

# Emotional Labor in Commercial Hospitality: Motivations and Behavioural Characteristics

*H.M. Hanshika Madushani Herath, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University,  
Badulla, Sri Lanka*

*Sarath Munasinghe, Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies,  
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Balangoda, Sri Lanka*

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## ABSTRACT

*In the face of rapid increase of tourist arrivals, Sri Lankan Tourism is expecting a huge development in accommodation sector. This is quite obvious when one observes the fact that the current room capacity of the country is around 20,000 and Sri Lankan Tourism expects to increase it up to 40,000 in two years to cater for 2.5 million expected tourists in 2016. However, this development should not be limited to the physical facility development, a greater attention should be paid to the aspect of human resource development. Further, it is argued that emotional labor in commercial domain of hospitality is worthy paying attention to. Accordingly, this paper presents the motivations, predictors, behavioral characteristics and positive and negative organizational outcomes of emotional labor in the context of resort hotels in Sri Lanka. Important findings were concluded in relation to customer contact employees in hotels and their motivations and behavioral characteristics.*

*Keywords: Behavioral Characteristics, Commercial Hospitality, Emotional Labor, Human Resource Management in Hotels, Resort Hotels, Task Motivations*

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## INTRODUCTION

In present tourism industry in Sri Lanka is on a boom. The end of the 30 years of ethnic conflict prevailed in the country and subsequent removal of negative travel advisories imposed against the country by the developed world have given rise to this state of affairs. In the year 2013 Sri Lanka received one million tourist arrivals. As result, the accommodation sector will be able to cash from these booming arrivals. It is believed by the travel trade professionals that the accommodation sector will run its full capacity and sometimes, it is supposed that the room capacity will not be adequate to cater the growing influx of tourists, provided the growth will continue. In the face of this growing scenario of tourism in Sri Lanka, it is believed that strategic planning for tourism would be more useful than ever before.

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Tourism is a multi-disciplinary sector of which the positive and negative impacts are diverse and will spread on aspects of nature, culture and economy of the country. Thus, managing this change will require a lot of cautions and precautions. On one hand, the culture and nature of the country will be vulnerable to this sudden influx of tourists and, on the other hand, in case the quality suffers with the focus of economic gains, the growth will not sustain. Therefore, the industry must be well equipped to deliver a competitive tourism experience to this new wave of tourists and, more importantly, try to build profitable relationships with customers in order to sustain the growth.

At this important juncture of Sri Lankan Tourism, the focus of this study is on the rapidly growing hotel sector of the country. In that, the specific attention is given to explore the significance of emotional labour in the commercial domain of hospitality in terms of its motivations and behavioural characteristics.

Accommodation sector, being a major component of tourism, is required to have a rapid development in the face of growing tourist arrivals. It is argued here that this should not only be limited to the physical facility development. The aspect of human resource development must be given a greater attention. Further, in hospitality management literature, it is widely accepted that the employee behaviour plays a key role in the service delivery (Jerome & Kleiner, 1995:21; Kong & Jogaratnam, 2007: 278; Sierra & McQuitty, 2005: 396-397). Hence, the resultant customer satisfaction, loyalty and subsequent post-purchase behaviour of guests will largely depend on the performance of the commercial hosts.

In this study, the main focus is given to the significance of the people-generated emotions and emotional attachments between hosts and guests in commercial hospitality. Emotional labor is a Managing feelings that creates nice and friendly attitude towards the guest which is strongly related to guests' satisfaction, simultaneously increasing their commitment and loyalty. In service work setting, employees are expected to manage their emotions as a part of their job, with the aim to adequately fulfill the job, to develop the customer relationship and to increase overall effectiveness (Jung & Yoon 2014: 84-88). Emotional labor is the fundamental aspect to create emotional energy among the employees in service encounters. As far as the literature on emotional labor is concerned, it is of short supply in general and very limited in the field of hospitality sector although it is very important to the guest satisfaction.

## BACKGROUND

Hochschild (1983) has been suggested the concept of emotional labor in her book "The Management of Heart". According to Hochschild (1990) 'regulating someone's emotions to comply with social norms' named as emotional labor. Furthermore, Erdogan (2007) states that emotions are composed of individuals' positive or negative responses to their social interactions. Martin (1999) notices that emotions are affected by situational, interpersonal and social circumstances. According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) emotional labor is sense of demonstrating behavior.

According to the literature, there are contradictory ideas and views regarding the emotional labor in the hospitality industry. Accordingly, Morris and Feldman (1996) claimed that emotional labor has four dimensions. They are, attention of emotional labor, frequency of emotional labor, emotional dissonance and kind of emotional labor. Meanwhile Krumboltz and Geddes (2000) states dimensions of emotional labor as two factors: deep acting (emotive effort) and surface acting (emotive dissonance). Further, Hochschild (1983) describes surface acting as "the difference between truly felt emotions and fake emotions". At the same time Grandy (2000) states that surface

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