Retail Hospitality in the city of São Paulo

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Abstract

The customer is part of the provision of services in hotels, bars and restaurants. Technological advancement, changes in buying and consumption behavior, and changes in people's lifestyles have created a distance in social relations. The discussion about the hospitable characteristics employed in spaces for service provision tends to (re)construct social ties between host-client in hospitality commercial activities. The general objective of this study was to investigate the hospitableness and *servicescape* present in the act of host-client social interaction promoted within Retail in three types of establishments: food services, lodging facilities and stores in São Paulo. The intention was to propose that Hospitality is present in the retail environment as a competitive differential. A quantitative approach was used to conduct the study, through a survey among Retail clients, to identify how the hosts prepare to "welcome" their customers and how clients see the way they were received.

Keywords: Hospitality, Retail, *Hospitableness, Servicescape.*

1. Introduction (Section Heading)

The way in which the interstice between customer experience in an establishment and the relationship between clients and hosts is drawn (Gotman, 2004; Lashley, 2004; Camargo, 2004; Grinover, 2002), the ability these hosts have of being hospitable and the care for the physical space that serves as a background (Reimer & Khuen, 2005; Bitner, 1992), will guide the discussion of this research, whose object of study is Retail (Kotler, 2000; Prasad & Seshanna, 2015), in lodging, restaurants or shops in the city of São Paulo.

According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE (2010), the metropolis of São Paulo is formed by 10,886,518 inhabitants, many of them consumers of Retail establishments, such as lodging, restaurants and shops.

In 2018, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) increased by 1.1% in relation to the previous year, totaling BRL 6.8 trillion. The main booster was the services sector, which corresponds to 75.8% of GDP, with growth of 1.3% in

relation to 2017. Trade grew by 2.3% and real estate activities by 3.1%, being the main influencers of this result. (IBGE, 2019)

In 2018, the hotel sector in the city of São Paulo had positive results. The annual average hotel occupancy rate was 68%, an increase of 5.1% in relation to the previous year, with an average daily rate of BRL 314.17, while hostels had a 16.3% higher result than in 2017, ending the year with 55.07% of occupancy rate and the average daily rate 4% above the previous year, at BRL 52.87, according to a report from the Tourism Observatory (2019).

According to the portal of the city of São Paulo (2019), it has 240 thousand stores, 77 shopping centers and more than 12 thousand restaurants and bars to serve the entire local population and tourists.

Based on these arguments, investigating this subject with an empirical study becomes important. Thus, the following research question arises: In what way does hospitableness and *servicescape* influence the clients' perception of the hosts' hospitality in Retail? The general objective of this work is to correlate hospitable and *servicescape* characteristics present in host-client social interactions in Retail in the city of São Paulo. The specific objectives are: 1 – To identify the perception consumers and customers have of the characteristics of hospitality in Retail; 2 – To relate which hospitable characteristics influence the perception of *servicescape*; and 3 – To list the *servicescape* features that can be present in Retail.

This work is justified by the understanding of Hospitality and the different environments in which it can be applied, such as Retail, through two pillars: *servicescape*, which represents the place where this interaction occurs, and hospitableness, the characteristics of the human beings involved in these interactions.

2. Literature Review (Section Heading)

The word retail derives from the word tailor, which means someone who cuts into pieces (Mulhern, 1997). Currently, the scope is much larger: retail is the final distribution channel that links factories to consumers (Prasad & Seshanna, 2015).

Retail is the set of business activities involved in the sale of goods and services, through commercialization to final consumers, for both personal and family use (Kotler, 2000; Levy & Weitz, 2000; Mattar, 2011; Parente, 2000).

With the strong competition in the sector, imitations and competition for the customer appear in services, stimulating that the quality of the service rendered is increasingly high, to win the preference of this consumer. As a strong ally, relationship emerges as one of the pillars of Retail Services (Parente, 2000).

In this way, traits of hospitality can be found when in relationships between the client (guest) and the seller (host). At some point, these traits can become competitive differentials (Chon & Sparrowe, 2003)

For Lashley (2004), Hospitality is the relationship built between host and guest. An interaction that happens from humans to humans, in planned times and spaces (Camargo, 2004).

Hospitality can be considered a virtue (Camargo, 2015; Telfer, 2004), and it is expected when there is a confrontation with strangers. It may result in the narrowing or removal of social bonds (Camargo, 2015).

In the commercial context, the host is not in a position to choose who will come to their establishment and how often it will happen. If employees perform well, or exceed expectations, and if there is an authentic interest in the guests' happiness, without charging exorbitant prices, these activities will be considered hospitable (Telfer, 2004).

Hospitability can be understood as a means of expressing various virtues, such as benevolence, zeal for public welfare, compassion. It is viewed as an optional virtue. Everyone can try to express these virtues, but not everyone needs to be hospitable.

Commercial hospitality goes beyond large-scale social hospitality. The business experience allows employees to deliver services that customers want and for which they are willing to pay (Lockwood & Jones, 2004). The service sector can be divided into two: commercial services and industrial and public services (Mullins, 2001).

Chon and Sparrow (2003) believe that, as an industry, hospitality and tourism can be considered a large sector, consisting of the provision of different services such as food and beverage services, lodging services, recreation services, travel related services and products offered as personalized services.

All who are part of these connections between services have the responsibility, as hosts, to be hospitable and courteous in offering their services (Chon & Sparrow, 2003). The culture of hospitality can be widely applied to commercial, governmental, and non-profit organizations by expanding attention to commercial service organizations. For these relationships to occur, the places where they take place also play an important role (Pizam & Tasci, 2019).

The term *servicescape* is a neologism created by Bitner (1992). It derives from the words landscape and service (Lovelock, Wirtz & Hemzo, 2011).

The term is used to describe the physical environment of a service company, which plays an important role in the service experience and can alter customer satisfaction, especially in services that have a high degree of contact between people (Lovelock, Wirtz & Hemzo, 2011; Reimer & Khuen, 2005).

In the composition of this environment is the interior and exterior design, environmental conditions (temperature, noise, odor) and the tangible part of services such as business cards and publicity materials (Reimer & Khuen, 2005). For Lovelock, Wirtz and Hemzo (2011, P. 309) "*Servicescape* is the entire visible part of the service including decoration, lighting, aroma, sound, architecture, showcase, temperature and humidity, environment etc.".

The physical environment influences the creation of the consumer image, especially in services providers such as stores, restaurants or lodging facilities (Upadhyaya *et al*. 2018).

The experience encompasses everything the consumer feels, perceives and experiences within a service environment. *Experiencescape* emerges from a holistic approach to service, which acts both in the sensory, functional, social and natural aspects, and with the culture of hospitality. It is everything that results in a different experience for the stakeholders and results in positive or negative behavioral reactions regarding the product, service and brand (Pizam & Tasci, 2019).

3. Methodology

This article is an exploratory research with quantitative methods from the scales tested in hospitality (Blain & Lashley, 2014), *hospitableness* (Tasci & Semrad, 2016) and *servicescape* (Choi, Lee & Seo, 2018). The measurement scales were developed based on the conceptual model of literature review. Factor 1 was used for the *servicescape* scale (Choi, Lee & Seo, 2018), referring to the atmosphere of purchase; questions related to the city were excluded. The hospitability scale (Blain & Lashley, 2014) was translated, and the meanings of the words of the *hospitableness* scale were added so that there was a better understanding on the part of the readers (Tasci & Semrad, 2016).

All items were measured using a seven-point Linkert scale, with (1) fully disagree, and (7) strongly agree. The first section of the questionnaire consists of ten items regarding the hospitality culture of the respondent's company according to clients/guests. The scale was developed using multiple items from three different sources: Blain and Lashley (2014), with an approach on the client's view of the host; Tasci and Semrad (2016), which through words refers to the feeling of hospitableness, e Choi, Lee and Seio (2018), focusing on the buying atmosphere. The last section of the questionnaire brings the sociodemographic information (age, sex, level of education, income, marital status and occupation).

For the quantitative analysis, the proposed technique is the modeling of structural equations that, according to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tathan (2009), explains the relations among multiple variables, examining the structure of interrelations between a series of equations, which describe the relations between the constructs.

The proposed model is based on the relationship between *servicescape* (Choi, Lee & Seo, 2018) and hospitableness (Tasci, 2016) regarding the customer's perception of host hospitality (Blain & Lashley, 2014). Thus, three research hypotheses arise: H1 – The physical environment impacts on the customer's Hospitality Perception; H2 – Hospitable features influence the perception of *Servicescape*; and H3 – Hospitable characteristics are directly related to the customer's Hospitality Perception.

In view of this, the proposed theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Model
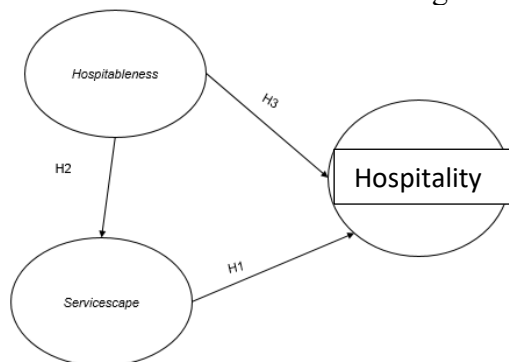
Proposed Structural Model based on the theory
Source: The author (2019)

Questionnaires, according to Vergara (2005), are questions presented to the respondents. They can be open and with free answers, or closed and with alternatives in which the respondent can make choices or ponder them. In the case of this research, the format used was a survey, provided as a questionnaire on Google Forms. It was available from January to April 2019. The research focused on establishments in the city of São Paulo.

The questionnaire was tested and validated by Hospitality scholars. The questionnaire was tested with seven respondents and their contributions were aggregated to the survey. The first respondent said that it was unclear what each of the words in the scale related to hospitableness meant; thus, the meanings of the words was added, based on the Michaelis Online Dictionary. The second respondent said that 7 response options left her confused; as the survey uses the Linkert scale, the number of alternatives was maintained. The third respondent missed the N/A (Not Applicable) option in the questions, and stressed that the meaning regarding Hosting was not clear. The

fourth and fifth respondents had no difficulty answering the questionnaire. The seventh had no comments either. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the respondents could write the name of the place they were evaluating, and which area it belonged to: food services, stores or lodging facilities.

The software used to model the structural equation with PLS was SMARTPLS 2.3M3, which is free. After installing the program, all data from the survey was downloaded through an Excel spreadsheet. In this spreadsheet, each question was identified with acronyms referring to its construct, and numerical values were all filled out. N/A received a value of -1, in order not to impact the figures presented.

The variables used for *Servicescape* (Choi, Lee & Seo, 2018) were:

Table 1 – *Servicescape* Constructs

SERVICESCAPE	Construct
The temperature of the place is comfortable.	SCP01
The place is clean and organized.	SCP02
The lighting is adequate.	SCP03
The noise inside the environment is acceptable.	SCP04
The staff are always put together.	SCP05
The use of colors in the decoration creates an exciting environment.	SCP06
Product information is available on the spot.	SCP07
In general, the layout of the establishment facilitates movement.	SCP08
The staff have a good attitude when serving.	SCP09
The architecture of the place is attractive.	SCP10
The interior is decorated in an attractive fashion.	SCP11
Overall, the design of the environment is interesting.	SCP12
Pre-purchase information was available.	SCP13

Constructs used for *Servicescape*
Source: The author

The questions used as a base for Hospitableness (Tasci & Semrad, 2016) were:

Table 2: Hospitableness Constructs

HOSPITABLENESS	
Kindess - 1. Quality of who is kind; 2. Act of politeness.	HBS01
Education – Knowledge and practice of good manners in social life; civility, politeness.	HBS02
Happiness – State of mind of those who are happy or satisfied; joy, contentment, fortune.	HBS03
Honesty – Quality of who is honest; integrity and probity.	HBS04
Speediness – Characteristic of what is fast or quick when doing something; celerity, lightness.	HBS05
Sincerity – 1. Quality or state of being sincere; 2- Absence of pretense or hypocrisy; smoothness of character; frankness.	HBS06
Flexibility – Aptitude for various things or applications; versatility.	HBS07
Friendship – Feeling of affection, esteem, tenderness, etc. which unites one person to another.	HBS08

Trust – Credibility or positive concept about someone or something; credit, security.	HBS09
Attention – 1. Focus of mental activity on a person or thing; 2. Manifestation of affection, kindness or respect; courtesy.	HBS10
Generosity – 1. Quality of being generous; 2. Altruist attitude.	HBS11
Courtesy – 1. Characteristic of one who presents himself courteously; 2. Kindness or politeness in dealing with people.	HBS12
Consistency – State or quality of a thing that promises to be durable; solidity, truthfulness, credibility, stability.	HBS13
Respect – Treatment with deep reverence or consideration.	HBS14
Hosting – 1. Act or effect of welcoming; reception, shelter, protection; 2. Place for support; refuge.	HBS15
Customization – Act or effect of customizing.	HBS16
Trustworthy	HBS17
Professional – One who is very dedicated to their craft.	HBS18
Attentive – 1. One who pays attention; 2. Delicate with words and attitudes; courteous, kind.	HBS19
Open-minded	HBS20
Well-trained	HBS21
Accommodation - Action, process or effect of accommodating.	HBS22
Dedicated to service	HBS23

Constructs used for Hospitableness
Source: The author

And the following questions were used for Hospitality (Blain & Lashley, 2014):

Table 3: Hospitality Constructs

HOSPITALITY	
I feel the employees of the place I visited put my satisfaction before theirs.	HOSP01
I perceived that employees did everything they could to make sure I had a great time during the time I was served.	HOSP02
I could see that employees always wanted to make me feel welcomed.	HOSP03
I felt that customer comfort was the most important to employees.	HOSP04
I could note a genuine satisfaction from the staff in making me feel special.	HOSP05
I noticed that employees liked to take responsibility for my well-being.	HOSP06
I could see that it meant a lot to employees when I showed approval for their hospitality.	HOSP07
I felt it was important for employees to do what I expected throughout the time I was served.	HOSP08
I noticed that employees were looking for opportunities to help me.	HOSP09

I felt unique when the employees were providing the service.	HOSP10
The employees tried to be in the same line of communication as I was.	HOSP11
I felt the attention at all moments.	HOSP12
I noticed that it was motivating for employees to take responsibility for the welfare of others.	HOSP13

Constructs used for Hospitality

Source: The author

The following questions did not receive enough answer points, and had to be excluded from the study: Hospitableness – HBS01, HBS03, HBS06, HBS07, HBS11, HBS 16, HBS18, HBS19, HBS20 and HBS23; Hospitality – HOSP02, HOSP03, HOPS04, HOPS05; *Servicescape* – SCP07, SCP10 and SCP13.

4. Results

The final sample consisted of 105 respondents. Table 4 shows the values of the sample characteristics.

Table 4 – Socio-demographic data

		N	%
Age Group	Between 18 and 25 yo	8	7.62%
	Between 26 and 29 yo	20	19.05%
	Between 30 and 40 yo	31	29.52%
	Over 40 yo	46	43.81%
Gender	Female	72	68.57%
	Male	33	31.43%
Monthly Income	Up to BRL880.00	4	3.85%
	Between BRL880.00 and BRL2,640.00	5	4.81%
	Between BRL2,640.00 and BRL4,400.00	20	19.23%
	Between BRL4,400.00 and BRL8,800.00	36	34.62%
	Acima de R$8.800,00	39	37.50%
Marital Status	Married	56	53.33%
	Separated	6	5.71%
	Single	41	39.05%
	Widowed	2	1.90%
Occupation	Freelance	21	20.00%
	Formal employment	51	48.57%
	Public service	18	17.14%
	Unemployed	15	14.29%
Education	Elementary School	1	0.96%
	High School	5	4.81%
	Higher Education	39	37.50%
	Post-graduate degree	59	56.73%

Demographic data of the sample
Source: The author

Regarding the evaluated establishment, 66% of the respondents evaluated food establishments, according to Table 5:

Table 5: Division per types of establishment

	N	%
Food Services	68	66.02%
Store	16	15.53%
Lodging Facility	19	18.45%
Total	103	

Data divided per type of establishment
Source: The author

The following criteria were used for data analysis:

Chart 1 – Glossary of analysis indicators

Indicator	Meaning	Reference
AVE – Average Variance Extracted	Convergent validity measurement that shows how much of the variable can explain the data. As a criterion, values above 0.50 are accepted (FORNELL; LARCKER, 2981)	Henseler, Ringle & Sinkovics (2009)
CA / CR Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability	They measure the internal consistency and reliability and eliminate biases of the construct in exploratory research. The value should be > 0.70.	Hair *et al*. (2014)
Student's t-test	Evaluates the significance of correlations and regressions. They are calculated to confirm if there is independence between each variable and their respective constructs, besides independence among them. Evidence ($p < 0.05$).	Hair *et al*. (2014)
Path Coefficient (T)	Path coefficient analysis. The (T)'s are not correlations, but indicate	Hair *et al*. (2014) and Guedes & Net *et al*. (2016)

	the causal relationships between constructs.	

Chart 1 – Glossary of analysis indicators
Source: Adapted from Oliveira (2018)

Using the SmartPLS software, it is possible to evaluate the relationship between the constructs and to test their significance (Hair *et al.*, 2009; Moretti & Pinotti, 2018). The bootstrapping feature can be used to measure Student's t-test values. For this case, the confidence level was for a p-value of 10%, and for the relationship between Hospitableness and Hospitality, and Hospitableness and *Servicescape* the confidence level is at 5%.
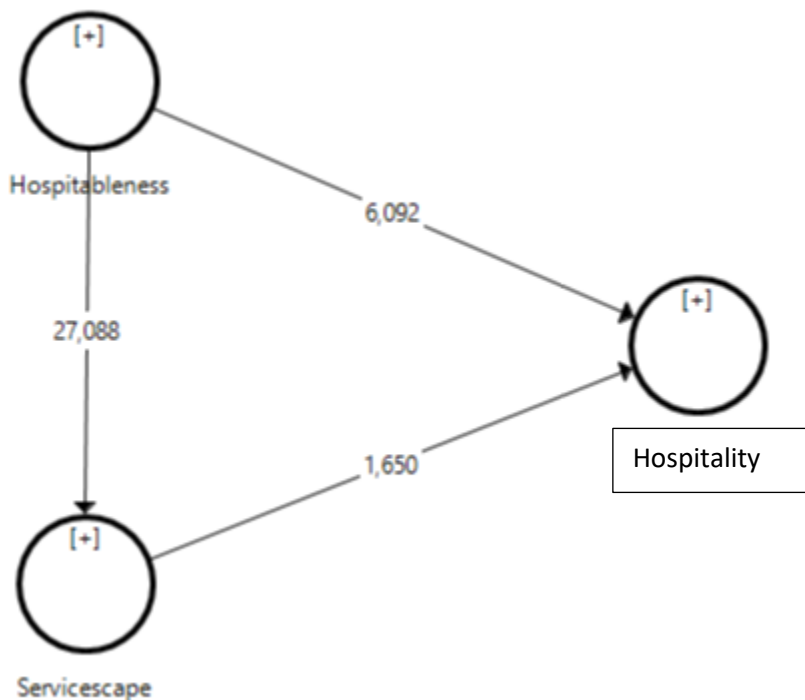
Table 6 – T-test and P-value

	T-test	**P-value**
Hospitableness -> Hospitality	6.092	**0.000**
Hospitableness -> *Servicescape*	27.088	**0.000**
***Servicescape* -> Hospitality**	1.650	**0.099**

T-test and P-Value
Source: The author

Graphically, this relation can be expressed in the following way.
Figure 2: *Bootstrapping* of the model

Bootstrapping Model
Source: The author

The Cronbach's Alpha (AC) must be >0.70; the numbers were significant in this study. The value adopted for AVE was >0.50, and the results meet this value. Composite Reliability must be >0.70, which was also reached in this research, according to Ringle *et al*. (2014) and Silva (2016).

Table 7: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability and AVE

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Hospitableness	**0.961**	**0.966**	**0.685**
Hospitality	**0.946**	**0.954**	**0.698**
Servicescape	**0.970**	**0.973**	**0.786**

Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability and AVE
Source: The author

The relationship established between the constructs helps to measure the balance of the model through an analysis of interdependence between them. It also identifies if each construct individually measures what it is supposed to, without getting mixed with the others. This measure is discriminant validity assessment and the best method is Fornell-Larcker's (Hair *et al*., 2009; Moretti & Pinotti, 2018)

Table 8: Construct Discriminant Validity Assessment according to Fornell-Larcker

	Hospitableness	Hospitality	*Servicescape*
Hospitableness	0.828		
Hospitality	0.864	0.835	
Servicescape	0.866	0.797	0.886

Construct Discriminant Validity Assessment according to Fornell-Larcker
Source: The author

The Path Coefficient (T) indicates how much the study hypotheses can be accepted or rejected. The values range from +1 to -1. Values closer to +1 indicate strong positive relationships between constructs, and the opposite means weak relationships. Values above 1.96 are considered significant. Thus, all hypotheses considered can be accepted in the study.
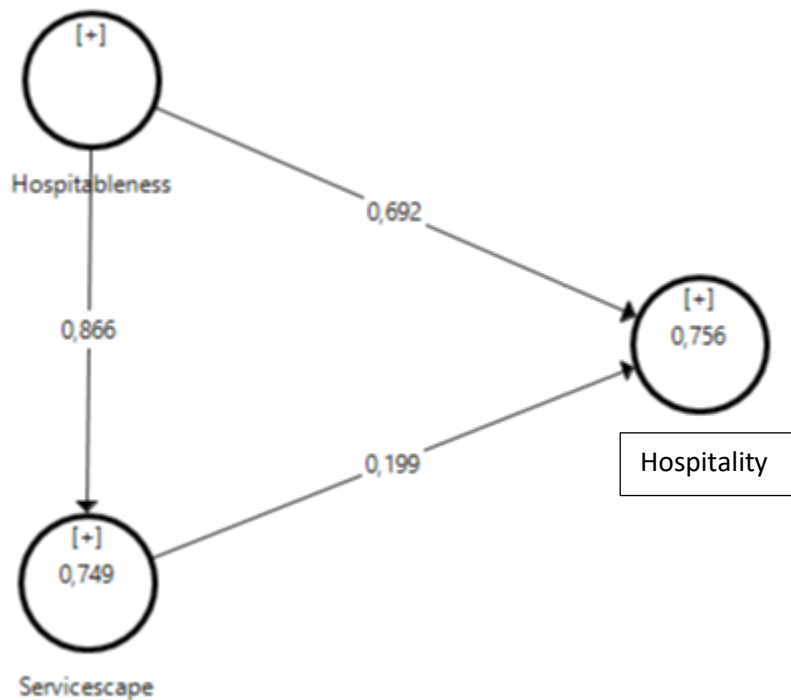
Table 9 – Path Coefficient (T)

	Hospitableness	Hospitality	*Servicescape*
Hospitableness		0.692	0.866
Hospitality			
Servicescape		0.199	

Path Coefficient (T)
Source: The author

Figure 3 – Path Coefficient

Path Coefficient
Source: The author

5. Discussions

Based on the concepts of hospitality, hospitableness, *servicescape* and retail, the authors sought to evaluate the clients' perception of hospitality in food establishments, lodging facilities and stores. This subject has not received much attention so far in the Service Retail in Brazil, and it is relevant, given its great influence on the Brazilian GDP. An attempt was made to answer the following question: In what way does hospitableness and *servicescape* influence the clients' perception of the hosts' hospitality in Retail?

The sample of this study was predominantly female (68.6%), aged over 40 years old (43.8%), married (53.33%), with formal employment (48.57%) and post-graduate education (56.73%). The most chosen branch for the analysis was food services (66%), according to Table 5. It is worth noting that the presented results are specific to this sample, and there is no pretension to generalize them, but the relevance of the study in this population should be noted.

Among the hypotheses raised, H1 was classified as having less influence in the clients' perception of Hospitality about the hosts, although there is a sign of significant influence. H2 had a significant result regarding the relation between hospitableness and *servicescape*. In the *servicescape* literature, we find the importance of the relationships established between employees and customers (Bernard & Bitner, 1981 *apud* Reimer & Khuen, 2005; Schuster *et al*., 2016). H3 also showed a significant value.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research intends to contribute to a better understanding of customers' perception of hospitality, considering the concepts of *servicescape* and hospitableness, perceived in environments involving Retail. Hopefully this contribution will be of use to the retail market, with a new look at hospitality, and to academia.

5.2 *Limitations and Future Research Recommendations*

The research had limitations, such as the restricted and homogeneous sample, and gave more focus to food establishments. It is recommended that the same study be carried out from the host's point of view, and through in-depth interviews with industry professionals.

6. Conclusions

The perception of hospitality is confirmed in all hypotheses as an impact factor between hospitableness and hospitality, as shown statistically. It seems correct to say that the perception of hospitality is related to the characteristics of the physical environment and to the hospitable characteristics in establishments such as lodging facilities, restaurants and retail stores in the City of São Paulo.

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