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# Effects of Personality Traits on Quality of Service of Service Staff in Catering Industry – Aspect of Emotional Labor

Yu - Hsien CHOU<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The proportion of dining-out population is increasing with the rapid development of social economy. It is considered that service staff presenting positive emotion has become the essential condition in the dinning process. To further have the customers perceive pleasure and satisfaction, service staff in catering industry actively and heartedly serving customers is critical. For this reason, this study tends to verify the effects of Personality Traits on Quality of Service of service staff in catering industry from the aspect of Emotional Labor. Total 270 copies of questionnaires are distributed to the first-line service staff of Grand Hyatt Taipei and 196 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 73%. The research results show significant correlations between: (1) Personality Traits and Emotional Labor, (2) Emotional Labor and Quality of Service, and (3) Personality Traits and Quality of Service. The practicability of the research results are further proposed suggestions.

*Keywords:* personality traits, emotional labor, quality of service, perceived behavior, catering industry.

## Introduction

The global industries changing from traditional technology-intensive to knowledge-intensive industries has also directly affected the changes of industrial structure in Taiwan. Starting from agriculture, the technology- and labor-intensive advantages have Taiwan become famous for the manufacturing in the world. Nonetheless, such cost advantages have disappeared because of price competition

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from other countries and outward manufacturers that the decline of manufacturing industries has forced the industrial structure in Taiwan transforming to service economy. In this domain, the staff is no longer treated as producing tools or machine, but the body in services.

What is more, the rapid development of social economy has female labors invest in the employment market that the family structure is also changed. The increasing eating-out population has the public stress more on the quality of meals. Besides, the customers could observe the behaviors of service staff, participate in the process, and experience the professional services as they stay in the same environment for 2½ hours during the meal. However, the quality of products in service industries has revealed certain standard that the customers change the focus from products or services to service staff and start to evaluate the appropriateness of such service staff's etiquette, attitudes, and emotion.

In traditional service industries, service staff could complete the transaction merely by presenting smile, talking silently, showing elegant body movements, and having simple eye contact with customers. Such basic services are considered insufficient in service industries. For competitive advantages, a service enterprise should have the service staff heartedly treating the customers as friends, which is regarded as the difference between excellent service staff and general service staff. The former always provides products or services meeting the customers' demands by standing on their points and pays for the customers by heart. The latter, on the other hand, merely presents positive emotion extrinsically, rather than showing by heart. As a result, service staff presenting conformable behaviors to the heart in the service delivery process would affect the perceived satisfaction and quality of service of customers in the consumption experience.

## **Definition and hypothesis**

### ***Personality Traits***

Pai (2009) defined "personality" as the physiological and psychological characteristics of a person, such as ambition, shyness, enthusiasm, laziness, and loyalty; such characteristics being frequently presented were called "traits". Personality therefore is not simply the accumulation of psychological growth and development of a person, but determines the interactive model between human beings and the environments; it is not formed by a single characteristic, but consisted of several ones, which are called "Personality Traits" (Tsai, 2010). Researchers divided personality into several continuous dimensions, and each dimension stands for a characteristic. Personality traits of an individual could be understood by comparing the performance of an individual on each dimension (attitudes and behaviors) with the normal performance in a group and presenting

the weights with psychogram (Tsai, 2010). Dimensions for Personality Traits started from the research of Cattell, who acquired 16 dimensions for Personality Traits, and five factors were discovered by Norman (Tsai, 2011). Such Five Factor Model (FFM) is now considered stable enough to measure the difference in Personality Traits (Tellegen & Waller, 1987). Goldberg found out five characteristics from the list of new variables to support such FFM in 1990, where Big Five, including 1. Neuroticism, 2. Extraversion, 3. Openness to Experience, 4. Agreeableness, and 5. Conscientiousness, proposed by Costa and McCrae (1986) was widely accepted and adopted. Based on Digman (1990) and McCrae & John (1992), the dimensions for Personality Traits are explained as below. Neuroticism, appearing the least controversy, stands for the tendency of worry experiences in individual differences of cognition and behavioral styles. Extraversion represents the degree or number of an individual feeling comfortable about the relationship with others. Agreeableness refers to the conformity of an individual to the rules regulated by others or the organization. Conscientiousness refers to the concentration and focus of an individual on the pursued objectives. Openness to Experience refers to the interests of an individual and the preference.

### ***Emotional Labor***

Goleman (1995) defined emotion as individual excitement or disturbance of mind, feeling, or sensation, which referred to any flushed or excited psychological state; it was an auto-suggested emotion about the experienced affairs (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), normally referred to individual and subjective affection (Strongman, 1987), and could be the index of psychological comfortableness and pleasant (Rafaeli & Sutoon, 1987). Researchers regarded the reaction indices of physiological and psychological characteristics in emotion; i.e., emotion was a reaction towards specific states, could induce disturbance or waver of organisms, consciously focused on strong emotion, and could result in changes or motion of visceral functions of bodies (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989; Edward, 1999).

Early research on Emotional Labor mostly referred to the classification of Hochschild (1983) to study and analyze high and low emotional labor work, but it could not help realize the composition or burden of Emotional Labor. Not until Morris and Feldman (1996) defined Emotional Labor with emotional interaction model did the research on Emotional Labor present more specific structure. They considered that Emotional Labor could be built upon four dimensions of 1. Frequency of Expression, 2. Attention to Performance, 3. Diversity of Expression, and 4. Affective Disorder. 1. Frequency of Emotion Expression was the most important index of Emotional Labor; the higher interaction between service workers and customers would result in more Frequency of Emotion Expression of the service workers. 2. With the higher concern about emotional expression rules, emotional labor workers would have to pay more efforts and strength that the load

would be increased. 3. When more emotional varieties needed to be presented, service workers would have to pay more emotional labor. 4. Conflict would appear when the real intrinsic emotion of emotional labor workers was not consistent with the extrinsic emotional expression requested by the organization.

### ***Quality of Service***

Enhancing Quality of Service is considered as the major strategy to increase the competitiveness in service industries, but a lot of researchers proposed distinct opinions and definitions about Quality of Service. However, most researchers agreed with the general definition of Quality of Service conforming to or exceeding customer expectation. Garvin (1983) regarded the subjective opinion about Quality of Service satisfying or exceeding customer expectation. P.Z.B (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985) defined Quality of Service as customers measuring the excellence of an enterprise that it was an “attitude”, but not equal to satisfaction, and the difference between customer expectation to services and the real perceived services. In other words, Quality of Service = perceived services - expected services that the higher perceived services than expected services stood for the higher and satisfactory Quality of Service.

A lot of researchers proposed theoretical models for Quality of Service, where Perceived Quality of Service proposed by Gronroos (1982) and PZB Model proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) revealed the best representativeness. Based on the dimensions of Corporate Image, Technical Quality, and Functional Quality, Gronroos's (1982) Perceived Quality of Service Model considered Quality of Service as the difference between expected service standards and perceived service standards of customers. Gronroos (1984) divided Quality of Service into Technical Quality, Functional Quality, and Corporate Image; and, Vazquez, Bosque, Diaz and Ruiz (2001) classified Quality of Service into entity, reliability, personal interaction, and policy.

### ***Research hypothesis***

Morris and Feldman (1996) considered the characteristics of service workers as gender and emotion, which were also the factors in the emotional labor load of service workers (Kao, 2011). Females need to precede more Emotional Labor than males do at the same work (Adelmann, 1989; James, 1993; Wharton, 1993) that females appear higher frequency of emotional expression than males do. When the inner affection of service workers is consistent with the emotional expression at work, they are suitable for the job. When the emotional rules in an enterprise request the service staff presenting positive emotional expression, the more negative inner emotion of the emotional labor workers could likely result in affective disorder. Similarly, when the service staff is requested to show negative

emotional expression, the more positive inner emotion would likely cause affective disorder (Morris & Feldman, 1996).

Among the research on the correlations between Emotional Labor and customer-oriented behaviors, Sutton and Rafaeli (1988), Kelley and Hoffman (1997), and Markus et al. (2009) proposed the effects of busy work on the emotion expression of high emotional labor workers, revealing that an employee could satisfy customer demands and provide proper goods and services with customers by controlling the emotional labor supply. Apparently, Emotional Labor would affect employees' Quality of Service. Besides, the positive emotion of employees appears positive correlations with customer-oriented perceived behaviors that the perceived Quality of Service would be enhanced when customers perceive the positive emotion of the staff.

Based on the above literature review, the following hypotheses are deduced in this study.

- H1: There are significant correlations between Personality Traits and Emotional Labor.
- H2: There are remarkable correlations between Emotional Labor and Quality of Service.
- H3: There are notable correlations between Personality Traits and Quality of Service.

## **Design of research method**

### ***Operational definition and measurement of variables***

*Personality Traits.* Personality Traits are divided into the dimensions of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, and the scale is referred to Digman's (1990) and McCrae & John's (1992) scales. The overall reliability coefficients show Neuroticism 0.83, Extraversion 0.86, Openness to Experience 0.81, Agreeableness 0.87, and Conscientiousness 0.85.

*Emotional Labor.* Emotional Labor Scale is referred to Morris and Feldman's (1996) scale. The overall reliability coefficients appear Frequency of Expression 0.88, Attention to Performance 0.80, Diversity of Expression 0.82, and Affective Disorder 0.84.

*Quality of Service.* Quality of Service is divided into the dimensions of Technical Quality, Functional Quality, and Corporate Image, and the scale is referred to Gronroos's (1984) scale. The overall reliability coefficients reveal Technical Quality 0.89, Functional Quality 0.83, and Corporate Image 0.86.

**Research participant**

Located in the most vibrant commercial centre in Xinyi district, Grand Hyatt Taipei is adjacent to Taipei 101 Mall and Financial Tower and Taipei World Trade Center, where is the most dynamic business, shopping, and entertainment district in Taipei. Grand Hyatt Taipei provides the most convenient services for business visitors and locates travelers in the best entertainment and shopping paradise. The delicate and comfortable guestrooms in Grand Hyatt Taipei offer a pleasant Taipei tour for visitors. There are several unique restaurants and bars offering Taiwanese dishes, relaxing dining atmosphere, and Japanese cuisine for friends, families, or business meetings. Grand Hyatt Taipei provides the customers with fashionable dinning feasts. Total 270 copies of questionnaires are distributed to the first-line service staff of Grand Hyatt Taipei, and 196 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 73%.

**Verification of reliability and validity analyses**

The reliability of the research dimensions achieves more than 0.7, showing the high reliability. The construct validity of the scales is analyzed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Table 1, where both convergent validity and construct validity are favorable.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Research dimension	Overall fit	Analysis result
Personality Traits	X <sup>2</sup> =0 (P<0.001); DF=0; GFI=1.00; CFI=1.00	Favorable model fit
Emotional Labor	X <sup>2</sup> =0 (P<0.001); DF=0; GFI=1.00; CFI=1.00	Favorable model fit
Quality of Service	X <sup>2</sup> =0 (P<0.001); DF=0; GFI=1.00; CFI=1.00	Favorable model fit

**Results**

**Correlation Analysis**

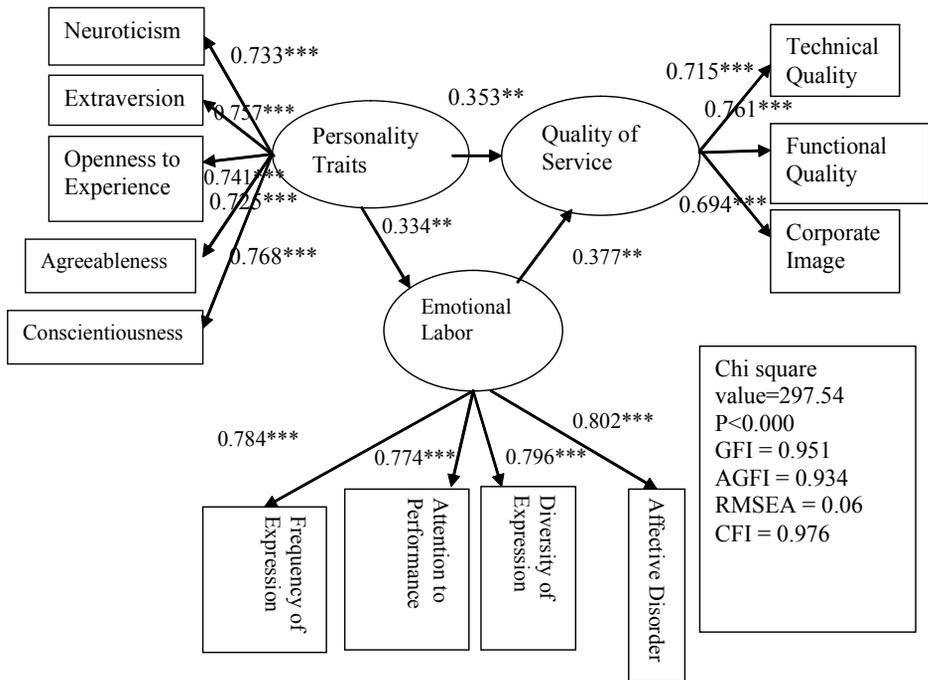
Table 2 shows the significant correlations among Personality Traits, Emotional Labor, and Quality of Service that multicollinearity could possibly appear among the research dimensions. Niehoff and Moorman (1993) suggested solving such a problem with Nested Model Analysis. Moreover, the significant correlations among the research dimensions reveal the conformity with the hypotheses.

Table 2. Correlation analysis

Research dimension	$\alpha$	Personality Traits	Emotional Labor	Quality of Service
Personality Traits	0.83			
Emotional Labor	0.81	0.27*		
Quality of Service	0.88	0.34**	0.42**	

### Discussion of theoretical model

The research results are presented in the following figure, in which solid lines show the path coefficients achieving the significance and dotted lines reveal those not achieving the significance. Obviously, the path coefficients of all variables achieve the significance that such path coefficients reach the convergent validity and conforming to the basic requirements of the analysis model. Furthermore, the goodness-of-fit indices, GFI=0.951, AGFI=0.934, RMSEA=0.06, and CFI=0.976, verify the model fit that the research model conforms to the theory and presents validity.



**Discussion of research hypotheses**

With Nested Model, Chi Square Test is applied to test the hypotheses as each Nested Model present the difference of a degree of freedom. In this case, when deducting the chi square value in Nested Model from it in the theoretical model achieves the significance, the path coefficient, which is set 0, is significant. The research results show the model reaching the significance; Nested Model Analysis is shown in Table 3; and, the hypothesis verification results are listed in Table 4.

Table 3. *Nested Model Analysis*

Model	$\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Theoretical model	297.54		0.951	0.976	0.06
Model 1: Hypothesis verification	301.96	4.42*	0.951	0.976	0.06
Model 2: Hypothesis verification	308.79	6.83*	0.951	0.976	0.06
Model 3: Hypothesis verification	313.91	5.12*	0.951	0.976	0.06

Table 4. *Hypothesis verification*

Research hypothesis	Correlation	Empirical result	P	Result
Hypothesis 1	+	0.334	0.00	Supported
Hypothesis 2	+	0.377	0.00	Supported
Hypothesis 3	+	0.353	0.00	Supported

**Conclusion**

The research results show the significant correlations among Personality Traits, Emotional Labor, and Quality of Service. In addition to the effects of Personality Traits on the cognition and perception of Emotional Labor when service staff in catering industry engages in the work, the effects of Emotional Labor on Quality of Service are also explored in this study. Meanwhile, it is expected that the research results could be the reference of managers in catering industry and successive researchers. In order to enhance the quality of service of the powerful work teams in catering industry and the job satisfaction and morale of the employees so as to promote the competitiveness and force, the cultivation of employees contain the training of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and professional knowledge, and powerful support of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and e-customer service systems should be reinforced. Emotional Labor is regarded as a new idea. Without paying attention to emotional labor management of emotional labor workers, some tangible and intangible losses are likely resulted in catering industry, such as affective disorder and emotional exhaust of service staff causing work fatigue, low job satisfaction, leaving the job or early retirement, and unfavorable work performance. It is proved in this study that Emotional Labor

and Personality Traits would positively affect Quality of Service of the staff in catering industry. However, individual personality traits are gradually formed in the development process that it is not easy to change individual personality traits through educational trainings. Consequently, catering businesses could largely enhance the staff's Quality of Service by effectively reduce the emotional labor to further affect the business performance and goals of the company.

### ***Suggestion***

According to the research results and findings, the following practical suggestions are further proposed.

1. Personality Traits should be emphasized when recruiting employees in catering industry. The research findings show that Personality Traits are not merely the key factor in favorable Quality of Service in catering industry, but could positively affect Emotional Labor. It is therefore suggested that aptitude tests could be included in the recruitment so as to predict the personality traits of recruited employees and arrange suitable jobs for the talents. Besides, service staff with high Emotional Labor could enhance customer trust and cooperation in the changeable emotional labor environment and positively promote teamwork to improve Quality of Service.
2. Reference of position transfer and educational training. In order to precisely acquire talents, catering industry is suggested to establish complete internal talent database for understanding the Personality Traits, Emotional Labor, and Work Performance of employees from distinct departments. A complete talent database could be the reference of internal transfer of personnel and position as well as enhance the application of human resources so as to largely promote Quality of Service and create the business performance of the organization. Moreover, regular educational training could enhance Quality of Service in catering industry.
3. Tutorial system. A competent catering staff should present professional knowledge and favorable service skills and attitudes, satisfy customers by meeting the requirements, and create profits for the company. However, such knowledge and skills need to be permanently practiced and explored through the environments, rather than being instructed in schools or achieved by several educational trainings in catering businesses. Especially, appropriate Emotional Labor for various customers needs to be modeled by a mature and stable senior guiding with real practice. It is therefore suggested that tutorial systems could be introduced into catering industry so that senior staff could lead the newly employed to learn the professional knowledge, service skills, savoir-faire, and emotional labor.

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