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Producing Hospitality Experiences at Exhibitions

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Abstract

This study presents considerations on the production of experiences in the environment of exhibitions in the city of São Paulo - SP / Brazil. Therefore, during the first phase of this investigation, bibliographical research was carried out on the subjects of hospitality, hospitality experiences, MICE - Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions, organizations and trade fairs. In the second part, a multiple case study strategy was adopted, consisting of the use of a case study protocol, observation and interviews with exhibition representatives. The question proposed in the research is: what are the aspects observed in the production of hospitality experiences when considering the activities developed by organizations and the environment of business exhibitions? The propositions of the investigation are, (P1) in the industry of exhibitions, which includes activities such as food and beverage, accommodation and entertainment, it is possible to observe aspects that involve the production of hospitality experiences; and (P2) the generation of hospitality experiences is observed through the articulation of organizations in the business exhibition sector and their stakeholders. The main objective is to analyze the activities that involve the provision of food and drink, accommodation and entertainment, and the provision of services in the area of exhibitions and hospitality experience organizations. The results consider different issues, stakeholders and ways of acting in the environment of exhibitions and organizations.

Keywords: Hospitality. Experience management in hospitality. MICE - Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions. Organizations. Exhibitions.

Introduction

The present research approaches issues related to the production of hospitality experiences, thus considering different environments in society, such as the perspective of organizations and the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) sector, which involves a set of practices and the systematization of concepts. It is, therefore, understood that the development of

theories on the field of hospitality operates in conjunction with other activities (Lugosi et al., 2009), which present different perspectives in the context of organizations and applied social sciences.

These aspects follow the dynamics of society through the routine activities of organizations that follow premises aimed at the offer of food and drink, accommodation, entertainment, the occupation of the workforce (Arica & Çorbacı, 2019; Brotherton, 1999; Jones, 1995; Lugosi, 2008; Telfer, 1995), and people's habits in the course of their relationships, especially when it is understood that human beings have a need to relate, to interact with others in order to establish exchanges of objects and knowledge, for example.

This points to different areas of activity and stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007) in this process. For example, when considering the consumption of food and drink by humans, there are ideological movements such as vegans, who abstain from animal products and adopt a plant-based diet. There are also people who find ways to cut down on excessive alcohol consumption as a way of staying more sociable and having less of an impact on the environment. For this reason, hospitality research investigates cultural, ethical, social and political dimensions of society in its theoretical approaches (Lugosi et al., 2009; Arica ve Çorbacı, 2017), and the association of these areas projects organizations and events towards aspects such as value creation and competitive advantage.

For the purpose of this research, the production of hospitality experiences takes place through encounters among people offering drinks, food, lodging, entertainment (Lugosi, 2008) and services in commercial, domestic, private and virtual contexts (Camargo, 2008; Lashley, 2000; Wada, 2003). Organizations use resources and professionalism to address aspects of event tourism planning and management in the tourism sector environment (Getz, 2008; Pearce, 2012). Exhibitions require proper infrastructure and the commitment of stakeholders; it is common to measure the activity through the service provided (Li et al., 2022), exhibitor satisfaction (Breiter & Milman, 2006), the marketing and design of the event (Lin & Lin, 2013), and the layout of the stands (Lee et al., 2015). With that in mind, the problem, propositions and objectives of the research were formulated.

The research proposition is: what aspects are observed in the production of hospitality experiences when considering the activities developed by organizations and the environment of exhibitions?

The propositions of the investigation are, (P1) in the industry of exhibitions, which includes activities such as food and beverage, accommodation and entertainment, it is possible to observe aspects that involve the production of hospitality experiences; and (P2) the generation of hospitality experiences is observed through the articulation of organizations in the exhibition sector and their stakeholders.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the activities that involve the provision of food and drink, accommodation and entertainment, and the provision of services in the area of exhibitions and hospitality experience organizations. This is how the specific objectives of this material were drawn up:

- Explore localized activities in the context of generating hospitality experiences in the exhibitions area;
- Estimate aspects that involve hospitality experiences in the course of organizations' activities;
- Analyze the activities that involve the offer of food and beverages, accommodation and entertainment, and the provision of services that generate hospitality experiences;
- Deal with hospitality involves understanding others, understanding the dynamics of life in modern society, understanding that the construction of knowledge goes hand in hand with the context of management of organizations and the area of events and exhibitions. For the time being, we are investigating historical, social, practical and educational aspects (Lugosi et al., 2009) demonstrating that thinking evolves through social lenses, showing new possibilities for action, such as the MICE sector - Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions. With that in mind, the next stages of the study will follow with a presentation of the theoretical basis of the keywords, methodology, results, and finally, the final considerations, where the findings and research opportunities will be demonstrated.

Literature Review

Hospitality Experience Management

Hospitality is an attribute of the encounter between hosts and visitors/guests, known as hospitable encounters (Camargo, 2008; Arica, 2020), sometimes associated with acts of charity and/or commerce, which presents its applicability in different situations, granting this activity with the possibility of greater depth in its analysis. For researchers, this represents a universe of experiences and orientations (Innerarity et al., 2017) that change according to relationships and adds knowledge to other areas of study involving the activity of travel agencies, enterprises classified as non-hotel and hotels, food and beverage supply, service provision (Lashley, 2008) and other market activities. However, there are other activities that comprise this sector, considering the different environments in society whose purpose is to meet the needs of others, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 presents approaches to the production of hospitality experiences that occur in encounters between people through the offer of food, drink, shelter or lodging, entertainment and the provision of services (Lugosi, 2008). These concepts are presented where the social domain involves activities aimed at welcoming people and providing them with well-being; the private ambiance involves issues of welcoming people into domestic spaces, and the commercial context takes place in the environment of organizations through the relationship between customer and service provider (Lashley, 2000; Wada, 2003), which can also include the virtual environment (Camargo, 2008).

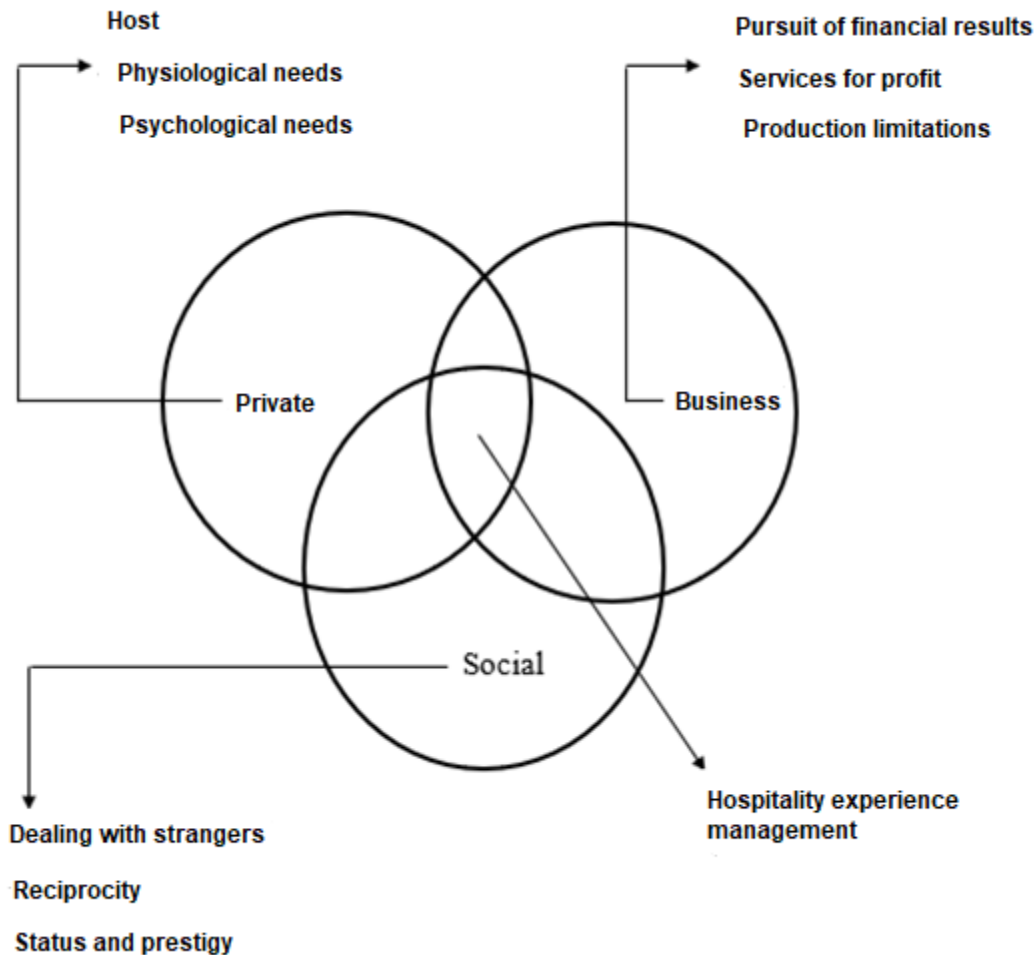


Figure 1. Hospitality Activities

Source: Lashley (2000: 6)

In the context of service provision, companies are oriented towards seeking customer satisfaction through the quality of interactions, where the decision-making responsibility of front-line staff is to build loyalty (Carlzon, 1994) and develop opportunities for the organization. The issues addressed by Camargo (2008), Lashley (2000) and Wada (2003) are presented in the dynamics of society, in which the economic, cultural and social pillars (Chon et al., 2020) are integrated with practical issues such as time, financial aspects and religion, for example. The virtual field is linked to modernity, the sphere of the metaverse and its possibilities. For this reason, technological aspects related to innovation have recently been used to develop characteristics of modern hospitality (Şener & Cobanoğlu, 2022) in the form of strategies for organizations operating in this sector.

Human nature involves the need to relate to others, to interact with stakeholders in social activities that involve the context of work and leisure in commercial, social, private and virtual environments. This occurs because human beings understand, even in unconscious ways that, in order to live, they need relational goods, including external items and other subjects (Innerarity et

al., 2017). In the organizational context, this can be seen in the sense of providing aspects of efficiency in the division and execution of routine tasks. In the context of leisure, this can be seen in the attempt to obtain or provide well-being for others.

Hospitality In Organizations and Exhibitions

There are fundamental qualities in hospitable people (Telfer, 2004). Therefore, they are part of and have the capacity to build society, even in the face of adverse situations (Innerarity et al., 2017), where natural disasters such as earthquakes in Japan and tsunamis in Thailand, volcanic eruptions in Hawaii's Kilauea, wars, pandemics such as the Spanish flu and COVID-19, and the emergence of diseases are becoming increasingly common. For this reason, hospitality researchers analyze the relationship between people in terms of spatial patterns, times of normality and adversity, the actions of organizations and the intertwining with their stakeholders.

When applying the traditional concepts of hospitality to commercial environments (Lashley, 2008), there is a debate about social ties, the quality of people's receptivity and visitation. In the events industry the organizational context, such as the types of business, industrial sector and values of each organization are found in a logic that involves aspects like personal processes and backgrounds, their results and impacts, the patterns of the activity, the planning and management of event tourism, with issues involving the nature of experiences in the sector being driven by aspects such as regulations and knowledge generation (Getz, 2008).

The provision of services, the choice of venue and facilities to host exhibitions meet the needs of the stakeholders involved in this process, in which its participants have considered the physical space where the event takes place and the emotions generated from the place that will host the event (Li et al., 2022; Tan & Law, 2021). In this context, it is understood that through the social lens of hospitality, the tangible and intangible are related and are decisive for the quality of human relationships. In order to hold events, festivals and exhibitions with quality and distinction, it is necessary to have premises with appropriate characteristics, where convention and exhibition centers provide spaces and services suitable for different purposes (Tan & Law, 2021).

When relating hospitality, entertainment and business, there are gaps to be explored, such as a set of professional activities that are part of the MICE sector and business exhibitions. That brings together numerous players from different sectors of the economy, such as manufacturers and suppliers, buyers and retailers, service providers and visitors who can, through this commercial and social activity, exchange knowledge and information to serve as learning (support) in specific areas for organizations (Li et al., 2022). With the development of tourism and event-related activities, it is possible to obtain factors associated with human well-being, such as an observed increase in the number of organizations (like hotels and restaurants), the creation of new branches of activity for the local population, the conservation of cultural and natural attractions, socio-economic development and improved quality of life (Çetin et al., 2021).

This is why events in the MICE sector, in which business exhibitions are included, add knowledge to organizations and value to tourist destinations, especially when it is understood that due to the positive economic impacts, this theme is connected to regional development in the context of increased support for products, services, social capital and community capacity (Moscardo, 2007), which in turn improves the business environment for organizations, generating employment and

income. It is observed that business exhibitions make it easier to connect professionals and representatives of companies and organizations. However, in order to achieve this goal, convention centers need to bring together a set of specific features or structural qualities so that the players in this sector feel adequately welcomed and comfortable to develop their relationship. Thus, the collaboration of the stakeholders (people and organizations) of the tourist destination is necessary for the development of regional tourism.

Methodology

The present research is qualitative in nature. During the first phase, we consulted articles with keywords such as hospitality; hospitality experiences; MICE - Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions; Organizations; and Business Fairs. Qualitative studies explore the practices of organizations operating in the tourism and hospitality sector, and examine the opinions of their employees (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). A semi-structured interview script was then drawn up, thus adopting the multiple case study strategy, which consists of using the case study protocol to increase the reliability of the research and guide the researcher (Yin, 2004) throughout the steps followed.

Semi-structured interviews recruit participants and gather data that is sometimes located in demographic characteristics, race and gender, age and average working time in organizations such as food, lodging and transport (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). The adoption of the case study protocol involves steps such as the overview of the case study protocol, procedures adopted during the field research, questions checked in the case study, and finally, the drafting of the report guide (Yin, 2004), which involves gathering sources of information. This was done in order to understand the gaps that exist and may arise, and to measure hospitality experiences (Pijls et al., 2017) in the environment of the exhibitions visited, by considering factors such as well-being, empathy and receptivity. In summary, this investigation adopted the following steps: elaboration and development of the theoretical framework, description of the method adopted, identification and prior contact with the target audience, request for signature and documentation of the consent forms, collection of evidence by observing the physical aspects of the convention centers during the interviews, conducting interviews and transcribing the material obtained, data analysis and completion of the case study report.

The field research involved observation and interviews with managers, supervisors and representatives of business exhibitions. The events visited were EXPOCATOLICA 2023, Jornada Paulista de Cirurgia Plástica [Sao Paulo Plastic Surgery Convention], Feira EBS - Speed Meeting, EXPOTEL - VI Feira Brasil para Hotelaria e Gastronomia [Brazil Hospitality and Gastronomy Trade Fair], and EXPOSEC - Feira Internacional de Segurança [International Security Fair]. The interviewees are Douglas Santos, Paulo Santi, Luzia Alba, Fraderick Kenzo Falck, Monica Calb, Mariana Mangabeira, Daiana Moura, Libia Lender, Francisco Feitosa, Fatima Massa, Jose Roberto Sevieri, Regina Silva, Cleber Martins, Rodrigo Santinelo, all listed in Table 1:

Table 1. Exhibitions and managers surveyed

Business exhibitions	Period	Venue	Managers / supervisors
Expocatolica	May 18-21, 2023	Pro Magno Centro De Eventos	Douglas Dos Santos E1
			Paulo Santi E2
			Luzia Alba E3
Jornada Paulista De Cirurgia Plástica	June 7-10, 2023	Wtc São Paulo Golden Hall	Frederic Kenzo Falck E4
			Monica Calb E5
			Mariana Mangabeira E6
Feira Ebs – <i>Speed Meeting</i>	May 31 - July 1, 2023	Centro De Convenções Rebouças	Daiana Moura E7
			Libia Lender E8
Expotel – Vi Feira Brasil Para Hotelaria e Gastronomia	June 14-15, 2023	Centro De Convenções Caneca	Francisco Feitosa E9
			Fatima Massa E10
			Jose Roberto Sevieri E11
Exposec – Feira Internacional De Segurança	13 a 15 De Junho De 2023	São Paulo Expo	Regina Silva E12
			Cleber Martins E13
			Rodrigo Santinelo E14

Source: Prepared by the author

Table 1 shows the exhibitions analyzed, the period during which they were held, the venues in which they were held (convention centers), and the names of the respondents. The field research was carried out in the year 2023. The researcher took part in five exhibitions and interviewed 14 people. Due to the time, the circulation of people in the analyzed environment and the tasks that arise during these events, some interviews were carried out days after the dates shown. The data obtained from the interviews was analyzed and processed using ATLAS TI software, a tool which helps in the development of qualitative analysis tasks (Atlas TI Qualitative Data Analysis, 2024). The research data was analyzed using the content analysis technique of observing the meanings in the interviewees' speeches (Bardin, 2011).

Findings

During the interviews, we noted the considerations made about business exhibitions. It turns out that events are the science of details, so all these details need to be thought out by all the stakeholders involved (E8). All aspects of the planning process are taken into account, considering the number of visitors and the number of days an event is held. Interviewee 14 points out that the

venue will welcome 50,000 people in three days. Thus, a city is built. All this involves a great deal of logistics, and the food part is no exception (E14). Temporary structures operate in this environment, i.e., you set up an exhibition, however big it is for a few days, then it runs for three days, four days, five days and then everything is dismantled (E11).

Some issues are intrinsic part of these events, such as hospitality. When you go to the park, regardless of the time of day, the Disney staff are always smiling and welcoming. With an exhibition it is the same (E13). Respondents talk about the atmosphere of these venues. A receptive environment seems to make everything people absorb at that moment (the event, the seminar, a convention, an exhibition) easier and more attractive. So, one can have the knowledge aligned with good service, and this provides satisfactory results (E10). This relationship varies. When you're in a hotel, you generally have a much kinder relationship. Hotel staff are trained. When you're in a specific venue, like an exhibition pavilion, then you encounter more obstacles (E5). The interviewee said that because of the number of people and organizations, and the size of the exhibition she attends. According to interview 6, this relationship of hospitality extends to everyone who is part of that event in some way. It's the connection, it's the participant (E6).

Through the respondents' discourse, aspects that involve the production of hospitality experiences are identified. This happens at different stages of exhibitions, such as the assembly, where, according to interviewee 1, from the person who attends to the assembler to the builder, who carries out a heavier job, everything is always done in a polite, calm and hospitable manner, so that they feel at ease. From this perspective, there are intangible aspects related to the expectations of producers, planners, assemblers and other stakeholders in the phase of preparation of a convention center. You see something like a city being built and in operation. It generates something that is incredible, like a sense of achievement, of work well done. It generates a positive impact (E14).

Throughout the interviews, questions were raised about the organizations and about other stakeholders operating in the city where the exhibition will be held. So, from the taxi driver who picks up the event participant from the airport, to the hotel, to the place where they will eat and request for an invoice, to the girl who answers the door and doesn't speak the language very well. Suddenly, they are looking into it, to a locker where they can keep their suitcase because it's the last day of the event (E8). Issues such as generating taxes for the government by requesting invoices, existing cultural and language differences are taken into account. Receptivity starts with the social network, from the phone call, from the promoter, and then comes the final part, which is direct contact with the accreditation, even if it's digital (E9). In this way, we consider aspects that for the time being involve the face-to-face sphere and the virtual environment.

There are different spaces at these events, since during the business exhibition there is this hospitality in the corridor, whoever is here. It is essential to make people want to come back, to make people feel welcome (E1). But for the respondents, the main objective of taking part in an exhibition is the networking among the participants (E7). For example, accreditation directly with the counter. Then there's the question of security - the security team, the cleaning team and the promotional team as well as the management team (E9). Regarding issues relating to people's sociability in these environments we emphasize the face-to-face context, the human relationship. It's the most important thing during the exhibition. Bonds are created, a network is created, a whole networking is created, so you're next to a person who has the same focus as you. You're with your peers (E4). There are other aspects to be considered. For example, at public safety fairs,

helicopters, riot trucks, robots (E12) are visualized within the convention center. These are objects, vehicles, and situations that generate practical aspects and memories in people's minds.

There are issues related to gastronomy at these events, because we inform our suppliers in the food court so that they can provide good service to our public, which is a very specific public (E3). As for the food that caters for the event's participants, it has to be quick food, easy food, food that can be produced without gas because gas isn't allowed indoors and food that can both surprise and satisfy people (E11).

Still in the context of food, Brazilians are hospitable precisely because of the issue of coffee, from the simplest Brazilians to the highest standard ones. When you receive or offer coffee, it is something that has been part of our culture for over 200 years. It came from Portugal and blended into our culture, a miscegenation (E9). Then there are opportunities to work at these events, since food is essential. Thus, more gastronomic experiences could be explored at events (E14). Exhibition planners/managers are concerned about the availability of food and drink, both for those who work, who sometimes spend 12 hours inside a pavilion, and for those who come to visit, who stay for at least two hours and need this type of resource (E2). This highlights issues that exhibition managers need to consider when working with the planning, execution and post-event phases, but also when considering the production of experiences for the participants in this activity.

Conclusion and Implications

This study serves as a reference model for the issues inherent in the production of hospitality experiences in the environment of organizations and exhibitions. For this reason, it surveyed articles on the keywords hospitality, hospitality experiences, the MICE sector, organizations and exhibitions with the apparent aim of revealing the current state of the art on this activity, and also carried out interviews with 14 managers / supervisors of exhibitions in the city of São Paulo, which demonstrates the possibility of contributing to the knowledge produced and disseminated on this activity, especially when one considers the multiplicity of subjects and issues that this activity represents for a region and its stakeholders.

In relation to the question proposed by this research, what aspects are observed in the production of hospitality experiences when considering the activities developed by organizations and the environment of exhibitions? In this investigation, the research worked on the considerations made by Innerarity et al., (2017) and Telfer (2004) which deal with the inherent qualities of people, the management of hospitality experiences, the construction of society and the aspects that involve human nature and the need to interact with others. Respondents 1 and 14 highlight the expectation of producers and the generation of a positive impact by creating a structure along the lines of a city planned and designed to welcome people.

Camargo (2008) considers the applicability of hospitality experience management in the context of commerce and charity, or according to Lashley (2008) and Lugosi (2008) in different daily situations such as relationships in commercial environments and in the consumer market, tourism sector, and companies that provide food and drink, accommodation and services. Interviewees 5, 6, 10 and 13 pointed out that receptivity is part of events, regardless of the time of day, sometimes varying according to the location, but the important thing is that having a hospitable atmosphere

generally provides a satisfactory result for the stakeholders in this activity, bringing all the parties involved closer together.

For Li et al., (2022) hospitality, entertainment and exhibitions are related and intertwined. This involves activities such as buying and selling, and the manufacture and provision of services. Visiting and receiving people can also be considered in this sphere. Camargo (2008), Lashley (2000) and Wada (2003) have shown that this activity involves different domains such as domestic, private, social and virtual. For respondents 8 and 9, these questions involve the practices of stakeholders operating in the city where the exhibition is held, where both face-to-face and virtual interactions are covered. This demonstrates possibilities about the dynamics of exhibitions, aspects that are fundamental when considering the activity of welcoming people by contemplating the areas in which this activity is carried out by human beings.

In relation to the main objective of this research, to analyze the activities that involve the offer of food and drink, accommodation and entertainment, and the provision of services in the environment of exhibitions and organizations that are hospitality experiences. Carlzon (1994) points to the need for organizations to please and retain customers through the quality of interactions. For Getz (2008), this involves the business and values of organizations in the MICE sector represented through processes, results, standards and regulations, planning and management, generation of knowledge and experiences. Respondent 12 said that there are objects and practical aspects that generate memories in people's minds and make it easier for them to identify with a certain situation.

For interviewees 1, 4, 7 and 9, welcoming people, creating social ties, networking and the desire to visit again are objectives that are relevant to exhibitions, where people socialize and have human exchanges in places like the service desks and corridors. Li et al. (2022), and Tan & Law (2021) consider spatial qualities and their suitability for different purposes, which generate different emotions in people, integrating tangible and intangible. Interviewees 8, 14 and 11 point to the need for planning and organization in events when considering the structural qualities of convention centers to host people over the course of three, four or five days.

According to Çetin et al. (2021) and Moscardo (2007) there are benefits in the development of exhibitions and events in tourist destinations, such as the promotion of local products and services, the well-being of the local population, the growth of the business environment for organizations and regional development in the socio-economic sphere, as well as natural and cultural conservation. This influences the receptiveness of people, the performance of organizations, whether gastronomic enterprises or lodging establishments, the development of tourist destinations, meeting the needs of local residents and visitors, and the way through which local stakeholders carry out their routine activities.

Respondents 3, 9, 11 and 14 points out that gastronomy in these areas needs to serve and generate positive experiences for its participants in accordance with the normative aspects of the place in order to generate opportunities in the way organizations in the sector operate, whether serving coffee or a snack. This indicates the possibility of fostering partnerships with local stakeholders and presenting a universe of possibilities, a promising and plural future. According to interviewee 2, it is necessary to consider the food and beverage area for all players, including those who work

in the convention center pavilion. It is essential for the development of this activity when considering future studies and issues regarding the social function of the sector.

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