analysis.

The boundary between what is considered private and public in resorts, tourist areas and airports has in many countries and regions from time to time sparked fears public discussions. In Thailand an allegedly Chinese woman who dried her bra and underpants on the chairs in a low cost terminal sparked the latest viral discussion. Judge from the public available pictures – the terminal was almost empty, nobody but the Chinese women was seated in close proximity to the “offense act”. Despite this, the pictures sparked a strong condemnation of especially Chinese tourists who it was claimed consistently violated norms of good behaviour and in particular other guest’s privacy.

Another example of clashes over privacy could be seen in a resort with 200 rooms. The mainly Scandinavian guests consistently complained that the Korean Honeymooners violated their private lunch at the beach restaurant, when the Korean couples were taken the obligatory selfie-pictures needed for presentation to friends and family when the honeymoon was over.

The same focus on privacy can be found in guest evaluation of resorts here taken from Tubkaak resort: “The resort is very isolated, which is lovely to get away from the hordes of tourists in the Krabi area” (guest evaluation from trip advisor. Italics added by author).

All 3 of the examples are taken from service areas in, which specific services are organized by professionals. It is common that the professionals do not appear in relation to any of the discussions by the guests and customers. The professional service organization is despite the open conflicts and discussions are almost invisible. Further, to this all the incidence mentioned are happening in areas with other guests.

The Tubkaak evaluations most directly illustrate this, with the reference to avoiding the “hoards”, “White sands and no people” – but admitted “this is because of the way the nature was setup”. The setting up of “nature” takes a very large amount of both planning and design, but also very large amount of resources to continuously make it look like “nature”.

The Korean Honeymoon selfies illustrate another aspect of this. Selfies are also very common in Scandinavia, and it is the authors claim that at any street café in a major Scandinavian city selfies are taken constantly, to be in open air, close to the see in your hometown for some reason do not spark the same ‘invasion of privacy’ as when the picture is taken inside a closed resort. Inside the resort privacy seems to be part of the package and therefore can’t be violated.

The low cost airport example might illustrate a normative clash between cultures. However, this potential clash in normative culture might be a bit paradoxical given that most low cost airports are extremely noisy, with children crying and running around, smells from food and snacks eaten in the waiting area, people laughing loudly, constant announcements from loudspeakers. You could claim that the average low cost airport in Asia increasingly looks like, and are organized as previous times train stations, which more looked like a market place, mall, and departure hall. A space where you can ask why you in the first place expect a normative privacy and behaviour in accordance with this.

## **2. Privacy**

Privacy is a heavily discussed issue when it comes to the Internet, protection of guest and consumer data etc. However, the discussion of privacy related to providing other kind of service seems to be very limited. However, in hospitality the discussion has started almost 100 years ago shortly after vacations and breaks from the city life became possible not only for the upper classes, but also the broader middle class in for instance United States. Sterngass (2001) shows in his book “first resorts: pursuing pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Coney Island that the first resorts were linked in a culture of see-and-be-seen voyeurism. However, these places later started to change dramatically in order to both separate the classes, but also increasingly to create a sense of privacy and being away from the crowds. These historically developments ask the question of what this privacy actually means, and what kind of privacy service the guests are expecting and the venues are actually selling.

In the historical literature (Aries & Duby, 1994, 1993, 1993a) it is largely shown that at least western European countries concept and understanding of private life changes dramatically over the centuries. Further, it is not before the Renaissance we can start see the shaping of modern forms of privacy. Privacy in the modern western sense of

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