

The Effects of Local Residents' Emotional Labor on Tourists' Satisfaction—The Mediating Role of Tourism Experience

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Abstract

To explore how local residents' attitudes and action influence tourists' satisfaction which in turn influences tourism destination's brand image, the paper conducts a questionnaire survey among 166 tourists who visited Yantai, analyzes and tests the relational model through structural equations. The test result shows that residents' deep acting strategy positively affects tourists' satisfaction; tourism experience partially mediates the effect of residents' emotional labor on tourists' satisfaction. It supplements the antecedent research of tourism experience. Policymakers are suggested to attach great importance to residents' emotional labor and tourists' experiential demand.

Keywords

Emotional Labor, Deep Acting, Surface Acting, Tourism Experience, Satisfaction

1. Introduction

In the experience economy era, tourists pay attention to the emotional experience rather than only viewing the scenery. During the tourism activity, local residents (*i.e.*, taxi driver, people selling their own-planted fruit, etc.) formerly are treated as destination's back-stage [1]. Nowadays, they have come to the front-stage with the change of tourists' experience demand. Their attitudes and behavior affect tourists' experience. When residents show authentic emotion, tourists will feel welcomed and relaxed physically and mentally. Thus, they will have identification with local culture and possibly satisfy with this journey. Otherwise, if tourists feel they are inauthentic or rudely treated, they possibly will experience unsatisfactory which will affect the revisit and word of mouth. How local residents' attitudes and action influence tourists' satisfaction, this remains a

research gap. Previous studies have shown that employees' emotional labor significantly affects customer's experience within service encounter. In tourism context, previous researches seldom focus on the interpersonal interaction between local residents and tourists. Local residents' external action and internal emotion is no longer the daily life demand for themselves. It has become the important component of the destination culture which influences tourists' destination perception. As the important participant of the tourism destination, residents need to take actions to manage self-emotion expression to make tourists feel like at home. This emotion management action is called emotional labor (Hochschild, 1979). The impact of local residents' emotional labor on tourists' satisfaction has rarely been presented in previous literature. That is, whether local residents' deep or surface acting has an effect on tourists' satisfaction or not, if yes, what is the affecting mechanism.

In this paper, 3 tasks were done. Firstly, emotional labor notion was introduced. Secondly, the relationship of local residents' emotional labor, tourists' experience and satisfaction was examined. Lastly, management suggestions were given to practitioners.

2. Theoretical Basis and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Emotional Labor and Tourists' Satisfaction

Emotional labor refers to service employees' regulation of feelings and expressions in order to display organizationally required emotions towards customers. Service employees can utilize two emotional labor strategies to express appropriate emotions: deep acting involves modifying inner feelings by recalling a prior event or reappraising the situation while surface acting involves faking superficial expressions when suppressing real feelings [2].

In general, most of the previous literatures discuss how employees' emotional labor strategies affect customers in the service encounter. Hennig-Thurau (2006) approved that employees' degree of emotion expression authenticity positively influence customers' perception of service quality and loyalty through simulation method while frequency of smile does not positively influence customers' perception of service quality and loyalty [3]. Groth (2009) approved that deep acting positively influence customer satisfaction and perception of service quality while surface acting negatively influence customer satisfaction and perception of service quality [4]. Van Dijk (2009) confirmed that deep acting positively affect customers' word of mouth and interpersonal relationship appraisal in the tourism context while surface acting performed negatively [5]. Yagil (2012) also confirmed the above opinion that deep (surface) acting positively (negatively) influence customers' satisfaction and loyalty [6].

Goffman's front-stage and back-stage theory suggests that the service area is divided into two parts: front-stage and back-stage. In the tourism context, front-stage means that culture is treated as goods and showed to tourists and thus leads to the stage feature of authenticity [1]. It's difficult to get authentic

perception for tourists in this situation. Back-stage is a closed space preparing for front-stage which can fulfill tourists' pursuit of authenticity. Local residents are regarded as the front-stage formerly. They don't need to interact with tourists. So their emotional labor is not paid attention to before. But today, more tourists want to walk into local residents' life to perceive the local culture atmosphere. It makes local residents come to the front-stage and become an important part of the tourism destination. Their emotional performance will influence tourists' whole perception about the destination. If residents show authentic emotion to tourists (deep acting), it will make tourists feel happy and relaxed in turn to give good appraisal with destination. Otherwise, if they treat tourists inauthentic and pretend to be welcome to tourists although they are not happy with them (surface acting), it will make tourists feel unhappy and in turn unsatisfied with the destination. Surface acting is not permanent emotion and will sometimes be found by tourists because there is difference between fake smile and authentic one [7].

Previous studies show that deep acting positively influences customer satisfaction and service quality perception while surface acting the contrary [4] [5]. Based on these arguments, we propose:

H1. Local residents' surface acting is negatively related to tourists' satisfaction

H2. Local residents' deep acting is positively related to tourists' satisfaction

2.2. The Mediating Effect of Tourism Experience

Pine and Gilmore J H (1998) suggested that experience economy era is the fourth development period after the agricultural, industrial, and service economy. They define experience as the unforgotten feeling created to customers [8]. Tourism experience has become the source of tourism destination value and the motivation of tourism economy increase.

As the complexity of tourism experience, academia hasn't reached agreement on its definition. But the connotation is agreed as follows: tourism experience is the joyful and relaxed feeling obtained by tourists in the context which is different from the familiar living condition [9].

Hosany (2010) suggested that tourists' positive emotional experience has relevance with tourists' satisfaction and will influence their future tourism decision [10]. Wang (2012) studied the remarks made by the tourists who use smart mobile phone and, found that information searching through intelligent mobile phone can enhance tourism experience and influence their opinion on destination [11]. Sera vada (2019) discussed the relationship between tourism experience and perception of happiness as well as sense of place, and found tourism experience positively influence sense of place [12]. Domestic researches mainly use qualitative methods to study the influence factors on tourism experience or combine qualitative and quantitative methods. But they haven't got enough results. The factors influencing tourism experience include high entrance price, little tour time and low degree of participation [13]. Zhangmei (2019) studied the

use of AR interaction mode in tourism experience, and suggested the usage strategy of AR interaction mode in tourism experience [14]. Zhao Zhenghua (2018) used SEM method to do empirical analysis, and found cruise experience plays positive effect on tourists' satisfaction and repeated visit [15].

Among these factors that influence tourism experience, previous study hasn't involved the interaction between tourists and local residents. This article takes local residents' emotional labor as antecedent and study how it influence tourism experience, then influence tourists' satisfaction.

Tourism experience is the combination of personal feature with tourism circumstance and will be influenced by local residents' action. Consumers' experience includes four parts which are common, extraordinary, perceptual and emotional [16]. Emotional experience can not only be motivated by tourism experience elements but by others' emotion [17].

Social exchange theory suggests that any interpersonal relationship is exchangeable. Only if the spirit and material exchange process get to balance, interpersonal relationship will become harmonious. According to this theory, only if local residents perceived plenty of material and spiritual wealth, most of them will feel satisfied and show positive emotion to tourists from the heart. This will make tourists feel happy and get excellent experience. Otherwise, if don't feel be paid enough, they will treat tourists inauthentic and pretend to be welcome to tourists although they are not happy with them. This may make tourists feel unsatisfactory. Based on this argument, we propose:

H3. Tourism experience mediates the relevance between local residents' surface acting and tourists' satisfaction

H4. Tourism experience mediates the relevance between local residents' deep acting and tourists' satisfaction

Figure 1 presents the Conceptual Model.

3. Method

3.1. Research Sample and Data Collection

Pre-survey was conducted before the formal one within the graduate students.

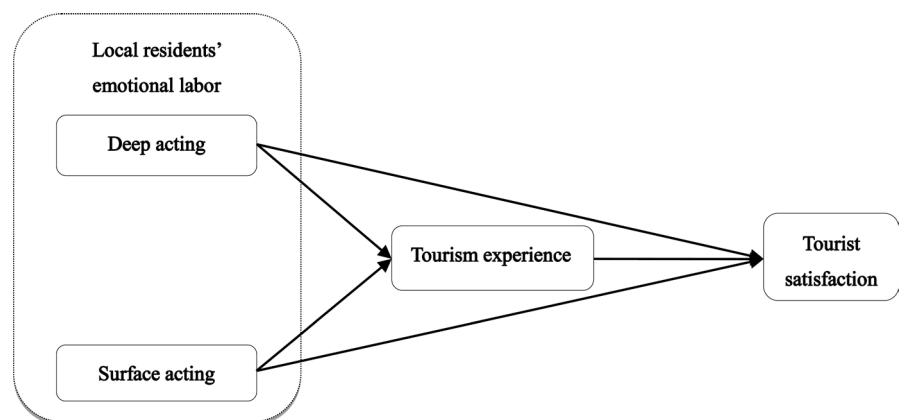


Figure 1. Conceptual model framework.

Difficult items were modified to be easily understood.

Formal research data was collected on May 2019 from the tourists who come to Yantai to visit. We used on-site questionnaire distribution method in order to do necessary explanation to tourists and avoid invalidity. During the survey process, in order to avoid group cognitive assessment, we only chose 1 to 3 people from one tourism party. 200 questionnaires were contributed and 187 were collected (93.5 valid response rate). After getting rid of 21 invalid questionnaires, we finally received 166 valid ones (83% valid rate). **Table 1** lists the basic information of the sample. Among the respondents, 46.4% are males and 53.6% are females, 77.7% aren't locals, 75.9% is the first time to come, the age and income distribution is well which means the data is general. It is well in line with characteristics of the target population to be investigated in this study. The questionnaire is listed in **Appendix A**.

3.2. Variables

3.2.1. Emotional Labor

We measured surface acting using Groth's (2009) three-item scale [4] and deep acting using Brotheridge & Lee's (2003) [18] three-item scale. Tourists were asked to evaluate the frequency of local residents' emotional labor strategies on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree). The Cronbach's alphas for surface acting and deep acting were 0.648 and 0.76, respectively (**Table 2**).

3.2.2. Tourism Experience & Tourists' Satisfaction

We used five-item scale to measure tourism experience [19]. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.87. Tourists' satisfaction used two typical items to measure. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.98. 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree) is used for the tourism experience & tourists' satisfaction. All study items are listed in **Appendix A**.

3.2.3. Control Variables

In the study, we controlled gender, age, local or not, income and first time to

Table 1. Basic info. of tourists.

Variable		Amount	(%)	Variable		Amount	(%)
Gender	Male	77	46.4	First time			
	Female	89	53.6	Yes	126	75.9	
Locals	Yes	37	22.3	No	40	24.1	
	No	129	77.7	Income			
Age	18 - 25	32	19.3	≤2000	27	15.41	
	26 - 35	37	22.3	2001 - 3500	49	38.72	
	36 - 45	49	29.5	3501 - 5000	55	29.7	
	46 - 55	23	13.9	Above 5000	35	21.1	
	Above 55	25	15.1				

Table 2. Items' reliability and validity test result.

Variable	Item	Factor loading	α	AVE	CR
SA	sa1	0.779	0.648	0.588	0.81
	sa2	0.749			
	sa3	0.772			
DA	da1	0.813	0.76	0.677	0.863
	da2	0.823			
	da3	0.832			
EL			0.572	0.632	0.912
TE	te1	0.826	0.87	0.576	0.872
	te2	0.788			
	te3	0.769			
	te4	0.801			
	te5	0.869			
SD	sd1	0.99	0.979	0.95	0.975
	sd2	0.99			

Note: SA-surface acting; DA-deep acting; EL-emotional labor; TE-tourism experience; SD-satisfaction.

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis.

Fit index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI
Standard	(<3.000)	(<0.080)	(>0.900)	(>0.900)	(>0.900)	(>0.900)
Value	1.003	0.003	0.96	0.939	1.000	1.000

come or not, since they can influence tourist experience.

3.3. Data Analysis

To test H1 to H4, we used SPSS21.0 and AMOS program. After exploratory factor analysis, we used confirmatory factor analysis.

3.3.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To investigate the convergent and discriminant validity of the variables, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS and examined the fit indices of the hypothesized 4-factor model (*i.e.*, deep acting, surface acting, tourism experience and tourists satisfaction). The CFA results (**Table 3**) show that the hypothesized 4-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2/df = 1.003$, NFI = 0.96, RFI = 0.94, TLI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.003). The composite reliability (CR) of each construct ranged from 0.81 to 0.98; the square root of AVE of each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs which indicates good convergent validity as well as discriminant validity of the scales.

3.3.2. Correlation Analysis

The correlation between emotional labor and satisfaction is listed in **Table 4**. It

indicates that deep acting, tourism experience and satisfaction are correlated.

4. Test of Hypotheses

4.1. Test of Relevance between Emotional Labor and Satisfaction

We used maximum likelihood method to calculate the path coefficient. The result is listed in **Figure 2**. ($\chi^2 = 11.87$, $df = 18$, $\chi^2/df = 0.66$, CFI = 1.00, PNFI = 0.49, RMSEA = 0.00). As is listed in **Figure 2**, the path coefficient from surface acting to satisfaction is -0.05 ($p = 0.363$, non-significant), which means H1 is not supported. The path coefficient from deep acting to satisfaction is 0.93 ($p < 0.001$, significant), which means H2 is supported.

4.2. Test of Mediating Effect

Bootstrapping method is used to test the mediating effect [20]. After sampling 2000 times using AMOS and calculating by maximum likelihood method, the total and direct effects of variables are as listed in **Table 5**. The path model is showed in **Figure 3**. ($\chi^2 = 60.028$, $df = 60$, $\chi^2/df = 1.000$, CFI = 1.000, PNFI = 0.738, RMSEA = 0.002). We can conclude from **Table 5**, tourism experience's mediating effect between surface acting and satisfaction is not significant, so H3 is not supported. As deep acting plays significant effect on tourism experience

Table 4. Correlations among variables.

	SA	DA	TE	SD
SA	0.767			
DA	0.004	0.823		
TE	-0.003	0.788**	0.899	
SD	-0.038	0.799**	0.898**	0.975

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Boldface letter is square root of AVE.

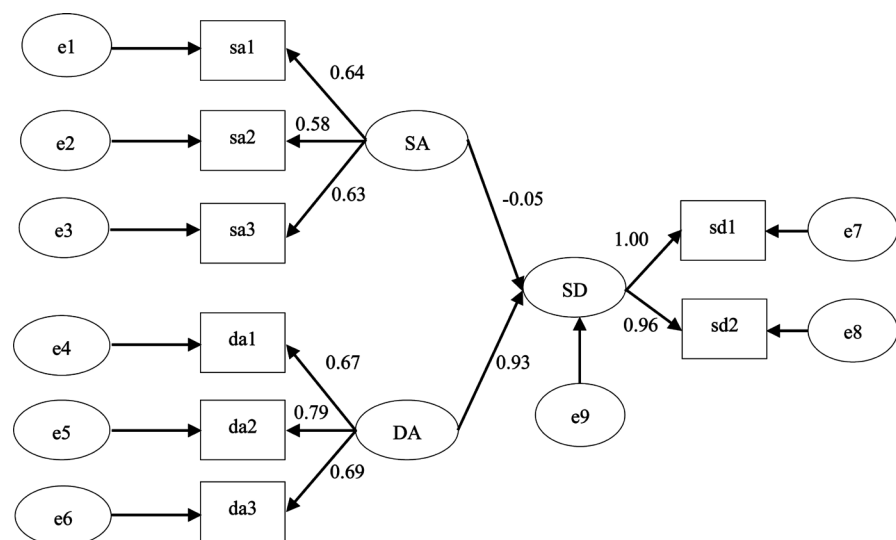
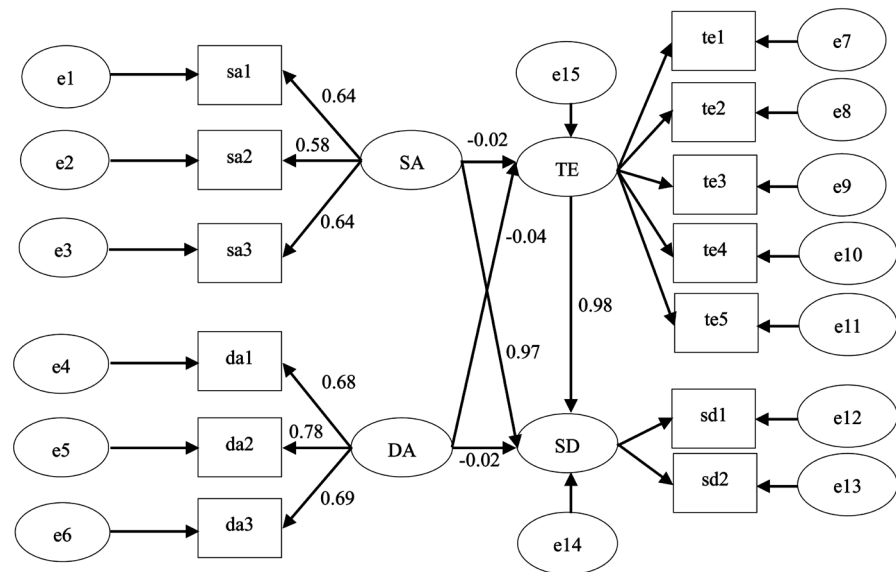


Figure 2. The path diagram from emotional labor to satisfaction.

Table 5. Total and direct effect between variables.

	Variable	SA	DA	TE
Total effect	TE	0.692	0.000***	
	SD	0.297	0.001**	0.017*
Direct effect	TE	0.692	0.000***	
	SD	0.477	0.913	0.017*

**Figure 3.** Mediating effect path diagram.**Table 6.** Results of hypotheses test.

Hypotheses	Test result
H1: Local residents' SA negatively influence SD	No
H2: Local residents' DA positively influence SD	Yes
H3: Tourism experience plays mediating effect between SA and SD	No
H4: Tourism experience plays mediating effect between DA and SD	Yes

and tourism experience plays significant effect on satisfaction, we controlled tourism experience to test deep acting's effect on satisfaction. The result is significant ($p < 0.001$), so H4 is supported. According to the above data analysis, whether the hypotheses have been tested is listed in **Table 6**.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This paper studies two aspects. One is the relationship between local residents' emotional labor strategy and tourists' satisfaction. The other is the mediating effect of tourism experience. First of all, we analyze the research results from abroad and domestic. Secondly, we use the tourists who visit Yantai as investigation sample. Thirdly, we use SPSS and AMOS to process the data. Useful results have been got. They are as below:

5.1. Residents' Deep Acting Strategy Positively Influences Tourists' Satisfaction

The current study tests the relationship of residents' two emotional labor strategies and tourists' satisfaction. Results show that residents' deep acting strategy positively influences tourists' experience and satisfaction. This shows local residents' attitudes and action influence tourists' perception. It reminds local government and tourism corporations considering related policy comprehensively.

Recent years, the effect of employees' emotional labor on customer satisfaction has been studied. In tourism context, local residents are the important "inner employee". Their emotional labor influences tourists' emotional experience. This is an important factor affecting tourists' appraisal about tourism destination. Sometimes, it might play a decisive role in tourists' revisit.

5.2. Surface Acting's Negative Effect on Tourists' Satisfaction Is Not Significant

The SEM testing results show, surface acting's negative effect on tourist satisfaction is not significant. The possible reason is that in the interpersonal interaction, part of the tourists' emotion is insensitive, thus reducing surface acting's negative influence on satisfaction. This is possibly related to gender difference because male's emotion sensitivity is lower than female's commonly. These findings are consistent with the nature of various emotional labor strategies. By nature, surface acting can be seen as a behavioral coping strategy in response to work demands on an individual's emotional management, because it only requires people to fake or "paint on" affective displays without shaping their inner feelings [21] [22].

5.3. Tourism Experience Plays a Mediating Role in the Relationship between Residents' Deep Acting Strategy and Tourists' Satisfaction

It is tested by the study that the tourism experience plays a mediating role in the relationship between residents' deep acting strategy and tourists' satisfaction. This indicates the importance of tourism experience. Local residents represent local culture and customs. As the development of experience economy, their performance plays an important role on tourists' satisfaction. If this is not paid attention to, it might influence local tourism brand image.

5.4. Practical Implications

Yantai is a big tourism destination. The tourism income is an important resource of local GDP. By discussing the relationship between locals' emotional labor and tourists' satisfaction, this study proposed the following positive suggestions for local policymakers.

First of all, as local residents are an important stakeholder of local tourism, management bureau should recognize the important role that residents play and take some measurements. According to social exchange theory, only when

people's economy and spiritual demand is satisfied, they will join in the local tourism. So, related policy should be set to encourage residents to learn more emotional display skill, in which, gentle expression is important to satisfy tourist. Meanwhile, benefit-sharing mechanism should be introduced. Some proportions of tourism income should be distributed to local residents. Corporations should try their best to provide local residents more work opportunity. Necessary training should be done in order to make residents realize that the local economy is related to individual interest.

Second, experiential tourism is a growing trend throughout the world and plays an important role on tourist satisfaction. There are new groups of tourists looking for unique experiences and local activities, eager to visit renovated urban historical centers with a developed experiential leisure offer. Corporations should create more experience process to satisfy tourists, for example, wine taste and grape planting experience, museum tourism, cultural experience and happy farmhouse tourism, etc. Memorable tourism experience could bring revisit and positive word of mouth, which will promote local tourism image and economy development.

5.5. Limitations and Future Research

Although we have made every attempt to ensure the validity of the research findings, some limitations should be acknowledged.

First, although our data provides a relatively conservative estimate of the hypothesized relationships, most of our findings are statistically significant and consistent with our expectations. Future researchers could collect a more diversified sample that intentionally includes both satisfied and dissatisfied tourists to see if our findings can be generalized to the latter.

Second, the survey is only conducted in Yantai. So the generalization for other regions needs to be tested. Future study may choose other cities to do more survey and test the generalization.

Finally, we only studied the influence of emotion factor on tourists' satisfaction. Future study could focus on the factors that influence residents' emotional labor. Different tourism destination life cycle could influence residents' attitude, so a longitudinal research design was called for.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix A. Items of the Study

Constructs and source of items	Items used in study
Surface acting (three items; Groth, 2009)	Local residents just pretend to have the emotions tourists needed to display. Local residents fake a good mood.
Deep acting (three items; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002)	Local residents put on a “show” or “performance”. Local residents try to actually experience the emotions they must show to tourists. Local residents make an effort to actually feel the emotions that they need to display towards tourists. Local residents work hard to feel the emotions that they need to show to tourists.
Tourism experience (five items; Wei & Pan, 2012)	Local residents are friendly and warm. Local residents are willing to answer questions. Local residents sell fruit at a reasonable price. I feel relaxed when walking in the street. I feel the local people are simple and honest.
Satisfaction	I’m happy with this journey. The reality fit in my expectation.