

EMOTIONS AS TOOLS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CONSUMERS' USE OF EMOTIONS IN SERVICE CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, the role of emotions in service settings has been the focus of many studies in the business literature (Ashforth and Humpfrey, 1993; Wharton and Erickson, 1993, Parkinson, 1991). Nevertheless, most of the studies in this area focused on the management of emotions in the workplace (Morris, Feldman, 1997, Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987, 1989) and only considered the consumer as a receiver, reacting to emotions displayed by the provider, which in fact represents only one way of the potential display of emotions.

Indeed, only few researchers have been interested in the potential ability of consumer to display emotions to the provider in order to obtain specific responses (Dubé and Menon, 1997, 1998; Taylor, 1994; Parkinson, 1995). In fact, and to a certain extent, the consumer may act as the provider does, displaying specific emotions.

Based on the extensive management literature about "Emotional Labor" (Hochschild, 1983) on the provider side and by introducing concepts from satisfaction and psychology literature, this paper investigates to what extent consumers are using emotions in the service context. It analyses the potential outcomes for the consumer, particularly in terms of satisfaction, if he was about to use emotions in this context. It also proposes a conceptual framework describing the process of the use of emotions by the consumer in a service context. The development of this framework provides interesting avenues for future research. Indeed, the conceptualization suggests the introduction of a twofold satisfaction for the consumer (self satisfaction and service satisfaction), the dual nature of emotions potentially displayed by the consumer (genuine versus managed emotions) in the service setting and finally the potential role played by outcomes (satisfaction) in building the following emotional experiences of the consumer. These findings can have important impacts on the way consumers will be perceived in a service setting and why practitioners and researchers should be concerned with the emotional processes involved during a service encounter.

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