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Tour Guides and the Emotional Labour Nexus

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Article

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Abstract

The tour guides/emotional labour nexus has only been examined since the mid-20th century and into the early 21st century. Members of an overarching tourist guide organisation were interviewed to ascertain whether or not they used emotional labour as a part of the interactive and interpretation approach with tourists. The tour guides were interviewed after in-depth engagement with the emotional labour literature, so as to determine if they used (or did not use) emotional labour in their guided tours. Participants were interviewed over a two-year timeframe at their bi-annual symposia held in remote and isolated locations. A constant comparative analysis was used to elicit themes, categories and collections from the data. Some guides did not recognise that they did in fact use emotional labour, but it referred to it in other terms. Nevertheless, it was found that emotional labour was successfully and willingly (although sometimes unwittingly) used by the tour guides in this study.

Keywords

*Tour guides,
tour groups,
emotional labour
(EL), service
economy, constant
comparative
analysis*

Introduction

Even though Cohen's influential work on tour guiding was written nearly forty years ago, the functions and abilities essential to tour guides continues to mature (Cohen, 1985). As 'experience' has transformed into a fundamental part of tourism, research about guides as raconteurs and experience-negotiators has expanded (Weiler & Black, 2021, 2015).

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Tour guides are a specific group of 'cultural brokers' who interact with tourists and clients in the liminal space of tourism encounters (Caruana & Crane, 2011). Since they add significantly to the experience and familiarity of a destination, tour guides are frequently assigned with marketing or image management duty to capture the spirit of a location and to be an interface into a place, metropolis, province, or even territory or nation (Salazar, 2015).

It is significant that the guides' use of emotional labour and performance should be explored because performance (see Erving Goffman, 1959) also outlines part of the perception of emotional labour. Emotional labour, in the past, customary in low-status work, is turning out to be more significant amongst all occupation levels in the developing tourism economy (Payne, 2009) and other areas. What makes emotional labour unlike other kinds of labour is that it is expended in the supply of the service to the consumer. For instance, when tour guides are on an excursion, they use the 'emotional labour' device to connect with the visitors and to generate a stress-free ambiance so that the clients enjoy the tour (Al-Okaily, 2022; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Emotional labour has been defined as 'the effort, planning and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transaction' (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987). This explanation highlights bosses' intentions in shaping their workers' emotions in addition to their physical behaviours (Erickson & Wharton, 1997). One way that bosses direct their employees' emotional behaviours is to provide service handbooks for customer service interaction. These handbooks may vary from forthright directions to 'smile'; and the way in which customers are to be greeted and farewelled, to very specific instructions for prolonged and more intricate relationships (Leidner, 1999).

A familiar definition of a tour guide indicates that a guide is a skilled worker who escorts, converses with and advises tourists about the journey and local wildlife and scenic anomalies in an competent and thought-provoking way in the language of the group's selection (MacCannell, 2011). According to Black, Ham and Weiler (2001, p. 149), an (eco)tour guide can be described as 'someone employed on a paid or voluntary basis who conducts paying or non-paying tourists around an area or site of natural and/or cultural importance utilising (eco)tourism and interpretation principles' (Black, Ham and Weiler, 2001, p. 149; see also Hillman, 2004; Holloway, 1981).

The research presented here is an examination of how tour guides use emotional labour when guiding tourists (Min, 2014). The research also examines whether or not the guides themselves recognise that they do indeed use emotional labour during their tours, and how they describe it and became accustomed to using this form of interpretation (Hochschild, 1979).

Firstly, a review of the background literature is presented. This is followed by the Methodology, and an explanation of how, where and why the research was conducted. Following on from this, is the Findings and Discussion section. Lastly, Implications and

Conclusion are presented, including Theoretical Development, Limitations of the Research and Future Research.

Literature review

Goffman's theory of performance is the forerunner to Hochschild's (1983) theory of emotional labour. Erving Goffman (1959) was the first to hypothesise about performance and interaction between individuals using his constructs of 'frontstage backstage'. The constructions of Erving Goffman contain two beneficial ideas: that of the emotional divergent, the individual with the inappropriate reaction for the situation and for whom the true sentiment would be a conscious conundrum; and that of the spectator, for whom each instance of human success is an all-encompassing story (Hochschild, 1983, 1979). Goffman's emotional divergent demonstrates a strain on groups which is comparable to what would now be evaluated as strain from anti-social activities. The view of the emotional divergent enables Goffman to show how the social harmony we accept must be continually reinvented in everyday life. He seems to be recounting, in illustration after illustration, that it takes a certain measure of hard work for a group to be natural at the same time, and a separate amount of exertion to achieve full engrossment in competition with each other (Wulf, Althans, Audehm, Bausch, Göhlich, Sting, Tervooren, Wagner-Willi & Zirfas, 2010). The character of the effort varies, but the reality is that it remains steady. Under this measurement is an inferred contrast with what it might be like for the performer, or in this case, the guide, to communicate what they sense, regardless of social restraint or what it might be like if compliance came about instinctively (Solomon, Solomon, Joseph & Norton, 2013).

Hochschild's influential work *The Managed Heart* (1983), expanded her evaluation of the nexus between societal composition, impulse managements and emotion control. Through the development of the notion of 'emotional labour', Hochschild emphasises how bosses in the service area rely on employees to interconnect with clients, to produce the needed emotion. Producing the needed regulation of emotion is a main element of the strong benefit of service-based commerce, though the effort that is needed by the workers is not really acknowledged or recompensed (Hochschild, 1983).

Even though the depiction of emotional labour initially proposed by Hochschild has endured, many researchers have enhanced and improved a range of features, using the ideal in various circumstances. Erikson and Wharton (1997) and Leidner (1999) observed that Hochschild's straightforward link between emotional labour and happiness was not adequate. Erikson realised that the theory was dependent on the degree of occupation autonomy an employee experienced: those with raised employment autonomy underwent fewer damaging effects regarding emotional labour than did others with minimal occupation freedom (Erikson in Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 1001).

Wharton noticed that employment contentment was unquestionably linked to emotional labour (1993, p. 218-220). Other writers, such as Leidner (1999) and Erikson and Wharton

(1997), have also emphasised that some personnel are grateful for the self-confidence that the procedure of emotional labour can offer them (Rowan, 2003); as with the participants below.

Many tour guides, can be catalogued as service delivery workers in the frontline. Their jobs, which necessitate concentrated client interaction, are at the very essence of various tourism activities (Wharton, 1993). Albrecht and Zemke (1985) succinctly convey the nature of tour guides' work as cutting-edge service work. They argue that the service delivery individual must intentionally include their emotions and reactions in the situation. They may not specifically feel like being affable and becoming a one-minute ally to the next consumer who they interact with, nonetheless that is certainly what being a frontline employment means (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985, p. 114-115) for a tour guide. Explicitly, service workers (and thus tour guides) must manage their own emotions and emotional display to create a positive atmosphere in which a sensitive operation occurs (the art of emotion). Even though this process of emotion influence has become identified as 'emotional labour', it is still commonly indistinctive in common place work conditions (Karabanow, 1999).

Emotional labour is essential to the performance of interactive work in the service economy. It is work that involves constant interaction with clients and customers. In this type of work, employers regularly try to control the emotions of their employees, while the employees endeavour to manage the reactions of their clients (Wharton, 2009). Organisational mechanisms for the direction and monitoring of tour guides within tourism employment increases organisational power over a part of workers' identities which is generally considered beyond the sphere of employer control (Leidner, 1999).

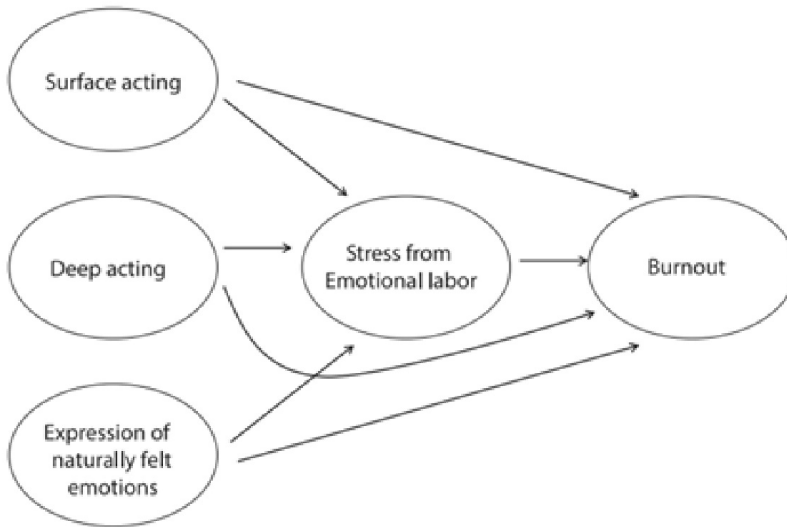
According to Hochschild (1983), occupations that include controlled displays of emotion have three characteristics. First, they involve face-to-face and vocal contact with the public. Second, they make the worker produce either emotional feelings or reactions in the client. Third, they offer an opportunity for the employer to maintain power over the emotional actions of their employee (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2014). This is the work of the tour guide. Exhibiting emotions requested by the employing organisation towards clients requires anticipation, exertion, preparation and amendment for circumstantial factors so as to freely exhibit emotions that workers may not necessarily feel in private (Morris & Feldman, 1996).

The dynamics of tour groups present a challenge to even the most astute of tour guides. Even if their clients are interested in what they have to recount, a high degree of emotional labour is involved. Tour guiding is exhausting and passionate work. Many of the guides in this research realised they were using emotional labour but could only appreciate the fact in terms of 'interpreting' for the tourists.

Figure 1 below, offers a progression of emotional labour from inception (encompassing deep acting, shallow acting and naturally felt emotions), through to the stress tour guides may feel from their work; to finally, suffering burnout from the overall process in their employment. The first three emotions (encompassing deep acting, shallow acting and naturally

felt emotions), are covered in the Findings and Discussion section. Stress and burnout are left for future research.

Figure 1: Progression of emotional labour



Source: Kim (2020)

Having covered the relevant literature and identified the gap in the research surrounding tour guides and emotional labour, the Methodology is described next and illustrates how the research was undertaken, analysed and presented.

Methodology

The participant group was made up of a larger overarching group of tour guides who had formed their own tour guide association in Outback Australia. Membership of the association gave them access to informed guiding techniques and offered camaraderie and skills- and knowledge-based transfer. Within the association were forty-four ($n = 44$) members, most of whom ran their own independent Small to Medium Enterprise (SME). A very small minority of the guides were female.

The author attended a number of bi-annual meetings held by the guides over a two-year timeframe. A purposive, and snowballing technique was used to gather and solicit interviews. As one guide was approached and interviewed, another would be nearby, seemingly interested, and waiting to be interviewed of their own accord. Or, on some occasions, the interviewee would recommend another guide as the next participant. No recompense was offered to the guides for participation. The group, in general, was interested and pleased to be part of the research program.

The questions studied various themes. Especially, how the participants became tour guides; how long they had been a guide; how they interpret tourist sites for the tourists; what sorts of interpretation they use; and what sort of qualities they think it takes to be a tour guide. Research on emotional labour, when directed at tour guides, enabled the author to create a research aim and to design open-ended interview questions. The open-ended questions were developed, enriched and completed using the constant comparative method as the literature was read more broadly and the author started the data collection, which afforded 'fit' between 'purpose, approach and theory' (Cruceanu, 2019; Lincoln & Guba 1985).

As the interviews proceeded and the data was collected, each interview was transcribed. The data collection process was iterative, each interview built on the previous one, and additional questions were asked of subsequent participants as, interview by interview, new ideas were uncovered that were relevant to the overall research project (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003).

When transcription was completed for each interview, a line-by-line reading of the data enabled the author to remain intently engaged with the data and coding process. The way coding is undertaken should fit the aim of the study. Thematic analysers, grounded theorists and constant comparative researchers may code row-by-row, section-by-section, instance-by-instance, or narrative-by-narrative. Charmaz (2012) promotes row-by-row coding in the initial stages of research as an investigative mechanism, especially for interview data. Thus, row-by-row coding enables grounded theorists to synthesise their research participants' lived experience and viewpoints (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). This approach and understanding of the data was used in this research project to engage with and develop themes using a constant comparative analysis of the data.

Triangulation was also used in the research in order to render the research credible, transferable (to other research contexts), dependable (in other words, reliable), and confirmable as a valid and robust research design (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The author compared the three data collection of transcribed interviews, line-by-line coding and their own perceptions (written fieldnotes) from the research in order to triangulate the data itself. Triangulation has been proposed as a technique to become incorporated into the researcher's way of reasoning (Carney, 1990), which incorporates a persistent, regular cross-check on ideas, descriptions, procedures, information, participants, and the researcher themselves (the 'constant comparison' method – see Smulowitz, 2017; Kolb, 2012; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Glaser, 1965).

In this study, the theory emerged from the data, and was verified by theoretical saturation. The collection and analysis of data concludes with theoretical saturation: the aspect where no new classifications or conceptions emerge. This means the emerging theory becomes repetitive as the researcher includes and evaluates more observed information. This can be described as the 'interchangeability of indicators'; that is, the stage at where no new

concepts and categories emerge from the data and are undifferentiated from those previously established (Engler, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 2017, 2009; Glaser, 1978, p. 43, 64–65). In other words, when no new themes emerge from the interviews, theoretical saturation has been reached (Davidsson Bremberg, 2011, p. 8314). Consequently, following theoretical saturation, one of the main themes to emerge from the data was ‘tour guides and emotional labour’. This theme is explicated and examined in the Findings and Discussion section below.

Ethics clearance was sought and granted for the author’s university Human Research Ethics Committee.

Theoretical development

All good research should present a ‘theory’ of the phenomenon under study. Arising from the qualitative research discussed here, a juxtaposition of tour guides and emotional labour theory follows. The good tour guide (Grinder & McCoy, 1985) is conscious of the tourist’s needs and tries to give them what they want through knowledgeable confident interpretation (Weiler & Black, 2015, 2021; Gurung, Simmons & Devlin, 1996). This is possible through the mechanism of emotional labour, where exchanges of personal feelings and empathy create the atmosphere of unity or ‘oneness’ between the environment, the tourist and the tour guide. Deep emotional sensations are the result of this base level interchange.

The progression of tour guides from mentor to providers of authentic encounters, to interpretive cultural mediators, is a significant central proposition in the theory of tour guides and emotional labour. Tour guides bestow a far more informative experience, when contrasted to their predecessors, and are more highly skilled than foregoing employees in this advancing tourism service sphere.

Limitations of the research

All research no matter how robustly conducted has limitations. One of the limitations of this research is that only one overarching group, made up of SMEs, was examined. Another limitation is that mostly only male participants were interviewed. Therefore, as with much qualitative research, the findings, implications and conclusions cannot be generalised to the wider tourist guide population.

Findings and discussion

Owing to intense emotional labour pressures, tour guides dedicate a lot of energy to modifying their inner feelings to transmit managerially suitable emotions (Yim, Cheung & Baum, 2018; Constanti & Gibbs, 2005; Sharpe, 2005). Emotional labour can also include the awkwardness of self-examination. For example, some tours are not always positive. One tour guide had moments of self-disbelief in the course of a tour. He considers that this may be a downfall in his abilities as an interpreter.

I did have a negative experience from myself [sic]. Whereas I sort of ran out of information halfway through the tour. We ended up coming back through the northern side of the

reserve, pretty much in silence. So, we talked about the people's local areas and stuff like that. Which was OK for them, but it really wasn't what we were there for (Participant).

Chatter throughout a guided tour gives an opening to develop awareness about other cultures and conditions. Whenever guides meet tourists from overseas, they can develop their knowledge. Familiarity with the cultural account of different tourist cultures allows guides to centre on features of their own traditions and customs that are distinctive, while simultaneously reducing the incongruity by using directed multicultural evaluations and assessments, occasionally to the amazement of the tourists (Salazar, 2015).

Consequently, it can be argued that emotionally motivated feelings are displayed by the guides and the tourists throughout and following a guided tour. These feelings can be generated through the adjacent and concentrated closeness with the site under the gaze of the tour group (see Urry, 2002, 1990; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Nevertheless, emotional labour is indeed satisfying for tour guides through interpretation for tourists and their responses. This, therefore, supplies tour guides with the best source of endorsement.

Another guide said that he *'feels great contentment when my tour operation welcomes a new tour group, and the tourists congratulate me at the conclusion of the tour'*. (Participant)

The tourists are displaying their gratitude for the tour and the opportunity to participate in such a stimulating experience. The guide also revealed that *'the tourists become over-zealous with commending me, and it is a frequent occurrence'* (Participant).

The guide further believes that *'it is connected to the (tour) groups being overawed by the location they are exploring'* (Participant).

Correspondingly, Ryan, Hughes and Chirgwin (2000) maintain that 'the experience of... tourism lies in the intensity of interaction with the site' (Ryan, Hughes & Chirgwin, 2000, p. 158). This response by the tourists is also underlined by Howard (1998) who claims that: ...a tourist's connection to a tourist locale is both multifaceted and challenging to understand. It has often been demonstrated that emotion and feeling influence the manner in which a tourist interacts with the tour and the location (Howard, 1998, p. 67).

This research has highlighted that certain tourists need to connect with the environment. Holloway (1981, p. 389) contends that the expression 'group emotion' can be used to illustrate the situation where a tour guide brings to life certain particular qualities or features of a site (see also Weiler & Black, 2021, 2015). Occasions such as these add considerably to the accomplishment of the guided tour. For instance, tourists feel mesmerised and become very silent and pensive during a guided tour to a place such as Everest Base Camp (Ireland & Gemie, 2015) or Uluru (Beeton, 2022). Fine and Haskell Speer (1985) consider that 'perhaps truly grand and awe-inspiring sights demand less verbal elevation' (1985, p. 91). Tour guides

must be perceptive to the need for quiet at certain times, to permit the full emotional effect on the tourists. So as to achieve diversity, tour guides need to apply a large investment in emotional labour. Some tourists choose guided tours as a way to escape emotional troubles, if only briefly. Tour guides must be sympathetic to these emotional nuances because, if the tourist is unhappy, they will be incapable of receiving full benefit from the tour.

Some tour guides find the emotional labour characteristic of interpretive guiding especially satisfying. For instance

a female tour guide in the study experienced this when she led a tour with a family who brought along an elderly relative on the tour as a birthday gift. (Fieldnotes)

And further, in one particular guided tour that the author took part in, emotional labour was most evident when the tour was piloted by small boat through a canyon, on a river, by the tour guide. The guide even remarked on the reality that most tourists become emotional when on the river. He clearly envisaged and pursued that reaction from his clients.

The outcome of emotional labour on clients and customers is suggestive - the emotional state is intense and inherent, rather than just a façade. This type of tourism work requires the tour guide to produce or limit specific feelings with the purpose of maintaining the exterior veneer that generates the suitable state of mind in other people. This disciplined production of feelings calls for synchronisation of intelligence and emotion, and sometimes it draws on an perception that is considered profound and fundamental to the character of humanity (see Hochschild, 1983).

Hochschild's work was a response to the advance of the service industry and the upsurge of what has been articulated as service encounter type of interfaces. While the diversity, concentration and quantity of contact between the service contributor and the recipient has altered, companies still insist that their workers act as if they have a relationship with the customer. For Hochschild the central emotional management presentation for service providers is to spontaneously exhibit an emotion that they may not instinctively secretly feel. Hochschild takes into account the effects of the situation that a service provider '... induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (1983, p. 7).

Implications and conclusions

This article has filled a gap in the literature on tour guides and emotional labour. The author has pinpointed the deficiency of theory relating to and consistent with tour guides and emotional labour. From a critical viewpoint, the tour guides' literature and emotional labour literature should be linked to form a new and complete theoretical position of these paradigms.

Leading guided tours comprises a large measure of emotional labour. Notwithstanding the attraction of working in breath-taking locations, the profession can be difficult, hard and only practicable during certain seasons every year. The tour guides in this research are

executing a balancing act, where employment and personal priorities have to be controlled, not unlike working in any other vocation (see Weiler & Black, 2015, 2021; Cohen, 1985).

Style, demeanour, discourse and reflection processes of the tour guides are essential to the result of the guided tour (Lugosi & Bray, 2008). This type of occupation requires what Hochschild (1983) defines as 'emotion work', to be precise, the enhancing of emotional consciousness in their tourist customers, frequently by the management of the tour guides' own feelings (Wong & Wang, 2009; Hillman, 2006). Such emotional labour may be crucial, because it is part of the service being put forward for sale (Leidner, 1993, p. 26). Researchers of emotional labour have distinguished the procedures following encounters with tourists as a component of the restructuring process; the argument presented here both reinforces and highlights this position (Bagnall, 2003).

Future research

One area in need of more attention is the progression from surface acting, deep acting and expression of naturally felt emotions to the stress from emotional labour developed from enacting and supplying emotional labour to tourist groups by tour guides, followed finally by burnout (and stress) from 'overacting' within emotional labour, would also be a research project worthy of investigation (see Figure 1 above).

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