

**EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE HOSPITALITY
INDUSTRY: A STUDY OF SELECTED RESTAURANTS IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS,
RIVERS STATE**

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Abstract

The quality paradigm in the contemporary service industry plays a pivotal role in customer satisfaction and organizational survival. It is therefore imperative that Employees in the service industry empathize with clients and intentionally embroil their feelings in what they do in order to render satisfactory service. As such, this study empirically examines the relationship between emotional labour and quality service delivery in Selected restaurants in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Four hundred and forty (440) waiters and waitresses in seventy-six registered restaurants in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, constituted the population for the study. The Krejcie and Morgan's table gave a sample size of two hundred and five (205). A hundred and seventy-two (172) copies of questionnaire were utilized for data analysis. The null hypotheses tested at 5% level of significance were tested using the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21,. The results led to the non-acceptance of the null hypotheses and the acceptance of the alternate; indicating a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of Emotional Labour and Quality Service Delivery. To this end, we concluded that there is the need for service organizations to pay more attention to the feelings and interaction of employees with customers, given the impact this has on customers' perception and loyalty.

Keywords: Emotional Labour, Quality Service Delivery, Surface Acting and Deep Acting.

Introduction

Today's work environment is characterized by keen consumer anticipations and taut competition, as such tourism and hospitality outfits concern themselves with providing top notch services that breed customer satisfaction and loyalty, competition and performance (Igbojekwe, 2017). Igbojekwe (2017) asserted that employees in the service industry must empathize with clients and intentionally embroil their feelings in what they do. This is hinged on the fact that the impression made during employee-customer interface informs the perception of the quality of service rendered and future line(s) of action to be taken.

While earlier explanations regarding the reason for thoughts and actions have been based on cognition, recent studies have shown that emotion is a major influence of

human thinking and behaviour (McShane & Steen, 2009). In the hospitality industry employees interact on a one-on-one basis with customers, in the process, emotions build up and the need to managed (Hochschild, 2003). Interestingly, organizations expect workers to act and behave in certain ways necessary to achieving set goals. In other words, to achieve certain objectives, organizations (especially in the hospitality industry) expects the exhibition of 'socially desirable emotions' along a myriad of job roles. When employees consciously exhibit emotions that are socially expected and/or required of them at work, they have engaged in emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Extant literature establishes the significance of workers' emotions on work output,

quality of decisions, ingenuity and team spirit (Gopinath, 2011; Shiopu, 2014). Specifically, Shiopu (2014) opined that the hospitality industry requires workers to engage in emotional labour in order to provide the needed outward look that triggers the right state of mind in customers. This is in synchronization with Lee et al's (2011) position that understanding workers' feelings in the hospitality industry is the key to knowing why they act in a certain way. They posited that the way a customer or an employee feels about the service or the job makes a big difference in terms of outcomes favourable to the organization such as customer loyalty, repurchase behaviour, employee job performance, and employee cooperative behaviour. In the service industry employees need to create smooth interaction with the customers by being responsive, caring and polite, treating them as individuals, and making them feel good and cared for (Svensen & Koch, 2011).

Going further, Gopinath (2011), found a positive relationship between emotional displays of bank tellers and customer satisfaction. The study suggests that positive emotional expressions will result in higher customer service performance. In another enquiry, Moi, Dean and White (1999) concluded that service quality is represented by three dimensions in the hospitality industry, namely, employees (behaviour and appearance), tangible and reliability. The best predictor of overall service quality is the dimension referred to as "employees". This study confirms employee behaviour as a critical factor in service excellence.

According to Lee (2010) emerging research on customer loyalty shows that an organization's success is closely linked to its ability to create the kind of exceptional customer service experience that leads to repeat business. If service workers are angry, demoralized or just plain disinterested, no

amount of training will affect the service climate this emotional state creates. Customer service research shows that 68% of customers defect from a firm because they were treated with an attitude of indifference (Lee, 2010). Thus, 68% of what leads to customer defection is related to emotion – or in this case, the lack of emotion. The connection between emotional labour and customer service is obvious, thus, the economic consequences of not addressing customer contact employee emotions can be disastrous to an organization. Despite the array of studies in relation to the study variables, there appear to be no empirical inquiry on emotional labour and quality service delivery in the hospitality industry, especially of eateries in Rivers State. To fill this void in literature, this paper is geared towards empirically scrutinizing the link between emotional labour and quality service delivery in eateries in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The underpinning theory of this study is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posited by Ryan and Deci (2000). This is a theory of human personality and motivation concerned with how the individual interacts with and depends on the social environment. The essential thought behind the theory is the variance amid autonomous and controlled motivation, on which the theory categorises the different types of external and internal motivation, how they correlate amongst themselves in such a way that it appropriately provides explanation on emotional labour. Sisley and Smollan (2012) employed the SDT to discuss how the concepts of extrinsic motivation (external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation) and intrinsic motivation are integrated with forms of emotional labour to explain how

and why employees regulate their emotional disposition.

In their exploration, Sisley and Smollan (2012) revealed that surface acting is performed in order to please someone else, usually the person's manager or the customer or colleague with whom the employee is interacting. As such, the motivation is for an outcome separable from the interaction itself, and hence is a form of extrinsic regulation. Thus, it fits well with the low autonomy forms of extrinsic regulation, namely external and introjected (Gagne & Deci, 2005). If the behaviour is performed in the presence of the manager, or is closely supervised in some other way, the motivation is external regulation. If it persists when the person is not observed or closely supervised, we can assume that the person has internalised the external regulation to some extent, without identifying with it or necessarily endorsing it and the behaviour is driven by introjected regulation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). In either case there is an external locus of causality (i.e. one is acting this way because someone else requires or expects it).

Then again, Sisley and Smollan (2012) depicted deep acting as having to do with attempting to really feel the way one is expected to feel prompting a spontaneous exhibition of it at the appointed time (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). The reason for this is to accomplish a divisible result, in that the intentional exertion made to understanding and express the feeling is isolated from really doing as such, however the difference is more unobtrusive. Thus the motivation is extrinsic, yet to the degree that workers wish to try and express this feeling since they think it vital to do as such as far as their own qualities, the locus of causality is internal. This may be out of loyalty to the organisation, a demonstration of good faith

(Johnson & Spector, 2007) in light of the fact that the staff individuals underwrite the presentation controls, or trust that it is imperative to act towards others in a suitable way. However, in all such cases they identify with the values underlying the behaviour. Hence the motivation is high-autonomy extrinsic regulation, either identified or integrated, depending on the profundity and degree of the identification (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Conclusively, this paper proposes that the interplay between autonomous and controlled motivation, specifically, the influence of external and internal motivation on employees' emotional expressions; greatly determine the quality of service they will render to customers. In other words, an employee whose emotional disposition is precipitated by an external locus of causality may most likely not conduct him/herself in a socially expected manner in the absence of such external motivation. On the other hand, employees who internalise the expected behaviour (i.e. who are influenced by an internal locus of control) will instinctively display the organizations's expected behaviour and ultimately deliver quality service.

Understanding Emotional Labour

Emotional labour could be referred to situations wherein employees are required to display emotions that may differ from the emotions they actually feel. When this happens, it is usually for the salary, so employee emotional labour has value of exchange (Liu & Zang, 2015). In order words, emotional labour involves the show of emotions that are required in order to serve the customers as well as present to the employer that "all is well" even when at times, "all is not well" with the employee.

Studies show that at least two-thirds of the interactions within an organization are associated with emotional labor (Chau, 2007) and emotional labor is greatly influences organizational desirable results at workplace (Grandey, 2000). Also, it affects individual and organizational results, physical and mental health and job satisfaction as well as customer service quality/ customer satisfaction and performance (Tsai & Huang, 2002). In order to provide better customer service, researchers paid a lot of attention to the importance of emotional labor and emotion management in the interaction between service staff and customers (Groth, Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2009).

Service marketing research shows that positive emotional behavior such as smile during service delivery has a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Soderlund & Rosengren, 2008). Because the apparent quality of the service is defined not only by the behavior of the service staff and the manner of operation and the way of speaking, but also by their emotional adjustment, most service organizations encourage their employees to manage emotions and feelings in service interactions in order to increase customer satisfaction (Bryman, 2004).

Surface acting

When a person expresses his excitement only in appearance to satisfy expectations, through facial movements, change of his tone, his position, and his hints, without realizing his feelings (Lazanyi, 2009). Surface acting occurs when the emotional staff is present, which includes the suppressed emotional feelings and the imitation of emotions not sensed (Lovatt et al., 2015) Employees may be intimidated or unshaken by clients to offer intimacy and suggestion. For example, a flight crew may approach nerve travelers with a sense of sympathy

and understanding (Fu, 2013). The involvement of a person in surface acting often causes a cognitive/emotional disagreement between representing the emotions required by the organization and the real experience of feeling that ultimately leads to burnout. Based on the theory of cognitive dissonance, which states that service workers are tense or abnormal when displaying emotions that are not in line with their main emotions, surface acting has a negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Deep acting

The process of changing the excitement in order to experience and express emotions is appropriate (Wang, 2011). Deep acting attempts to correct internal emotions and external expressions to harmonize them with rules (Chu, Baker & Murmann, 2012). In deep acting, employees create the expected or needed excitement within themselves (Groth, Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2009). Service workers who often engage in emotional labor, are often more satisfied with their job. Employees who show real emotions in the work environment, have more intrinsic job satisfaction than those who often use surface acting. Although deep acting requires effort to change the emotional state of an individual, many research has found that such efforts not only lead to emotional exhaustion (Judge, Fluegge & Hurst, 2009), but also lead to the spread of personal integrity, personal success and a sense of success (Grandey, 2003). Because deep acting does not include high levels of cognitive dissonance, it can lead to good status and increased job satisfaction.

Understanding Quality Service Delivery

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988), service quality can be defined as an overall judgment similar to attitude towards the service and generally accepted as an antecedent of overall customer

satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). Parasuraman et al. (1988) have defined service quality as the ability of the organization to meet or exceed customer expectations. It is the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). Perceived service quality results from comparisons by customers of expectations with their perceptions of service delivered by the suppliers. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990).

Nexus between Emotional Labour and Quality Service Delivery

Emotional labour has been established severally as a fundamental aspect of work in the service industry, where a high degree of impression management is required to maintain cordial employee- customer relations. A fundamental prerogative of service work is to make the experience of customers highly rewarding and prevent negative emotional disruptions which can

trigger off unwanted adverse effects from the customers. The manner in which employees manage their emotional states promotes customers spending and repeat visit. It is argued here that that as workers display organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions, they tend to fulfill their task requirements and may increase the task effectiveness especially when interacting with customers. Furthermore, Liu & Zang, (2015) confirm that emotional labour is a potentially powerful tool for creating high levels of quality service delivery in the service industry. Emotional Labor will therefore increase the workers' ability to modify feelings to match emotional displays, modify their displays without changing emotional feelings and thus, increase the prompt and efficient delivery of service. We therefore hypothesize that:

Ho₁: Surface acting has no significant relationship with quality service delivery.

Ho₂: Deep acting has no significant relationship with quality service delivery

The proposed hypothesis is depicted in Figure 1.

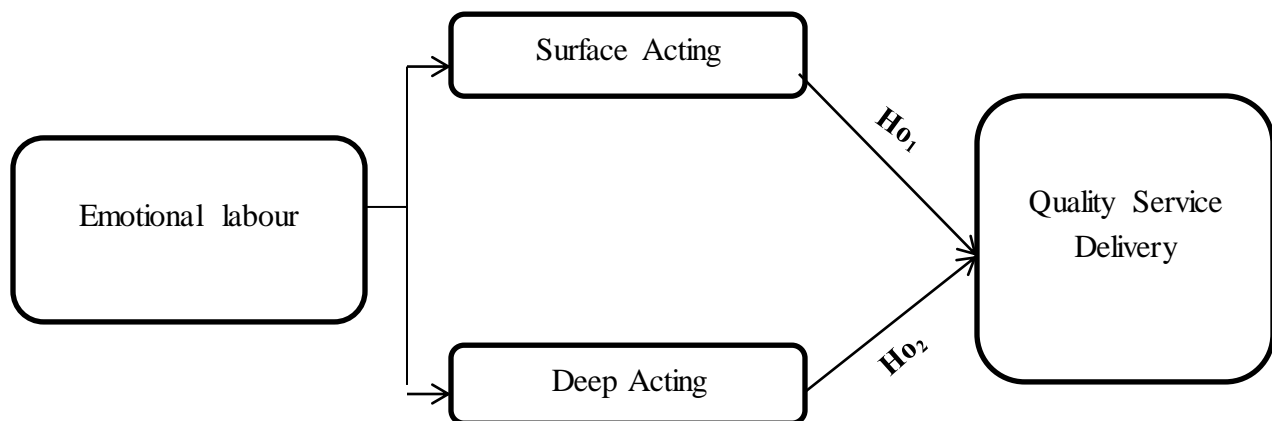


Figure 1: Proposed Relationship between emotional labour and quality service delivery. Researcher's conceptualization, 2018

The proposed model shows surface acting and deep acting as dimensions of emotional labour, while the dependent variable is service delivery.

Methodology

The cross sectional survey design was utilized in this study. The target population for the study is the entire staff of all the eateries in Rivers State, however, accessible population is the waiters and waitresses of the seventy-six registered restaurants in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, as listed in the official directory of registered businesses in the state (Rivers State Yellow Pages, 2013/2014 Edition). The population size obtained was 440 and using the Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, this gave a sample size of two hundred and five (205). The convenience sampling technique was employed. The study instrument was put through a pilot study and the alpha value of .890 satisfied Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) .70 minimum threshold. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (Rho) was employed to test the hypotheses. One hundred and

seventy-two (172) copies of completed and usable copies of questionnaire were used for data analysis, representing 83.9% respondents who genuinely participated in this research. A 5-point Likert scale was adopted with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale for measuring the dimensions was obtained from Grandey (2003) while the scale for service delivery was obtained from Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988).

Results and Data Analysis

Test of Hypotheses

This section is concerned with testing hypotheses stated earlier; using Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient statistical tool and the p-values obtained; hence the **decision rule**; reject null hypothesis if p-value obtained is less than the alpha value of 0.05 and accept the null hypothesis when p-value is greater than the alpha value (0.05).

Table 1: Test of relationship between Surface acting and Quality Service Delivery (Test for Hypothesis 1)

		Surface Acting	Quality Service Delivery
Spearman's rho	Surface Acting	1.000	.918**
			.000
		172	172
	Quality Service Delivery	.918**	1.000
		.000	.
		172	172

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 21 – Field Survey, 2018

Table 1 presents Spearman rank order correlation run to ascertain the relationship between surface acting and quality service delivery as reported by 172 respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between surface acting and

quality service delivery which was statistically significant ($\rho = .918^{**}$, $p = .000 < 0.05$ (alpha value) this suggests that there exists significant relationship between surface acting and quality service delivery of Eateries in Rivers State.

Table 2: Test of relationship between Deep acting and Quality Service Delivery (Test for Hypothesis 2)

			Deep Acting	Quality Service Delivery
Spearman's rho	Deep Acting	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.928**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	172	172
	Quality Service Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.928**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 21 – Field Survey, 2018

Table 2 presents Spearman rank order correlation run to ascertain the relationship between deep acting and quality service delivery as reported by 172 respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between deep acting and quality service delivery which was statistically significant ($\rho = .928^{**}$, $p = .000 < 0.05$ (alpha value) this suggests that there exists significant relationship between deep acting and quality service delivery of Eateries in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The results from the analysis showed a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of Emotional Labour (surface acting and deep acting) and Quality Service Delivery of Eateries in Rivers State. The results support the alternate hypotheses (H_1 : There is a significant relationship between surface acting and quality service delivery; and H_2 : There is a significant relationship between deep acting and quality service delivery).

The results are in congruence with several other studies that have empirically examined the relationship between emotional labour and service delivery or customer satisfaction. Pugh (1998) found a

positive relationship between emotional displays of bank tellers and customer satisfaction. In his study, he suggested that positive emotional expressions will result in higher customer service performance. Svendsen and Koch (2011) corroborated further by offering that in the service industry employees need to create smooth interaction with the customers by being responsive, caring and polite, treating them as individuals, and making them feel good and cared for. Although research suggests that surface acting is likely to drain energy, as it involves prolonged internal tension between displayed and true feelings, it has been observed here that deep acting has the power to convince a customer. Grandey (2003) corroborates this when it was empirically observed that deep acting has a positive influence on observed interactions with customers that goes beyond the effect of job satisfaction. In other words, the continuous experience and management of emotional dissonance entails high levels of psychological effort, and thus contributes to resource loss (Diefendorff and Gosserand, 2003;).

Also in line with the results of this study, Igbojekwe (2017) revealed that employees in the service industry must empathize with

clients and intentionally embroil their feelings in what they do. This is hinged on the fact that the impression made during employee-customer interface informs the perception of the quality of service rendered and future line(s) of action. In further collaboration of the results obtained in this study, Gursoya, Boylub and Avcic, (2011), emphasize that in tourism and hospitality service settings, it is expected that employees display more positive and pleasant emotions, with the resultant end product of repeat visits by the customer.

Similar to the findings of Brotheridge and Grandey (2002), results of this research indicated that deep acting involves the modification of feelings, so that continuous efforts to monitor expressions are only necessary up to the point where the employee has successfully modified his/her feelings. Thus, Grandey (2003) observed that deep acting holds the promise of restoring energy and attention by reducing the conflict between feelings and expressions. It was also found that deep acting involves conscious processes at the intellectual level of regulation and this is corroborated by Hochschild (1983) where it was found that during the phase where the employee actively tries to influence his or her feelings to bring them into line with the emotional displays required by the firm, deep acting is therefore considered cognitively effortful.

Along these lines Yagil (2012) corroborates the findings of this research by reiterating that emotional labour may help employees successfully fulfill their task requirements and may increase the task effectiveness especially when interacting with customers. This is imperative because the goal of every business is to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction by providing their client with value added through positive

employee-customer interaction. In other words, in the contemporary business world of high competitiveness, the key to sustainable hospitality business is effective quality delivery.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To this end, we conclude that there is a significant positive relationship between Emotional Labour (specifically, surface acting and deep acting) and Quality Service Delivery of Eateries in Rivers State. Therefore, there is the need for service organizations to pay more attention to the feelings and interaction of employees with customers, given the impact this has on customers' perception and loyalty. It is plausible at this juncture to recommend that:

- i) The management of these organizations should offer training to employees for proper display of emotions, attitude, gestures and speech, Moreover, they should recruit individuals with a suitable personality for the emotional display rules of the company.
- ii) It is also important to provide a workplace suitable for natural deep acting. Given the link between service providers' deep acting and the high scores obtained in service evaluation, it is recommended that special amenities that support the process of deep acting such as rooms for music appreciation or reading or even massage machines.
- iii) Interactive sessions on their thoughts on the job and interactions with customers should be encouraged in an open and informal setting to allow robust and sincere discussions.
- iv) Employees should be clearly informed on the socially desirable behaviours expected of them in their interaction with clients. Refresher courses on the

psychological impact of their expressions on the clients, themselves and the organization should be intermittently organized by the management.

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