

Personology

Personology, the knowledge and the study of a person, is a term coined by Henry A. Murray in the 1930s in personality research. It originated as an approach to personality and personality assessment. He emphasized the importance of studying the whole personality in a life historical context. Therefore, it refers to an in-depth, holistic study of the person (Murray, 1981). It also means analysing how the past, present and future influence their personality. This is a more descriptive, interpretative attempt to understanding lives, rather than an experimental, quantitative examination favoured in behaviourism or trait approaches. Knowledge about a person's whole life provides details about the internal factors that impact on their behaviour, including their actions, thoughts and social activities.

This term has attracted attention outside of personality psychology. Putting academic research aside, a brief online search produces interesting results that show that personology has been extended beyond its original application. These include personology as a 'New Age' pseudoscience, the art of face reading, or personology as a theme in the evidence-based BBC Future, featuring articles on 'first impressions' and 'millennial narcissism'. However, in its original capacity this term has been rarely used in other research areas apart from psychology. For example, in consumer behaviour research, Baumgartner (2002) used personology to understand internal factors such as goal striving that impact on the behaviour of a consumer. This in turn allowed for a much clearer knowledge of the role of the consumer. In hospitality and tourism management research, so far only Gebbels, Pantelidis and Goss-Turner (2019) utilized personology as an umbrella term to understand the key intrinsic characteristics of a hospitality professional. The concept of personology was then further developed to conceptualize patterns of career commitment in hospitality (Gebbels, Pantelidis and Goss-Turner, 2020).

A simpler way to decode the term personology is to ask a question: what makes a person? Within a vocational context, such as hospitality management, research has sought to share knowledge on what makes a hospitality professional (Gebbels, 2019; Lee, 2014). For Lee (2014), like for some other researchers, profes-

sionalism rather than personology has been the preferred term. It helped to further elaborate the necessary qualities for front-line hotel employees, such as a sense of calling and customer orientation. Gebbels et al. (2019) incorporated professionalism into their research on the personology of a hospitality professional. Its purpose was to contextualize the entire study and recognize professionalism 'as an ideology and a prerequisite for career success' (Gebbels et al., 2019, p. 225). However, professionalism and personology are not synonymous. The former refers to the skills, competencies and behaviours necessary to carry out a particular job or to follow a particular career. In the past, these qualities were prescribed by a professional body and would differ among different professions. The latter refers to the inherent qualities of a person, which can be either person specific or job specific. Further discussion on professionalism is beyond the scope of this entry.

People are the lifeblood of most service businesses, so attracting and retaining the right talent is critical. This is particularly pertinent for the hospitality industry, known for a costly issue of high staff turnover. If hospitality employers want to continue delivering consistent and professional service whilst also reducing high recruitment costs, they must understand the intrinsic qualities of their employees. Knowledge of such qualities can be obtained by drawing on the principles of life history – analysing one's whole life (Ladkin, 2004) to formulate relevant questions about career choices, professional experiences and emotional attachment to hospitality. These can then be incorporated into the interview stage of the recruitment process as well as during formal appraisals. Such knowledge will also help businesses to put together effective human resources (HR) strategies to prevent hospitality professionals from leaving this industry.

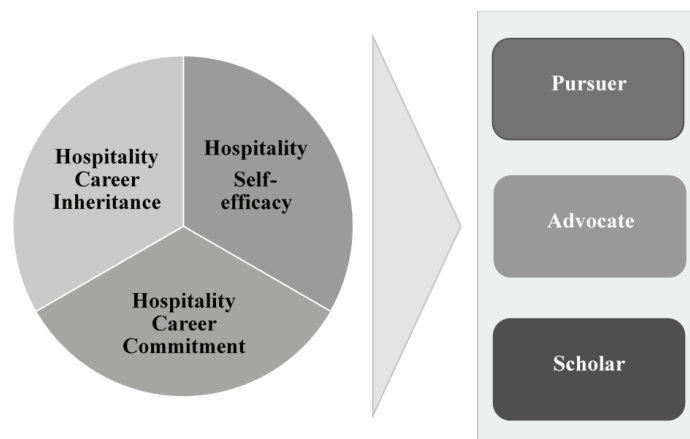
Personology can help to identify key characteristics that make a hospitality employee 'professional' and committed. Historically, the hospitality industry recruited by focusing on task proficiency, competencies, specific technical expertise and job aptitude. Rarely did characteristics such as passion, sensitivity, emotional self-control or professional ethics feature as important markers (Gebbels, 2019). Yet, the research identified an intricate set of intrinsic characteristics that together form the

MARIA GEBBELS

2 ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

personology of a hospitality professional (see figure). These are hospitality career commitment – a commitment to the hospitality career; hospitality career inheritance – hospitality is inherited from one's family; and hospitality self-efficacy – self-confidence to achieve a successful hospitality career (Gebbels et al., 2019). Concepts of self-efficacy, career inheritance and career commitment originated from social psychology and sociology (ibid.). A unique interaction between them forms the basis for the personology of a hospitality professional as a pursuer, an advocate and a scholar:

- The pursuer is a hospitality employee who is also known as a career manager. They are motivated to realize their career goals by improving their skills through training or searching for promotion opportunities. When faced with job-related challenges, they approach them positively as obstacles to be solved rather than a hindrance. According to the personology of a hospitality professional, although a highly valued member of a team, the pursuer is guided by their career self-interests and the extent to which they identify with the hospitality industry. As soon as that is not the case, they will search for further career opportunities elsewhere (in different sectors of the global hospitality industry or in other industries altogether).
- The advocate is fully committed to the hospitality industry and has a strong emotional attachment to hospitality, both in commercial and non-commercial settings. This means that the advocate practices hospitality – welcoming strangers and providing for their needs and wants, through their hospitality roles and in their everyday lives. Because hospitality is a part of their career inheritance, they identify with it beyond their professional lives. Hospitality employers need to invest in rewarding such employees for their loyalty and showing them that the business is valuing them.
- The scholar is driven by the prospects of enhancing their employability and progressing their career. Following the personology of a hospitality professional, such an employee will search for career opportunities outside of the hospitality industry if they are not satisfied with the existing options for career growth. Hospitality employees can support scholars with training and continuing professional development to minimize their intentions to leave.



Source: Adapted from Gebbels et al. (2019, p. 224).

Personology of a hospitality professional

MARIA GEBBELS

Knowledge of the personology of a hospitality professional can support HR managers in attracting hospitality professionals who have self-confidence, are committed, and emotionally attached to hospitality.

Personology, although established in psychology and personality research, is underutilized in tourism and hospitality research despite its benefits to both the hospitality employee and employer. The discussed personology could be applied to other areas of the service sector, such as the airline industry and assist in recruitment and selection, but its possibilities could stretch beyond this sector thanks to artificial intelligence (AI).

We know that AI uses algorithms to identify and keep a record of various physical factors in a particular scenario. We also know that tourism and hospitality are facing an automated future, with some hotels already embracing AI to manage customer-facing operations (Tussyadiah, 2020). Can AI be used for the tracking of the psychological and emotional state of people within an organization and contribute to an automated personology assessment? An AI-enhanced human resource management (eHRM) enables closer monitoring and management of human talent, which has possible future benefits for increased customer satisfaction and improved service quality (Ruel and Njoku, 2020). In the post-COVID-19 world, recruitment and retention of the right staff could not have been a higher priority, and the use of AI might be also a possible solution to reimagine some outdated HR practices and further utilize the personology of a hospitality professional.

MARIA GEBBELS

References

- Baumgartner, H. (2002), 'Toward a personology of the consumer', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, 286–36.
- Gebbels, M. (2019), 'What makes a hospitality professional?', *Hospitality Insights*, 3 (2), 5–6.
- Gebbels, M., Pantelidis, I.S. and Goss-Turner, S. (2019), 'Towards a personology of a hospitality professional', *Hospitality & Society*, 9 (2), 215–236.
- Gebbels, M., Pantelidis, I.S. and Goss-Turner, S. (2020), 'Conceptualising patterns of career commitment: the leaving process in hospitality', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32 (1), 126–147.
- Ladkin, A. (2004), 'The life and work history methodology: a discussion of its potential use for tourism and hospitality research', in J.A. Phillimore and L. Goodson (eds), *Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies, Methodologies*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 236–254.
- Lee, K.-J. (2014), 'Attitudinal dimensions of professionalism and service quality efficacy of frontline employees in hotels', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 41 (1), 140–148.
- Murray, H.A. (1981), *Endeavors in Psychology: Selections from the Personology of Henry A. Murray*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Ruel, H. and Njoku, E. (2020), 'AI redefining the hospitality industry', *Journal of Tourism Futures*, ahead-of-print, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-03-2020-0032>.
- Tussyadiah, I. (2020), 'A review of research into automation in tourism: launching the Annals of Tourism Research Curated Collection on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 81, 1–13.

MARIA GEBBELS