

Effect of Emotional Labour on Guest Experience in Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

This study has two objectives, first, to identify the conflicts between character and experiences of emotional labour in hotels, and its effect on the overall wellbeing of the workforce. The second and more general objective is to develop a research stream in identifying its direct effect on customer satisfaction. A qualitative research methodology is proposed to achieve the desired objectives. Results of pilot personal interviews reveal that four SERVQUAL dimensions i.e. Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy have a close emotional content. The study also shows that services received by customers provided by the emotional labour are actually what decide the scale of business efficiency and the effectiveness. An empirical investigation with hotel managers to validate the results of the pilot study would be the next step.

Keywords: Emotions, Emotional Labours, Characters, Experiences and SERVQUAL

INTRODUCTION

‘Guest contact workers of the tourism and hospitality industry engage directly with customers, where services required certain different approaches of interaction between the server and the served. Services offered on face-to-face basis automatically involve inter-personal features, which are to be deployed positively by service workers (Robbins, S.P., 2001). Employees are made to demonstrate a willingness to be of service by displaying emotions. These emotions displayed may or may not be genuine, depending on the moods, personality, and behaviour of the service worker.

The study looks into ‘emotions’ at workplace, in particular respect to the hospitality industry. The importance of emotions displayed by the front-line employees is discussed in reference to ‘emotional labours’. The conflicts

arising out of reality and idealism in form of character and experience of the emotional labour are elaborated upon. Hochschild’s (1983), reference to emotional labour distinguishes two types of emotional labour, Surface Acting and Deep acting that reflect on the differences that occur whilst employees perform emotional labour.

The final section of the study includes the various dimensions of emotional labour in the hospitality industry. Examples from the industry would be illustrated to make the concept more clear in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. In particular, the SERVQUAL model of assessing service quality would be used to identify the relationship and importance of emotional labour and services provided. The SERVQUAL model is suggested to differentiate between the thin line of emotional labour and perceived service qualities.

EMOTIONAL LABOUR – THE CONCEPT

Traditional organisation theory has regarded emotions as deviant ((Fineman, 1993) Lashley, et al, 2003). This theory of workplace without emotions formulated and continued as involvement of emotions was considered irrational (Lashley, et al, 2003).

Today’s organisations give special attention to the theory and practice of ‘emotions’ at work. This is particularly the case in service organisations, where employees deal directly with the clientele. But why consider ‘emotions’ at all?

“Emotions” are defined as “the feelings experienced toward an object, person, or event that create a state of readiness” (McShane, et al, 2003). It has been regarded that emotional arenas provide organisational members with both emotional support and challenge (Lashley, et al, 2003). It is considered that emotions form an integral part of what characterises behaviour in organisations.

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Like stated above, emotions come along in our ways of life without us realising that they come and go with everything we do and do not.

Personal emotions have always been a part of organisational behaviour, where emotions displayed have gained importance only recently. Hochschild's revolutionary work in 1983, *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*, identified an invisible dimension at workplace - the importance of dealing with emotions at work (Zhao, M., 2002). Hochschild's theory of 'managed heart' particulates appropriately to the service industry where management of emotions and its display are as vital to organisations as is the Holy Grail to Christians. Service workers experience more emotions because their jobs require frequent and long durations of voice or face-to-face contact with customers and others (McShane, et al, 2003). In other words, employees of service organisations display emotions that are required off the job, which over the period of time become automated. "This is described as '*emotional labour*' where workers strive to create and maintain a relationship, a mood, or a feeling (1983:440) during their social interaction within the labour process, as shaped by the dictates of capital accumulation" ((Taylor, 1998:84) Zhao, M., 2002).

Conceptualised on the premises of theatre acting, Hochschild has projected that emotions are controlled or self induced or suppressed as a part of the labour process (Zhao, M., 2002). She further identifies "two forms of emotional labour: Surface Acting and Deep Acting" (Zhao, M., 2002). Where the former takes place when the workers is aware that there is change in their mode of responding to clients whilst work, the latter starts taking place when the worker deceives oneself as much as s/he, deceives others. Gradual growth of deep acting in display of emotions brings about a false self, one who is 'estranged from their real feelings' (Zhao, M., 2002).

Lashley, et al, 2003, explains the concept of 'HAND- Have a Nice Day Culture (Fineman, 1993)' where conflicts arise when service workers produce and reproduce emotions, as per job requirements. These conflicts result in frustration at work, as servers feel different from what they are asked to feel. McDonaldization of the Society, has been thought of the phenomenon that initiated and spread the HAND culture, which ends in stress related behavior at work.

Central to the above discussion is Hochschild's argument, "that emotional labour is performed at a personal

cost to the worker and that is a direct result of the 'commercialisation' of emotions" (Zhao, M., 2002). Here the author explains that the emotions displayed by servers are a product of training and job requirements, following which the service actually sold is a by product of the sacrificed needs of the employees. The people in need for work, sell their 'smiles' to management in return of pay for themselves and 'good service' for their organisations (Zhao, M., 2002).

Researches further indicate, that customer rather have fake smiles and say 'Have a Nice Day' to them than be shown real feelings of disrespect and loathing (Lashley et al, 2003). This clearly indicates the need of education amongst the masses on the impact of emotional labour performed by employees at service organisations, which has been stressed upon on the following sections.

It is recognised that conflict exists between service worker's individuality and their daily experience as labourers at service organisations. This dissonance among the emotional labourers of the service industry, causes high employee turnover, as they are unable to deal with stress at such levels (Lashley, et al, 2003).

Support of emotional labour in organisations, regards hiring of people with the 'right attitude' as the solution to emotional stress. Combined with which can be training and interactive processes amongst staff and customers (Lashley, et al, 2003). Personality traits amongst different individuals, should be traced and understood by management. This would bring a sense of closeness between management and employees (Lashley, et al, 2003).

CONFLICT BETWEEN CHARACTER AND EXPERIENCE

"It is an instructive sight to see a waiter going into the hotel dining room. As he passes through the door a sudden change comes over him. The set of his shoulders alters; all the dirt and hurry and irritation have dropped in an instant. He glides across the carpet with a solemn priest-like air... and you cannot help thinking, as you see him bow and smile, with the benign smile of a trained waiter" ((George Orwell) Guerrier, Y., 2005). Service workers across the hospitality industry, are faced with this challenge of wearing 'welcoming' behavior whilst service. The behavior goes back to what the workers are actually

feeling, as soon as they are out of the guest vicinity. The change of attitude, behavior and emotions at service based organisations have led to Cognitive Dissonance (occurs when people perceive an inconsistency between their beliefs, feelings and behavior, McShane, et al, 2003) in front-line staff of service organisations.

Researches indicate the common leak of emotions among emotional labour in forms of subtle body postures. This is specifically the case when emotions like anger and stress are felt by workers (Robbins, S.P., 2001). Stress related behaviour is often the outcome emotional labour, *deep acting*. Here employees deceives oneself as much he/she deceives the customers (Zhao, M., 2002). The continual practice of displayed emotions, brings about a false self and leads to 'Have a Nice Day Syndrome': the psychological effects of providing emotional labour ((Mann,1999:84) Lashley, et al, 2003). Other significant consequences of displayed emotions are that employees become less satisfied with their job, are more likely to leave or be absent from work, suffer minor illnesses, complain of being 'burn out', and 'have an increased susceptibility to serious conditions like coronary heart disease' ((Mann, 1999:85) Lashley, C., 2003).

The above stated are the negative facets of emotional labour's practice. Furthermore these aspects occur due to the differences in personality traits of individuals working as emotional labour. Where, the values of the firm and employees differ at many arenas. Raab, C., et al, (2002), explains the situation as one where 'Compliance occurs when attitudes and behaviours are adopted not because of shared beliefs but simply to gain specific rewards', the authors denote this as external dimension to psychological bond with the organisations. These specific rewards are perceived differently by different employees. Therefore it may be said that personality differences influence 'emotions displayed' at workplace. "For example, personality may influence the extent to which employees perform emotional labour and the extent to which adverse outcomes may result from such labour (Tews, M.J., et al, 2003)."

Each individual has his/her own way of communicating, interpreting and understanding of thoughts and gestures. One's individuality is judged through the personality that person demonstrates. Here 'personality' can be defined as "the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with other (Robbins, S.P., 2000). Emotional displays at work can be investigated deeply with the understanding of personality traits amid service workers.

Tews, M.J., et al, (2003), state that "personality may bear a stronger relationship with emotional labour behaviour than traditional performance behaviors, assessed as quantity and quality of "hard" output, since the management of emotion is not constrained by technology and ability and is more interpersonal in nature."

Tews, M.J., et al (2003), have considered the Five Factor Model of Personality (FFM) for their research. The five dimension being:-

1. **Extraversion:** is related to positive activity, which influences positive mood states, greater social activity, and more rewarding interpersonal relationships.
2. **Neuroticism:** is related to negative moods, such as depression, anxiety, irritability, and anger.
3. **Conscientiousness:** is related to achievement oriented, hardworking, dependable, and orderly.
4. **Agreeableness:** refers to an interpersonal orientation, whereby such individuals are cooperative, good natured, and likable.
5. **Openness to Experience:** addresses an individuals range of interest and fascination with novelty. Extremely open people are creative, curious, and artistically sensitive (Robbins, S.P., 2000).

The research by Tews, M.J., et al, (2003), signifies the importance of relationship between these personality traits and the reasons for conflict between the characters of emotional labour and their experiences. The research indicates that people with personality traits of Extraversion and Neuroticism genuinely express negative and positive emotions respectively at workplace, thus directly link to behavior of emotional labourers. Additionally it can be said that individuals with such traits portray emotions which are genuine and thus fall under the category of deep acting- workers who do not distinguish between emotions felt and displayed (Hochschild: 83).

People with traits of 'agreeableness' resulted to show that they suppress negative emotions and display positive emotions. Individuals with such traits would fall under the category of surface acting- workers who distinguish between emotions felt and displayed (Hochschild: 83). Here, it can be assumed that such cooperative individuals may, over a period of time, undergo stress related behaviour.

Traits of 'conscientiousness' illustrated that they neither fake positive emotions nor do they suppress negative

emotions. Such individuals are most likely to respond to customers in accordance to their moods. The demand for emotional labour influences the extent to which conscientiousness plays a role. Again falling under the category of surface acting.

Workers with traits of 'openness to experience' show no signs of suppressing negative emotions and hence are less likely to adhere to workplace and societal norms. Falling under the category of surface acting, individuals with this trait can be assumed to be unfit for the service organisations.

Thus emotional conflicts between character and experiences of labourers exist, where personality traits indicate as to why such conflicts take place within service organisations. Each individual worker experiences emotional labour in accordance to the personality traits described, forming difference in response, which may and may not lead to conflicts.

EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND THE INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

The dilemma of 'managed hearts' in service organisations have lead to conflicts between the character and experiences of emotional labour. Managing emotions, is regarded as important from business perspectives, where research and study on the topic are scarce. Different personality traits have been identified in the section above, that could be regarded as to why service workers react in certain manner. Literature on the subject indicates the outcome of certain emotions displayed and their impact on service organisations.

Literature illustrates the negatives and positives of emotional labour experiences in the hospitality industry. Where at times situation of well being occurs, at other times, negativity prevails and outcome may be directly in relation to employees, organisations or both. This sections elaborates on emotional labour in the international hospitality industry and the impact of 'displayed emotions', on employees and organisation in terms of service procedures and actual service encounter. The SERVQUAL model, for assessing service quality has been used by the essayist to elaborate.

Zhao, M., (2002), expands on the emotional experiences of service workers on the cruise industry. The research

argues on the commercialisation of emotional labour and effects of racial and ethnic patterns in the industry. In this research on "Emotional Labour in a Globalised Labour Market: Seafarers on Cruise Ships" the author explains the concept of 'packaged smiles' or exchange of emotions with wages.

Considering work to be a social activity, Zhao, M., (2000), explains how social matters such as race, gender and class actively play their roles at service organisations, to the cruise industry specifically. A multi-cultural and nationality workforce form a part of the seafarers industry, and has become a trend in the last two decades. Thousands of workers provide services to 'guests' and not passengers as they now call them. The author explains that people no more travel on ships for transport but for fun and leisure, precisely where emotional labour starts playing the role. Seafarers are placed to ensure that their 'guests' get what they have paid for, namely, fun, sun, romance and leisure.

The author further elucidates, that 'smile' is considered as a vital component of the product or service cruise line promise to deliver to meet their customer demand for leisure. The concept of emotional labour is well practiced and preached as a part of the industry norms. Forms of emotional labour have been deployed at as early a stage as interviews. Management of cruise industries form their perception of individuals at the interviews they take, where they not only judge the looks of front-line applicants but also judge and ask to express smiles and good behaviours. Training followed after selection of applicants, ensure that all aspects delivering service with 'smile' and the 'right attitude' of being friendly and approachable is displayed by the seafarers.

Stress and workload are considered to be much greater in this industry than any other service industry. Zhao, M., (2002), explains that the work space being confined, servers being far from family and friends for most part of the year, tend to develop emotional set backs, beginning with stress. Here the author notices a trend of Asian people delivering better services than the Europeans. This is effectively due to the difference in personality and cultural traits of the two groups. The author also talks about the difference in male and female staff members. Here employees are basically hired to provide hospitality services. Where male members usually deal with more of physical labour, female members are hired to display emotions whilst work. Women as service employees

are considered more 'natural' and 'welcoming' from management and guest perspectives and thus subject to emotional labour.

Examples from the research, indicate the negativity of emotional labour personified. Seafarers interaction with similar clientele for months at a stretch, makes them stressed and less satisfied with jobs and surroundings. Emotional labourers at the cruise liners feel emotionally drained and exhausted, reasons explaining the same are poor living conditions, little or no entertainment, and other such factors.

Other sectors of the hospitality industry, indicate the case of emotional harmony as well as employee well being in service organisations like call centres or Business Process Outsourcing Organisations (BPO). Research indicates less stress and more harmony amongst the employees of BPO's as they deal with less annoying guests and more cooperative co-workers. Job satisfaction, performance and pro-active are a few traits identified amongst call center employees (<http://esrccoi.group.shef.ac.uk>). Here it is important to mention that men feel motivated to perform well when surrounded with women dominated workforce! (Hindustan Times, CITY, 2005).

Study by Ross, L.H. (2001), compares the impact of emotional labour between the National Hospital Services (UK) nurses with hotel employees. Research indicated emotional labour felt by both the groups equally at different levels. Where nurses provided services with no intentions of immediate financial rewards, hotel workers paid importance to gratuities and in relation the service provided.

Similarly tour operators, taxi drivers and other service providers become a part of this emotional labour whilst providing services. These "social interactions of service exchange", in which performance of emotional labour plays an integral part, is one factor used by customers as an indication of service quality (Barbara, A.A., et al, 2003).¹ For which the essayist has used the core SERVQUAL MODEL¹, dimensions of which have high emotional content (Barbara, A.A., et al, 2003).

Factors that collectively influence emotional labour have been found out to begin with training in organisations (Clemenz, C., 2001). Where literature indicates the

influence of employees right from the stage of interviews. Where applicants are asked to display gestures (for the right reasons), told about the needs of emotional displays required for the job they have applied for and other such aspects. Following which, training moulds employees to behave in required manner and train them to manipulate emotions as and when required by the job.

Service procedure to be followed within service organisations are told and inculcated by the employees. Over a period of time it is noticed that customers form their own perceptions on services provided by different service organisations, like fine dining restaurants, fast-food restaurants, calls from mobile phones service providers and others. This is where the SERVQUAL models vitalises the service dimension of *The Intended Service*. Here emotional labourers are explained about the needs of guest and their expectations towards the perceived services. Following which is the *Specification of Service* by the server, here individuals make them self aware of the emotions to be displayed and thus get ready for the actual service. The *Actual Service* or 'moment of truth' is followed by specification of service. Here the emotional labour ends up displaying what he/she feels at that moment of time the delivery of service takes place. Display of emotions at this time are directly related to the concept of guest satisfaction, which leads to repeat customers or word of mouth which further influences profitability of the organisations. (Ross, L.H., 2001, Clemenz, C., 2001., & Barbara, A.A., et al, 2003).

Thus it can be noticed that the SERVQUAL model of service quality influences emotional labour in ways, to perform service. People with a right attitude towards hospitality, good training and pro-active personality can be regarded as those who could perform emotional labour without pessimistic after effects on self and organisation.

LIMITATIONS

The research being secondary data based had a few apparent limitations. Foremost limitation being work based on other data's and thus having no scientific basis for its outcomes. Secondly, the researches carried out on the impact of emotional labour on international hospitality have been scarce and hence subject to changes from other organisations under the hospitality sector. Thirdly, dilemma still persists amongst researchers on the positivity and negativity of emotional labour in context to

¹ Appendix 1, Conceptual model of service quality.

service organisations in common. The outcomes presented through this paper are only generic and hence subject to change when related with management concepts when explored scientifically.

DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The conceptualisation of emotional labour in respect to the hospitality industry gives out an array of dimensions. These dimensions may have existed from the initial stages of service delivery, but have found ground only recently. Management of emotions have become integral to the human resources, especially the front-line staff. Hochschild's discovery of 'Managed Hearts' revealed the invisible element of workplace and its relation with emotions. Labourers practising emotional display at workplace are found to hide what they feel and display what they don't. Secondary research on the topic, revealed the optimistic and pessimistic sides to the concept. Where few emotional labourers feel stress and lesser job satisfaction over a period of time, others feel elevated and have a experience of well being. Examples from the industry being seafarers and call center employees respectively.

Personality traits amongst employees of service industry help identify reasons to why conflict exists between their individuality and experiences as emotional labours. Personalities of employees at service organisations can be considered as a factor that decides to what extent they can perform emotional labour for an organisation. The level at which employees perform emotional labour further decides the goals and profits for the organisations, which are directly related to services offered. The conflicts between the character and experiences of the emotional labour give rise to facets such as, lesser job satisfaction, high turnover, suppression of feeling, low/high performance levels, burnout and others.

These feelings of low/high job satisfaction, performance, burnout, have become a common feature of the hospitality industry. The experiences of seafarers indicate the extent to which employees are made to perform emotional labour and face the ill consequences. Such factors pertaining amongst the front-line staff of the hospitality industry is a cause of concern. As services received by customers is actually what decides the scale of performance, experience and repeat business. The model of SERVQUAL, identifies

and relates to three dimensions that have a close emotional content. These dimensions should be closely understood by management in respect to management of emotions at work.

Support of emotional labour is another way by which conflicts could be taken under control. Here literature indicates the right use of recruitment and selection processes. Managements of service organisations should employ people with a right attitude towards service culture, where they should be aware of the differences that are to be displayed as emotions. Applicants aware of such differences in the service procedures would show better results than those who were unaware. Training and interactive session between employees are among other suggestions by various authors. Training would ensure that organisational values are understood by the service workers and are deployed appropriately. Personality and psychometric tests are other forms by which employees behaviour could be assessed and accordingly employed for the right position.

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