

# Guest Greeting Practices in Indian Hospitality: A Psychological Perspective: A Systematic Review

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## Abstract:

Guest greeting in India reflects psychologically important cultural practices of respect, reciprocity, and social harmony. Traditional greetings, such as folded-hand gestures, verbal welcome, and hospitality rituals, do not operate simply as social etiquette but as psychological mechanisms of interpersonal governance. This article focuses on the insights of the social psychology, cultural anthropology, and intercultural communication to examine the psychological bases and social functions of guest greeting behaviours in the Indian context. The review sums up how shared cultural scripts, nonverbal communication, and collectivist orientations create an environment of trust, reduce social uncertainty, and foster relational bonds. The variation in greeting styles across regions, religions, and social hierarchies is reviewed, revealing cultural diversity with psychological underlying unity. The findings suggest that Indian guest greeting practices underpin identity affirmation, emotional comfort, and maintenance of social order. Integrating psychological theories of social interaction with culturally imbedded practices, this article posits the centrality of greeting behaviour as an important means of improving intercultural understanding, hospitality management, and social cohesion in a relentlessly globalizing society.

**Keywords:** Guest greeting, Indian culture, social psychology, hospitality behaviour,

## Introduction

The style of guest greetings is the most basic form of social behavior and is the starting point of social interaction. In Indian culture, the practice of greeting a guest has not been considered a mere optional activity but carries significant psychological and social implications. The importance of these styles of guest greetings has been observed to lie in the way these are executed by verbal communication, body language, and other expressions of hospitality in establishing a social connection. From the psychological point of view, greeting behaviors can be seen as learned social scripts. These social scripts provide individuals with the means to deal with social situations in a clear and confident way. In the Indian setting, the social scripts related to greeting others tend to be shaped by collectivist cultural values, in which social harmony, social sensitivity, and social obligation prevail. The greeting behavior tends to be mindful of social roles, age, and status, giving the host and the visitor insight into the social roles. Some research studies carried out in social and cultural psychology have revealed the importance of greeting styles in determining feelings of warmth, acceptance, and belonging. For instance, in India, greeting styles that emphasize hospitality help to bring about favorable emotional reactions in the guest and also help to

maintain the social identity of the host as respectful and hospitable. There are also significant social roles played by greeting styles, such as the facilitation of social linkages in the community. Although such practices occur on a day-to-day basis, there has been minimal holistic psychological examination of the concept of guest greeting practices in Indian society. Most literature that has been done on guest greetings has been fragmented across various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and communication studies. The importance of guest greeting styles, as done in Indian society, will be reviewed below.

### **Literature Review**

The research into greeting behaviors brings out the central place that culturally patterned social rituals hold in shaping interpersonal interaction. Whether located in social psychology or cultural anthropology, scholars theorize greetings as learned behavioral scripts that signal intent, regulate social distance, and manage face-work across varied social contexts. Writing in an early work, Goffman (1967) stressed greetings as part of everyday "ritual encounters" that organize social interaction, reduce uncertainty, and affirm social expectations. Subsequent research has broadened this perspective by analyzing the place of cultural norms in shaping both the verbal and non-verbal expressions found in greeting practices.

Hospitality and respectful address have been identified as key components of greeting behavior in studies specific to South Asian contexts. Greeting behaviors in Indian culture are discussed within the literature as reflecting cultural values such as collectivism, respect for hierarchy, and relational attunement. Cross-cultural psychology researchers argue that in collectivist cultures, group harmony and mutual recognition are prioritized, as reflected in greeting rituals involving warmth, politeness, and symbolic acknowledgment of the other. Empirical evidence suggests that such practices improve perceived social support and interpersonal closeness, especially in initial encounters.

Non-verbal communication scholars have focused on gestures, eye contact, and proxemics in greeting patterns, pointing out the large role of culturally specific cues in conveying respect and social intentions. In India, body language and spatial behavior of greeting is closely tied to age, gender, and social roles, serving both psychological and normative functions. The findings are consistent with the area of embodied cognition: the studies suggest that physical gestures influence emotional experience and social perception.

### **Methodology**

The approach followed in this study is an integrative literature review to review the psychology of the style of greeting a guest in India based on findings from the scholarly articles. Studies related to the subject matter from psychology, anthropology, communication, and hospitality research were systematically chosen by academic databases. The literature reviewed was analysed thematically to draw on common psychological constructs, greeting patterns, and Impression on sensory environment, greeting behaviours that allow comparisons across cultures and disciplines.

### **Cultural Foundations of Guest Greeting in India: Atithi Devo Bhava and Tradition**

The tradition of welcoming guests in India has strong roots in the country's culture and traditions that glorify the guest and show them reverence and respect. The tradition and the philosophy of welcoming guests and making them feel at home in India has been articulated in the ancient Hindu text as "Atithi Devo Bhava," meaning "a guest is like God." It has been the guiding light for the behaviour and conduct of the people in general and has now been slowly incorporated into the hospitality industry. The tradition and the culture in India of welcoming guests and showing them reverence and respect "as they are like

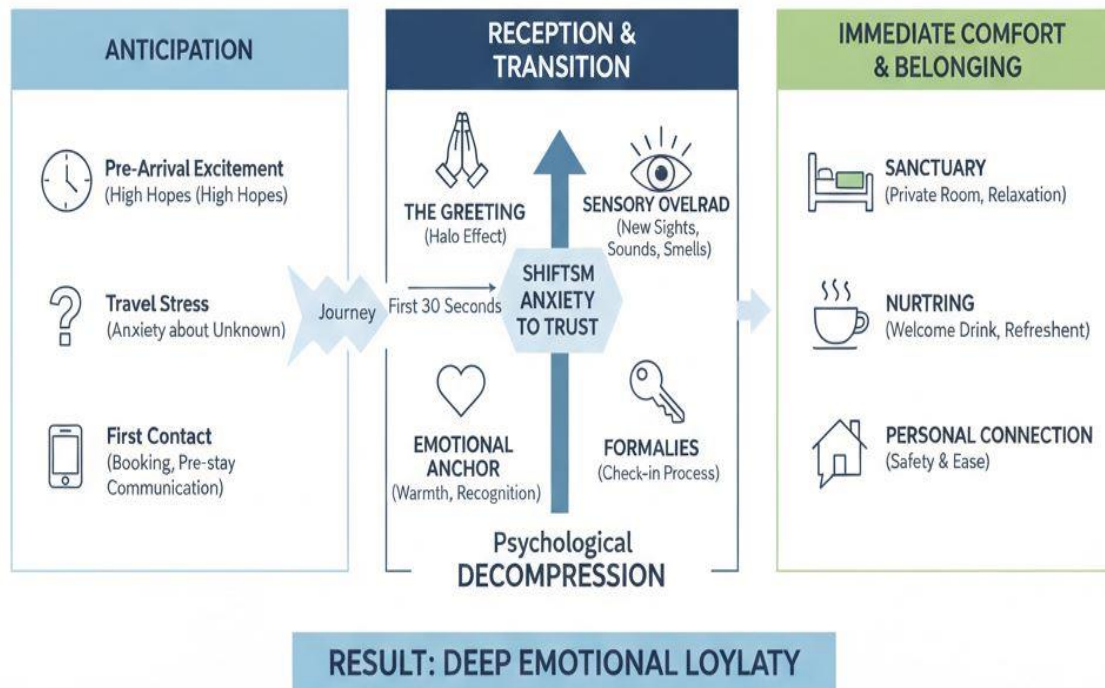
God” provides them with the sacred welcome of “aarti,” “tilak,” and flower garlands and refreshing drinks like “sherbet”. These traditions in the United States and other countries have been slowly adapted into the hospitality industry in hotels and other establishments where tourists and visitors can make their stay pleasant and enjoyable. The philosophy has now been adapted into the national campaign by the Tourism Department of India so that the moment the guests set foot in India, they should make them feel welcome and valued.

But the impact of “\*Atithi Devo Bhava\*” is much deeper and moves into the realm of real human interaction. Employees at elite Indian hotels including Taj, Oberoi, and Leela Palace, and heritage hotels, are trained to bring these ideals to life. Arrivals at Taj Hotels, for instance, are made to include an auspicious greeting accompanied by lighting of an auspicious lamp, flower garlands in sweet scents and aromas, and a cooling local drink, which highlights their thoughtful combination of local culture and service. Such gestures, while mere show, are anchored in their treatment of their guests as if they are being welcomed into their dear or precious home, rather than business establishments. At “The Oberoi,” simultaneous attention to “quality service and other details such as sandalwood tikka spots or marigold garlands” helps reinforce this attitude of being appreciative of their guest's arrival. Though rooted in traditions, they are carefully crafted to suit their luxury offerings and influence their guest's experience from the moment guest arrives in Hotel.

### **Crafting First Impressions through Sensory Environment and Greeting Rituals**

The welcome in any hotel or resort begins long before the first staff interaction encountered by the arriving customer. Sociocultural research in the hospitality industry has shown the important role played in creating early impressions about an establishment by scent, lighting, sound, and interior design. These kinds of early attractiveness features are used in the hotel industry to create a certain kind of desired response; it has been shown in various industry-related research studies around the globe that scent plays the major role rather than lighting or sound in creating early memories. In India, many five-star resorts have been known to make use of certain kinds of signature scenting in the hotel reception area, like sandalwood or jasmine or even lemongrass. The overall “estate of warmth” created through this kind of proper scenting along with sufficient lighting designs or proper music in the background has been successful in creating a familiar feeling in the minds of customers as soon as they enter the hotel.

Parallel to the environmental stimuli, the hotel associates reinforce these impressions through personal gestures. Industry best practices suggest greeting guests warmly upon sight, with eye contact, a genuine smile, and the guest's name when known. In luxury Indian hotels, these recommended practices are often developed onto culturally resonant greetings such as “Namaste” with a slight bow of respect. For many travellers, this distinct blend of universal hospitality etiquette and localized nuance stands out as a defining part of the welcome experience. The personalization of service through greeting the guest through recognition, which will make them a loyal guest. The acknowledgment of special occasions like birthdays or anniversaries makes the emotional resonance add the value to greetings. When one is greeted by name or presented with a handwritten welcome note, emotional engagement shifts from routine to personal recognition and appreciation, fostering a sense of being seen, respected, and welcomed in a meaningful way.



**Figure 1: Impressions on Sensory Environment and Greeting Rituals**

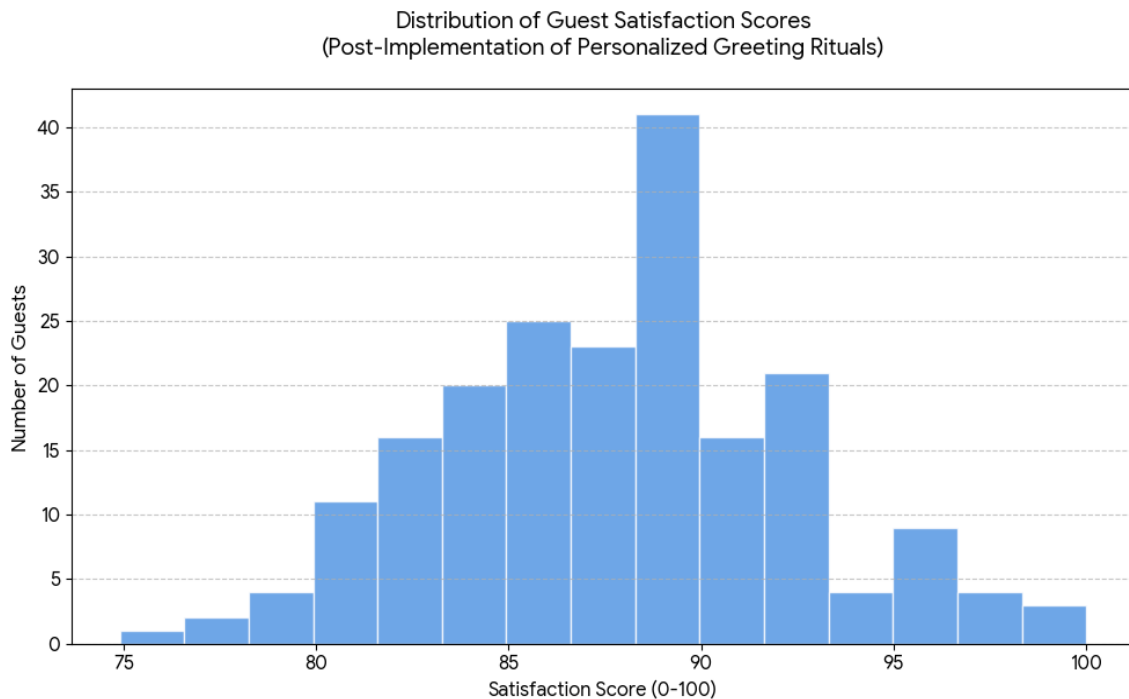
**The Emotional Arc of Guest Arrival: Anticipation, Reception, and Immediate Comfort**

The process of arrival is even more than purely transactional; it also determines the mood and tone for the whole stay itself. Researchers observing the check-in process in hotel organizations have found that anticipation, participation, and the following retrospective mood stages after arrival in the hospitality business enhance overall satisfaction and future commitment through inherently deep intercommons and interrelations and interactive effects and associations and interplay and interconnections and interlinks not as separate entities but as closely interacting and inter-related stages and phases and facets and aspects and points in time and space of anticipation and participation and reviewing in anticipation, participation, and retrospective mood convergence and association and interaction and interrelation of anticipation, participation, and retrospective mood stages after arrival in the hospitality business of overall satisfaction and future commitment and related stages and phases and points in process. “Anticipation, participation, and retrospective mood stages after arrival in hospitality business not as separate entities but as inter-related stages after arrival in hospitality business.” Guests coming from other spaces and organizations with anticipation eager, curious, and hopeful anticipate an improved welcome and reception and greeting and check-in and process compared with guests tiring and experience. Additionally, this emotional journey can be further enriched through personalized attention. In some of the luxury hotels in Rajasthan, for instance, guests are received with Rajasthani folk music, or they are treated to cool, flavoured towels and drinks in order to arouse their senses and physically revive them as a result of their prolonged travel. In other places, the staff members can engage the guest in some kind of cultural storytelling or encourage them to participate in heritage experiences of the place, all in an effort to immediately establish an emotional connection with the guest as a symbol of the place itself. These are some of the ways in which

an initial sense of caring or responsiveness is established through an emotional primer that generally results in increased levels of satisfaction, engagement, and exploration of the rest of the hotel’s offerings

**Transforming Luxury Hotel Guest Experience Through Personalized Arrival Strategies**

Luxury hotels within the Indian hospitality sector have been doing the needful to marry time-tested hospitality insights with the art of modern-day personalization. What makes the arrival experience truly special is carefully designing these elements, pegged to personal preferences and taking into account their cultures as well. To explain, let's consider how luxury hotels track their personal preferences via the best property management systems possible, using this data to deliver better greetings like handing over their favourite drink upon arrival, taking into account an existing preference for room allocation, or handing over personalized presents that would appeal to their identities based on their cultures. This is more about satisfying the special guest's emotional need for being understood as a distinctive human being rather than just another customer; otherwise, greeting them becomes just another routine for them based on routine services offered. Personalization also responsible for an important task in the process of changing the arrival experience to become a generator of loyalty. By recognizing guests in such personal ways right from the beginning, an emotional experience through guests welcome at the establishment always results in good reviews in online, lead to revisits to the establishment, and recommendations to other people in their social networks.



**Figure 2. Guest Satisfaction on Implementing Greeting Rituals**

The act of recognizing guests, particularly those who have revisited, demonstrates to guests that this establishment remembers them and is concerned with their wellbeing after the mechanical processes of booking rooms have been concluded. Such "memory of care" contributes to guests’ emotional investment in this establishment because they become more forgiving in case of small problems but are more enthusiastic to recommend this establishment to other people in their networks.

### **Creating Memorable Arrival Experiences: Rituals, Stories, and Cultural Engagement**

A memorable arrival experience obtained through personal interaction during check-in, some Indian luxury hotels also include storytelling as part of their arrival experience for greater meaning creation. This is achieved for instance by allowing visitors to experience some local craft, music, or ritual, part of the local culture that makes one feel as though he is part of the whole narrative as well. This is very crucial especially when one considers the kind of tourist experience that people are looking for today, where authenticity in terms of culture is becoming more important as opposed to standardized hospitality templates that are pervasive across the whole globe. As such, through storytelling, Indian luxury hotels are turning arrival into exploration, rather than just transiting from one place to another through check-in procedures.

Of course, the development of unforgettable arrival experiences does not happen without paying attention to human emotion and staff conduct. Emotional intelligence-employees who can read body language, empathize with travel weariness, and adapt tone and approach based on customer cues, and respond proactively-plays a very important role in shaping how guests feel from the start. While it is the structural elements-environment and rituals-that set the stage for such experiences, it is the human interaction that completes the emotional arc and makes the guest feel understood, respected, and welcomed with much fanfare. Thus, at the dynamic confluence of cultural warmth, personalized service, and emotional engagement, India's hospitality industry crafts arrival experiences that often linger longer in guests' memories than even the physical comforts of a room or amenities.

### **Impact on Guest Loyalty, Satisfaction and Long-Term Brand Perception**

Guest greeting and experience have far more relevance in the minutes immediately after entering the hotel than is commonly appreciated. First moments mean so much more in terms of overall satisfaction levels in providing guests with an emotionally uplifting moment, where guests feel recognized as individuals from around the world, where the culture is accepted. These guests are also more easily prone to maintaining a positive attitude in terms of overall service encounters, right from dining to activities to checking out. However, when guests have unpleasant encounters right from the first moment due to delays in greeting guests when checking in or are treated without sensitivity by hotel staff, this casts a shadow on the entire visit where these guests are easily prone to complaining about even small issues.

The significance of making customers emotionally uplifted right from the initial steps of guest arrival in a competitive scenario, such as that of world-class tourism, the customers of Indian hotels have witnessed expertise at handling a crucial factor that can be attributed to its enormous impact in determining satisfaction levels arising out of management.

styles and arrival experiences aligned to meet the expectations of an ever-changing clientele while also celebrating cultural heritage. With the increasing adoption of technologies like data analytics-driven personalization and real-time tracking of guests' preference trends, the possibilities of creating even more personalized and emotionally engaged arrivals are on the rise. However, it is important to remember that it is the power of human warmth, cultural traditions, and personal interaction that lies in the focus of guests' gratitude. Based on this understanding, whether it is in the area of floral decorations and rituals or customized arrivals in line with guests' history data, the heritage of Indian hospitality continues to tap into the power of positive arrivals.

Luxury hotels in India have further elevated this approach by integrating advanced personalization strategies and culturally resonant storytelling into their arrival experiences. By anticipating guest

preferences, acknowledging individual identities, and creating moments of surprise or delight, hotels are not only meeting expectations but exceeding them, building emotional engagement that extends beyond the stay itself. Such early-stage emotional connections significantly impact overall satisfaction, brand perception, and long-term loyalty, demonstrating that a carefully orchestrated arrival experience has tangible business and experiential value.

Ultimately, the greeting style and arrival experience in Indian hospitality embody a delicate balance between tradition and innovation. They transform first impressions into lasting memories by connecting guests to both the hotel and the culture in authentic and meaningful ways. In doing so, India's luxury hotels demonstrate that emotional resonance, cultural awareness, and personalized attention are not optional extras but essential components of a hospitality experience that is memorable, transformative, and deeply human.

### Conclusion

The manner in which guests are greeted in India is far more than a routine procedure it is a "profound expression of cultural values, hospitality traditions, and emotional intelligence." The styles of guest greeting in India are a deeply ingrained system of psychology and culture and are certainly not mere etiquette. These practices in the philosophy of "Atithi Devo Bhava" are effective social devices that communicate respect and comfort right from the first encounter. The paper illustrates that the aspect of guest greeting encompasses nonverbal and other elements that aim to provide comfort and create trust. These practices in the hospitality industry, in particular luxury hotels in India, play a major role in determining the satisfaction and perception of guests in the industry. These practices in the hospitality industry in India display the potential for integration of values and practices in the industry with the principles of emotional intelligence and the concept of making first impressions into experiences by understanding the guest greeting practices in India. The practices of guest greeting in India reinforce social identity and define the industry as a region with potential for interconnected human experiences in the global world.

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