

## Emotional Labour Needs and Consequences in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry of India: a Study of Hotel and Travel Company Employees of Kolkata, West Bengal



### Tourism

**KEYWORDS:** emotional labour, emotional labour in tourism industry, emotional labour in hospitality industry, emotional labour in tourism industry in India.

Vandita Hajra

Muralidhar Girls' College (affiliated to Calcutta University)

### ABSTRACT

*The paper attempts to examine the role of displayed emotions and feelings of the employees in the tourism and hospitality sector on their self reported stress levels, willingness to continue in the industry, use of scripts in training, and the competencies required for working in this industry. The findings shed light upon the emotional competencies required for a career in the tourism and hospitality industry which can serve to suggest the criterion for selection in this sector or for tourism and hospitality training institutes to check for the required qualities in the prospective candidates as criteria at the time of admission as must-have skills or to include training for inculcation of these competencies as part of the curriculum to reduce the misfits in the industry after choosing it as a career.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The study conducted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) along with YES Bank suggested a rapid growth of the tourism sector in India from 2011 onwards. The year 2019 is expected to be a boom period for the country's tourism sector that is speculated to become the second largest employer in the world by employing more than 40,037,000 people by 2019. However, the tourism industry in India is characterised by its short-term adhoc approaches to human resources development. The tourism human resources development in India has been affected by lack of investment, infrastructure, and qualified instructors, which has resulted in making a major proportion of tourism education and training activities of questionable relevance and value.

The clichéd "service with a smile" i.e. jobs in the tourism industry calls for the primary and quintessential ability to remain courteous and friendly with demanding and difficult customers. Feedback from tourism graduates often indicates that their training although provided them with training in cognitive skills, they are left on their own to acquire an appreciation for, and to develop skill in, nuanced emotive skills. Along with that, all around the world, cognitive labour pays higher than an equal amount of emotional labour and a Third World Country like India is no exception. Many positions requiring emotional labour are "vocations" - rather than just jobs, including the tourism jobs. In a vocation, the workers are expected to be committed, engaged, self-sacrificing and intensely focussed on

customers regardless of whatever. The need to acknowledge the emotional work done by employees and to reward it or provide support for it is overlooked by many organizations.

Prior to joining the apparently glamorous tourism industry, it is important to know about the emotional labour requirements of the jobs in the industry and check how well-equipped a person is to manage stress and other signs of emotional exhaustion. This paper attempts to investigate the level of awareness about emotional labour being an essential component of everyday work in the tourism industry in India along with the extent to which employers acknowledge, manage and reward their workers' emotional contribution to the organizational performance. Appropriate measures in terms of human resource practices for the purposes of selection, training, development and compensation have been suggested in the study.

### II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (i) To find out the percentage of employees whose emotional contribution to workplace is duly acknowledged by employers
- (ii) To find out the percentage of employees reporting to have undergone trainings and referring to "scripts" to fulfil emotional labour needs at work

(iii) To assess the stress level of employees

(iv) To find out the percentage of employees willing to work in the same sector

(v) To identify the essential personality characteristics to survive in the tourism and hospitality industry

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotions are feelings that people experience, interpret, reflect on, express, and manage (Thoits, 1989; Mills and Kleinman, 1988). Emotions are quintessential to human experience, which influences man's thoughts and actions. In the past, emotions in the workplace were believed to conceal sound judgment and thus were not even perceived as workplace phenomenon (Grandey, 2000). The recent decades have witnessed an explosion of research on the role of emotion in organizations which is in stark contrast to the above mentioned scientific view from almost a century ago. Along with this trend came not only the acknowledgment that employees' performance on the job can indeed be affected by their emotions, but also the increasing classification of emotions as a commodity that needs to – and can – be controlled and regulated by organizations (Fineman, 2001; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli, 2004).

Emotional labour is the procedure by which an organization attempts to dictate a certain 'emotional palette' that employees can use when interacting with customers in order to attain positive consequences like consistent employee performance, projection of a uniform organizational image and most importantly, satisfied and loyal customers. Arlie Russell Hochschild, a professor emerita of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley was the first to coin the term "emotional labour" in her groundbreaking work on the commoditization of feelings in the workplace named - The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labour is the practical application of emotional intelligence in workplace, involving the management of one's own emotions, sensing the emotions in others, and applying that knowledge to lay out a foundation for the actions on the job. The organizationally-desired emotions can be displayed by the employees by acting out a particular emotion. Hochschild described a set of "feeling rules", also called "display rules" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) by which people identify what the appropriate behaviour is (Hochschild, 1983). These feelings rules are similar to a script, describing the "correct" response for work situations (as well as others) (Hochschild, 1983). They can be part of the training for the occupation, or can be simply 'manners'. In the service industry in general, and the hospitality industry in particular, being friendly or nice to people is a value-added part of the product that employees provide (Schneider & Bowen, 1985). Most managers in the field assume that the friendliness and cheerfulness of employees are strongly related to customer satisfaction and

increase customer commitment, loyalty, and therefore, affect bottom lines (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985; Bowen, Siehl, & Schneider, 1989).

Some critics also believe that the concept of emotional labour has taken that basic assumption and expanded it "to a quite absurd degree so that it is a caricature of common sense" (Baum, 2006: 108). Emotional labour is "the ritualisation of courtesy" (Nickson, 2006: 130) and paves the way for the creation of a false environment. Many critics also note that this is ultimately pointless because "most customers are capable of detecting falseness and insincerity" (Baum, 2006: 110). If this is the case, emotional labour can be seen to be a kind of 'subconscious contract', where both employee and consumer are aware of this artificiality but value it nonetheless.

In her book, Hochschild argues, "When we do not feel emotion, or disclaim an emotion, we lose touch with how we actually link inner to outer reality." Drawing analogies with alienation as described by Karl Marx and with the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance, Hochschild (1983) suggests that performance of emotional labour threatens to produce what she calls "emotive dissonance." Workers who are required to display emotions regardless of whether these are congruent with their feelings may over time develop a sense of self-estrangement or distress. Previous studies have unearthed a host of both negative and positive outcomes of emotional labour. Overall, most negative outcomes have been linked to surface acting, or, in emotion regulation terms, suppression of negative emotions (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998b, 1999), whereas deep acting, or reappraisal, has been found to be less detrimental and has yielded more positive outcomes (Gross, 1999; Liu, Prati, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2008; Martinez-Inigo, Totterdell, Alcover, & Holman, 2007). Studies have shown emotional labour to cause emotional exhaustion (i.e., a facet of burnout) and depression (Abraham, 1998; Bono & Vey, 2005; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Chau, 2007; Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Grandey, 2003; Kim, 2008) and other negative symptoms of health (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000).

Liu et al. (2008), in a study on the effects of personal resources on emotional labour strategies, found individuals with high levels of emotional resources (indicated by high emotional intelligence) to be more likely to deep act, and individuals with comparatively low emotional resources (indicated by high negative affectivity) to be more likely to surface act. Similarly, Austin and colleagues (2008) found individuals high in emotional intelligence less likely to engage in surface acting.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data has been gathered by structured interviews and surveys through usage of questionnaires. A total of 350 professionals from 25 travel companies, 20 hotels (ranging from 5-star to 2-star properties) and 3 airline offices of Kolkata agreed to participate in the survey. The participants were chosen through random sampling method. The respective profiles of participants ranged from proprietors, general managers, assistant general managers, administration personnel, marketing executives, travel and reservation consultants, ticketing managers, sales executives and heads, rooms division managers, duty managers to front office supervisors and shift leaders, front office executives, operation trainees, etc. Analysis of data has been done with a goal of highlighting useful information and suggesting appropriate conclusion. Simple statistical devices such as MS Excel has been used to calculate percentages and content analysis was done of the qualitative data gathered from interviews.

#### V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

From the data collected, it was found that 71% respondents revealed that their emotional contribution towards organizational

performance is appropriately acknowledged by employers. 63% of the employers reported of undergoing trainings and referring to "scripts" while on job and dealing with clients. Around 43% of the respondents reported of moderate stress levels caused by the emotional labour demands at work, 20% reported of low stress levels followed by 14% each of reporting high and very high stress levels at work respectively. Out of a total of 350 respondents, 14% respondents displayed their non-willingness to continue working in the tourism industry. Some characteristics like having a pleasant disposition, conflict resolution skills, emotional resilience, excellent communication skills, and high tolerance for stress, patience and social confidence were identified as "must haves" in a person to be able to work and survive in the tourism industry as per the opinions of the respondents.

#### VI. SUGGESTIONS

The tourism and hospitality industry employers must be aware of the impact of emotional labour on their performance and organizations must find ways to provide the necessary support to the workers and help them deal with the impacts of emotional labour. Some of the measures that can be suggested to the organizations are as follows:

a) Proper selection i.e. screening for emotional labour abilities is crucial because the ones with the right skills will do a better job for the company. Usage of a number of selection tests and techniques such as aptitude and personality tests and most importantly, emotional intelligence tests would be particularly relevant in the context of this industry.

b) Proper training and development programmes which include orientation programme, on-going training programme and stress management programme have several benefits which could be as follows – firstly, it would signal to the employees that the management is aware of and acknowledges the emotional contribution that they put into the jobs. By extension, employees' motivation and productivity on the job would be enhanced. Secondly, it would provide the opportunity for employees to vent their negative emotions caused by their jobs. These programmes should also teach the following:

- 'Display rules' (which are organizationally approved norms or standards that workers learn through observation, instruction, feedback, and reinforcement)

- Problem solving techniques (which help people build confidence and reduce their negative reactions to unpredictable and volatile situations by helping workers to move beyond using scripts or relying on other display rules)

- Enhancement of Emotional Intelligence (the ability to recognize other people's emotions which is effective way to reduce the burden of emotional labour)

- Necessary tact and diplomacy to face conflicting requirements at job

c) Carefully fashioning the physical work environment is important because the environment in which the service is delivered can have an impact on employee behaviours and emotions.

d) Giving employees a break from time to time would help in increasing productivity levels and enhancement of the quality of service being delivered, especially in situations in which employees has extended voice or face-to-face contacts with customers.

e) Establishing strategic pay plans must be a very crucial management agenda in the tourism industry because it is often seen that the employees' emotional contribution is not being accordingly acknowledged by the management. Whereas mental and

physical labour gets compensated fairly well, emotional labour performers in the industry seem to receive relatively lower wages. The central point is that when the tourism employees successfully deep act to provide quality and genuine service, they need to be not only recognized but also rewarded for their efforts.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Emotional labour is a relatively new area of study and the proper recognition and management of emotional labour in the realm of the Indian tourism industry is of utmost importance right now because the tourism industry in India is poised to become the second largest employer in the world by employing over 40 million people by 2019. Tourism professionals in India, carrying a tag of being engaged in a “vocation” and not “jobs” are still overworked and underpaid along with their emotional labour contributions being not acknowledged, managed and rewarded appropriately. Emotion work or emotional labour being at the heart of this extensive service industry, the implications of it cannot possibly be overlooked in the long run. The human resources policies and practices in most tourism organisations in our country should undergo necessary reviews and possible revolutions to accommodate proper and updated selection and training strategies, employee management strategies and establishment of strategic pay plans. Along with that, the tourism training institutes should also prepare the pupils by sensitising them towards the emotional labour requirements in the industry and by imparting the necessary skills required to take on the jobs and responsibilities in the industry. Since the study has been carried out only in a single metropolitan city (Kolkata), the results are not representative of the status of the emotional labour aspects of tourism industry of the whole country. However, the findings could supplement further, bigger researches in this area.

## REFERENCE

- Books: | (i) Grandey, Alicia, Dienfendorff, James & Rupp, Deborah E., 2013, Emotional Labor in the 21st century: Diverse Perspectives on Emotion Regulation at Work, Routledge | (ii) Hochschild, Arie, 2003, The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, University of California Press | (iii) Weinberg, Ashley & Cooper, Cary L., 2007, Surviving the Workplace: A Guide to Emotional Well-being, Thomson Learning | (iv) Anderson, Barbara & Provis, Chris, 2002, Recognition and Management of Emotional Labour in the Tourism Industry, Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism Private Limited | (v) Cassidy, Eamon, 2011, Emotional Labour in the Hospitality Industry: The Implications of Emotional Labour for Employees in the Hospitality Industry, VDM Publishing | (vi) Briner, Rob B., 1999, Emotion at Work: A Special Issue of the European Journal of Work, Department of Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck College | (vii) Kusluvan, Salih, 2003, Managing employee attitudes and behaviors in the tourism and hospitality industry, Nova Publishers | (viii) Bach, Stephen, 2009, Managing Human Resources: Personnel Management in Transition, John Wiley & Sons | (ix) Newton, Tim, Handy, Jocelyn & Fineman, Stephen, 1995, 'Managing' Stress: Emotion and Power at Work, SAGE | | Websites: | | (i) [http://www.academia.edu/596005/Hard\\_labour\\_at\\_35\\_000\\_feet\\_A\\_reconsideration\\_of\\_emotional\\_demands\\_in\\_airline\\_service\\_work](http://www.academia.edu/596005/Hard_labour_at_35_000_feet_A_reconsideration_of_emotional_demands_in_airline_service_work) | (ii) [http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/104684/2/21\\_Lazanyi\\_Organizational\\_Aptract\\_j.pdf](http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/104684/2/21_Lazanyi_Organizational_Aptract_j.pdf) | (iii) [http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/94398/2/11\\_Lazanyi%20Who\\_Apstract.pdf](http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/94398/2/11_Lazanyi%20Who_Apstract.pdf) | (iv) <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-115944> | (v) <http://aviationknowledge.wikidot.com/aviation:emotional-labour> | (vi) <http://blogs.hbr.org/research/2010/09/why-is-it-that-we.html> | (vii) <http://www.business.otago.ac.nz/mgmt/ANZAM2004/CD/Papers/ABSTRACT42%20REVISED%2011-10-2004.htm> | (viii) [http://www.ctnerhi.com/fr/images/revue\\_interactions/Schneider\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ctnerhi.com/fr/images/revue_interactions/Schneider_EN.pdf) | (ix) <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1771050&show=pdf> | (x) <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=851639&show=pdf> | (xi) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional\\_labour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_labour) | (xii) [http://theses.whiterose.ac.uk/763/1/uk\\_bl\\_ethos\\_485906.pdf](http://theses.whiterose.ac.uk/763/1/uk_bl_ethos_485906.pdf) | (xiii) <http://hum.sagepub.com/content/65/10/1259.abstract> | (xiv) <http://ideas.repec.org/a/ags/apstra/104684.html> | (xv) <http://www.jcu.edu.au/tldinfo/writingskills/models/papers/MG2703essay1.pdf> | (xvi) [http://www.jennybray.com.au/storage/pdfs/BRAY\\_Emotional\\_Labour\\_NSWHACC.pdf](http://www.jennybray.com.au/storage/pdfs/BRAY_Emotional_Labour_NSWHACC.pdf) | (xvii) <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/259161?uid=3738256&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21102122921281> | (xviii) [http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/volume14/pdfs/ss\\_06\\_chong\\_press.pdf](http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/volume14/pdfs/ss_06_chong_press.pdf) | (xix) <https://ira.le.ac.uk/handle/2381/10095> | (xx) <http://mcq.sagepub.com/content/14/1/8.abstract> | (xxi) [http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/hces\\_cr\\_word/link\\_lect.pdf](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/hces_cr_word/link_lect.pdf) | (xxii) [http://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/emotional\\_labour/](http://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/emotional_labour/) | (xxiii) <http://wes.sagepub.com/content/14/1/77.abstract> | (xxiv) <http://wes.sagepub.com/content/25/4/709.abstract> | (xxv) <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-06302002164031/unrestricted/Chuetd.pdf> | (xxvi) <http://screened-out.blogspot.com/2010/04/emotional-labour.html> | (xxvii) <http://www.skope.ox.ac.uk/publications/whats-wrong-emotional-labour> | (xxviii) <http://www.tasa.org.au/conferences/conferencepapers06/papers/Leisure,%20tourism,%20sport%20and%20everyday%20life/Hillman.pdf> | (xxix) [http://www.tema.ca/Emotional\\_Intelligence.pdf](http://www.tema.ca/Emotional_Intelligence.pdf)