

EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED SERVICE PROVIDER SINCERITY ON CONSUMERS' EMOTIONAL STATE AND SATISFACTION DURING SERVICE CONSUMPTION

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A holistic approach to satisfaction and its effects seems to be particularly important in high-affect, high-involvement, and extended duration services such as those offered by many travel and tourism providers. This means understanding the complexities of service provision and its processes. Consumers value service interaction that appears sincere. For this reason, organizations expect service providers to manage their service “performance” to reflect a genuine display of positive emotions towards the customer, which has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and possibly overall life satisfaction. This study explores consumers’ perception of sincerity and tests its effects on positive emotions and satisfaction in an extended duration service. The findings indicate that perceived service sincerity positively influences consumers’ emotions during a service and has important direct and indirect effects on life satisfaction, service satisfaction, and intention to repurchase. Implications for managers and opportunities for further research are discussed.

Key words: Service providers; Sincerity; Consumers; Emotions; Satisfaction

Introduction

There is extensive research in the tourism literature that focuses on authenticity as an assessment of genuineness of artifacts, events, or behavioral displays as offered to and experienced by tourists. The relevance of the existential nature of authenticity in tourism receives less attention possibly because the concept is somewhat unclear (Steiner &

Reisinger, 2006). However, the role of authenticity in general interactive service provision has been explored in a number of studies, some of which are in the travel and tourism industry (Arnould & Price, 1993; Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Lynch, 1993; Wang, 1999).

Genuine, sincere, or authentic expression of emotions and effort in service provision is widely considered an important element of consumer’s

service evaluation (Bitner et al., 1990; Grayson, 1998; Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Mohr & Bitner, 1995). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argue that “service providers comply with expression norms or ‘display rules’ through surface acting, deep acting, and the expression of spontaneous and genuine emotion” (p. 89). These displays are manufactured to comply with rules of appropriate behavior and expression in certain situations (Hochschild, 1983). Research suggests that happy expressions, perceived to be sincere, elicit a more heuristic processing style than serious expressions and induce trust and acceptance whereas expressions that are more somber call for further cognition or evaluation (Krull & Dill, 1998; Ottati, Terkildsen, & Hubbard, 1997). From the service provider’s perspective, management of emotional displays is an imperative and so is the requirement that these displays appear to be *authentic*, *genuine*, or *sincere*. Indeed, firms may insist that expressed sincerity is inherent in service provision (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Furthermore, customers do express a preference for receiving a “sincere” display from service providers (Arnould & Price, 1993; Bitner et al., 1990; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Lynch, 1993). The evidence suggests the concept of sincere and genuine behavior has an appeal for consumers (Bitner et al., 1990; Dubinsky, 1994; Lynch, 1993; Price, Arnould, & Tierney, 1999). Research indicates that sincere displays are desirable and conducive to heightened consumer enjoyment in certain tourism situations (Arnould & Price, 1993). Of particular interest is the extent to which the consumer believes that she/he has witnessed a “sincere” effort and what (if any) impact this has on their evaluation of the service itself. Hochschild (1983) showed that airline passengers do indeed use the concept of at least a “sincere” effort in their service evaluation and this increases customer satisfaction.

Context is likely to make a difference, as certain situations, such as a service provider receiving a complaint, call for serious attention to be displayed rather than more lighthearted smiles. However, the key is that whatever the emotion being displayed it should be appropriate for the situation and perceived as sincere by the recipient. Customers want service providers to react to their displayed emo-

tional state, believing that they are unique, which calls for a unique, discrete (unscripted) response that is perceived as sincere (Price et al., 1999). If the display appears fake, a negative impression of the service “performer” may be elicited (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005). As previously mentioned, happy expressions perceived as sincere result in heuristic processing of information whereas displays that are more serious result in more cognitive processing (Krull & Dill, 1998; Ottati et al., 1997). Therefore, a genuine display of emotions may moderate the relationship between displayed emotion and service quality perceptions (Pugh, 2001). If this is so, then perceived sincerity may have a value in terms of overall satisfaction and intention to repurchase, which connect to positive evaluation of service quality. Closer consideration of sincerity and its role in service provision should not be ignored in satisfaction research, as marketers need to understand the impact of both perceived sincerity and perceived insincerity.

In the management and marketing literature, the words authenticity and sincerity are often used interchangeably. Yet, Trilling (1972) distinguishes sincerity and authenticity somewhat differently, the first being more associated with social interaction and the second with private life. This separation may be conceptualized as interpersonal and intrapersonal authenticity (Wang, 1999). The appearance of authenticity is often related to social facilitation and as far as service transactions are concerned, Goffman (1959) believes that the way in which a consumer is treated in a transaction has an impact on his or her sense of place and belonging in society. This indicates that authenticity has deeper implications than satisfaction alone. Authenticity is deeper than a behavioral display that is perceived by others and is transient in nature (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The need for interpersonal authenticity demonstrates a deeper human need that may be met through engagement in tourism activities, which can offer the consumer relief and escape from the pressures of social and status inauthenticity in everyday life (Wang, 1999).

Cultural values may influence the appearance of authenticity, such as power positioning, which social class and gender status within a particular culture frequently mediate. Thus, perceived sincerity

or authentic display is open to personal interpretation, which may be guided by individual and socially bound perspectives (Wang, 1999). For example, Leidner (1993) refers to American women finding the work done by Japanese geishas to be "reprehensible" because it involves the insincere flattering of male clients. Apparently, the geishas found this attitude surprising as to the Japanese there are two concepts that relate to this problem: *honne* and *tatemae*, which are the truly felt and the socially required expression of feeling. The Japanese do not consider facades insincere but simply a way of easing a situation (Leidner, 1993). Customers are not in a position to know whether service providers are being truly authentic or not in any given transaction, as the assessment of authenticity is a matter of the perception held by the consumer about the genuineness of the provider's emotion display. The extant body of literature focuses on detecting genuine smiles but does not address, in detail, other indicators of authentic behavior during service provision. This article explores the way in which consumers perceive service provider sincerity as a response to service providers' performance during service provision and its effect on customer satisfaction, life satisfaction and intention to repurchase.

Emotions and Perceived Service Sincerity

Past studies indicate that sincerity should be explored as a broader concept, which embraces the whole performance. This may include the expressions and personal attributes of the provider, and the functional aspects of the actual task delivery (Grandey, Mattila, Fisk, & Sideman, 2002). The role of emotions in consumers' product evaluation is an important area of service research (Bagozzi, 2000; Oliver, 1997; Price, Arnould, & Diebler, 1995). However, each consumer's emotional state is rather complex, and may be contingent upon a wider range of factors, including the duration of the service, the individual's personality, their involvement with the product/service, natural preferences, and the emotional state prior to, during, and after the service encounter. Consumers' emotional states and service evaluation may be affected by stages in the transaction process (such as excessive waiting

in a check-in queue before a flight), through others' influence (e.g., word of mouth), or memory of a recent experience in the repeat cycles of transactions. Clearly, the service organization may control some of these events but not all. Understanding the complexity and dynamics of emotions in service transactions is important, as consumers' emotions influence their service consumption evaluation (Dube & Morgan, 1998; Holbrook & Gardner, 2000; Howard & Gengler, 2001). According to Fournier and Mick (1999), meaning and emotion are integral components of satisfaction. The meaning of an experience may have both cognitive and emotional connotations. Hochschild (1983) frequently refers to the intervention and influence of cognition upon the emotional state where service providers reframe their assessment of a client's behavior in order to change their perception and feeling towards them. However, Arnould and Price (1993) found that participants in a white water rafting vacation resisted cognitive recall as they felt the magic was "best preserved if associated feelings and sensations are not examined too closely."

Research indicates that in evaluating their satisfaction, consumers look beyond the discrete consumption experience and consider the effects on their overall quality of life (Dagger & Sweeney, 2006). Certain experiences, especially those related to leisure, may be a component of quality of life as well as satisfaction with the particular consumption experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999). The model developed by Neal et al. (1999) measures if leisure satisfaction "captures the leisure experience across a variety of situations over a period of time" (p. 154), which includes macrodimensions and measures as well as the microdimensions, and considers that leisure is a component of life satisfaction. This being the case, many leisure activities, which for some include any act of consumption, may be said to be an intrinsic part of the overall perception of life satisfaction or quality of life. This is based on the basic premise that "life satisfaction is functionally related to satisfaction with all of life's domains and sub-domains" (Neal et al., 1999, p. 154). Satisfaction occurs at different levels and all domains contribute towards overall satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Dube & Menon, 2000; Schwarz, 1990). The pro-

cess of satisfaction is a dynamic interaction between all of the variables that constitute the total service product; in some cases, the expressive or affectively derived elements of service may be more important than the instrumental (Neal et al., 1999). Additionally, there is a clear relationship between satisfaction and future purchase intentions (Oliver, 1997; Williams & Visser, 2002).

In summary, the perception of sincerity is one aspect of many within the consumers' consideration set of satisfaction judgments. Clearly, it would be excessive to suggest that sincerity is any more than an enhancer to a service already deemed to be satisfactory (Grandey et al., 2005). Logically, perceived sincerity reinforces a positive service evaluation. Therefore, sincerity should be part of a holistic approach to satisfaction measurement that includes all salient aspects of service. Bitner et al. (1990) found that consumer service evaluations based on the "Gestalt" or holistic approach included comments such as "a sincere and professional team effort" and frequently referred to displays of empathy or genuine understanding. Additionally, the benefit of sincerity or authenticity for the service employee is apparent; research has shown that positively perceived displays in service providers results in higher rewards or "tips" (Pugh 2001; Tsai 2001; Tsai & Huang 2002).

As previously mentioned, authenticity is discussed in the tourism literature in two ways: in relation to artifacts and events and as a human quality, which is extremely important in services, relating to tourism and leisure. In such contexts, customers are looking for meaningful interactions that allow a sense of freedom and escape from the imposed constraints of everyday life (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). Customers are unable to know whether a service provider's emotional display is authentic or not; however, the individual's perception of sincerity or insincerity affects their own emotional state and evaluation of satisfaction and intention to repurchase, particularly in extended duration services (Collishaw, Dyer, & Boies, 2008; Price et al., 1999; Pugh, 2001). Therefore, perceived sincerity has an important role in the delivery of tourism services and a practical, measurable understanding of how it relates to displayed emotions, satisfaction, and intention to repurchase is extremely useful.

Based on the literature, the hypotheses are as follows (see Fig. 1):

- H1:** Perceived sincerity has a positive association with a) positive emotions during the service, b) life satisfaction, c) overall service satisfaction, d) intention to repurchase.
- H2:** Positive emotions have a positive relationship with a) life satisfaction, b) overall service satisfaction, c) intention to repurchase.
- H3:** Service satisfaction is positively associated with a) life satisfaction, b) with intention to repurchase.

Measuring Perceived Sincerity

A literature search revealed no scale for specifically measuring perceived service sincerity. Sincerity has been included as one of five dimensions of brand personality (Aaker, 1997), comprising the following components: Down to earth, Honest, Wholesome, and Cheerful. The four components proposed by Aaker (1997) constitute a positive mix of complementary characteristics expressing authenticity or sincerity. The purpose of the components is to describe part of brand personality, and as such they do not necessarily indicate specific behaviors that may be associated with each of the components but do provide a useful guide to possible characteristics that may constitute a perception of sincerity.

Although, there is no scale or measure specifically for perceived sincerity in service provision; however, other researchers have tested the role of sincerity in different contexts. Grandey et al.'s (2002) work is primarily concerned with the question "is that smile for real?" and is undoubtedly important. In assessing the importance of authenticity in service settings, Grandey et al. (2002) conducted experimental research to test whether a service employee with a fake smile will be perceived as less friendly than an employee with a genuine smile; whether a service encounter where the provider is authentically positive will elicit greater satisfaction than where the provider fakes a positive display; and whether the effect of authenticity on customer satisfaction depends on the context of the service situation. Grandey et al.'s findings indicate that authenticity is important as it positively relates to the impression of friendliness formed about the server

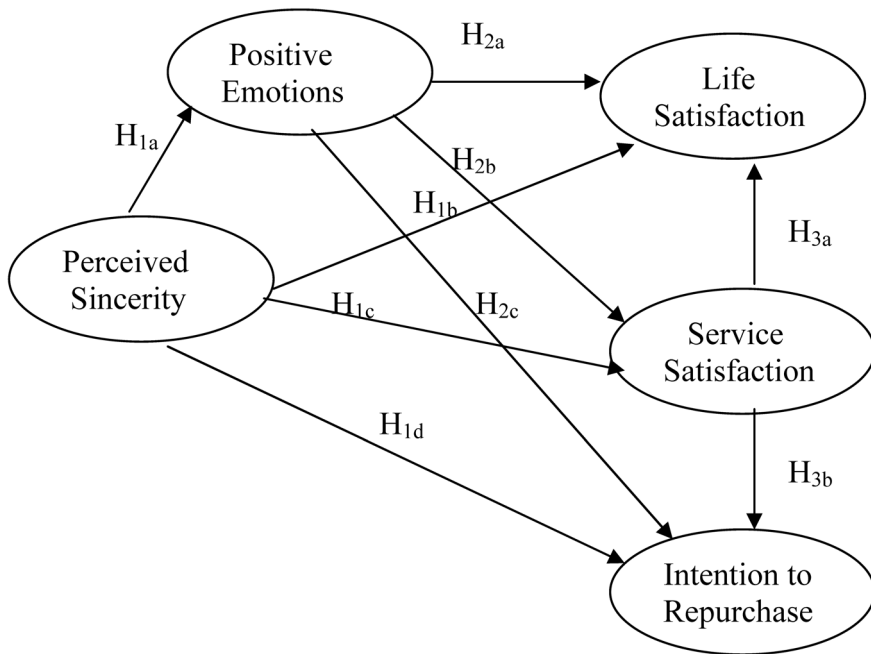


Figure 1. The proposed model.

and relates to satisfaction with the service experience, which is greater than when the performance is perceived as fake. Furthermore, the context of the service provision and whether tasks are performed poorly or well affects the impact of authenticity. The findings suggest that consumers adjust expectations of provider authenticity according to the busyness of the service outlet and through the duration of a service, which adds to the complexity of the service interaction.

Genuine smiles are often mentioned in the collection of witness statements where the perception of sincerity is especially important. Witnesses determine the display of sincere smiles by looking for “real” smiles, “embarrassed” smiles, and “false” smiles. Evaluation of the quality of the sender’s smile in witness statements combines with eye contact, and the impression of manipulated facial expression (Biland, Py, & Rimboud, 2000). The display of sincere emotions is very important in building trust, as shown in witness statements about crime (Biland et al., 2000; Kaufmann, Drevland, Wessel, Overskeid, & Magnussen, 2003). The expressive, personal, and functional attributes that lead to the perception of service sincerity are likely

to include the when, what, where, why, and how things are done (Kaufman et al., 2003).

Research Method

Firstly, we conducted the literature review of the relevant concepts, which contributed to the mapping out of the conceptual options. The literature review aided formulation of what each construct actually is and how to conceptualize it in the airline services context. Secondly, the qualitative exploratory research—depth interviews and focus groups comprising airline passengers (eight focus groups, $N = 110$) and discussion with students and fellow academics about the nature of perceived service sincerity—helped to clarify the constructs’ psychometric properties.

Measures

Perceived Service Sincerity. As no scale for perceived service sincerity was found in the marketing and wider psychology literature, a scale to measure perceived sincerity was developed through the exploratory research stage and reviewing the literature concerned primarily with lying, deception (the

opposite of sincere or genuine behavior), and credibility found in the criminology and psychology literature. The criteria commonly used by individuals for qualitatively assessing sincerity and credibility, or lying and deception are a mixture of: body language, degree of perceived unease, sincere smiles, voice tone, semantics, and facial expressions such as happiness that indicate little or no psychological (cognitive and/or emotional) dissonance. The indicators of sincerity used in this research are shown below and combine the aforementioned salient characteristics of authentic behavior that are highlighted in the literature (Biland et al., 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Lemmink & Mattsson, 2002; Price et al., 1995; Raffaelli & Sutton, 1987) and are hypothesized to represent the construct ($\alpha = 0.92$).

- The staff seem happy.
- Air ***'s crew members show sincere willingness to help the passengers.
- The crew members give real, friendly smiles.
- The crew members show genuine care for the passengers.
- The crew members look directly at you when talking to you.
- The crew members seem to vary their responses to suit individuals' needs.
- The crew members used appropriate verbal expressions.
- The crew members seem confident.

Emotions. Plutchik's (1962) emotions scale has been used to measure emotions. This scale was chosen as it reflects adjectives, relating to positive emotions, during the service, that were used by the focus group participants (i.e., trust and happiness) ($\alpha = 0.75$).

- During this flight I have felt: a) happy, b) trusting.

Satisfaction With Life. Five items were adapted from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1984), as shown below ($\alpha = 0.87$).

- In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- The conditions of my life are excellent.
- I am satisfied with my life.

- If I could live my life again, I would change almost nothing.
- I have most of the things I want in life.

Service Satisfaction and Intention to Repurchase. The consumers' assessment of emotions, perceived service sincerity, and life satisfaction are measured through the items discussed previously. Service satisfaction and intention to repurchase are included as overarching discrete assessments.

- Overall I am satisfied with this flight.
- Intention to repurchase
- I am likely to choose Air *** again.

Data Collection

A national airline agreed to cooperate with the study. Airline staff administered the survey on flights to the airline's major domestic and international destinations. The sampling method is probability sampling. Three thousand questionnaires were distributed over a 3-week period on a range of international and domestic flights by the flight attendants during the last hour of the flight to passengers in seat numbers previously randomly selected by the airline's operations department. The participants were asked to rate their responses to the questions on a 10-point Likert scale. An explanatory letter about the academic purpose of the questionnaire assured the participants that questionnaire completion was voluntary and anonymous, and a blank envelope in which to place the questionnaire and seal to ensure anonymity. The sealed envelopes were collected by the flight supervisor and returned to the operations department. Of the 3,000 questionnaires distributed, 1,232 were returned, which represents a return rate of 41%. Seventy-two of these questionnaires were deemed unusable due to being incomplete. This left 1,160 useable questionnaires reducing the successful response rate to 39%, which is still well above the average response rate for this industry.

Findings

Following Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002), Exploratory Factor Analysis using Varimax rotation examined the Perceived Service Sincerity scale's properties, as it is new and untested. The result in-

Table 1
Exploratory Factor Analysis for Perceived Service Sincerity

The crew members seem happy	0.785
The crew shows sincere willingness to help you	0.867
The crew give real, friendly smiles	0.851
The crew show genuine care for the passengers	0.888
The crew members look directly at you when talking to you	0.777
The crew members seem to vary their responses to suit individuals' needs	0.696
The crew members use appropriate verbal expressions	0.794
The crew members seem confident	0.834
Eigenvalue	5.29
Variance extracted	66.16%

indicates that the Sincerity items form one factor (see Table 1). This was then tested as a structural model. The individual parameter estimates range from 0.62 to 0.90 and the fit indices are as follows: $\chi^2(17) = 72.659$, $cmin/df = 4.274$, $NFI = 0.98$, $TLI = 0.97$, $CFI = 0.98$, and $RMSEA = 0.07$, indicating an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Next, the relationships between perceived sincerity, positive emotions, satisfaction, and intention to repurchase were tested as shown in the conceptual model. The descriptive statistics and correlations for the model are shown in Table 2. Then, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, using structural equation modeling, was used to test the relationships between the variables (see Fig. 2). The results indicate an acceptable fit: $\chi^2(108) = 402.865$, $cmin/df = 3.730$, $NFI = 0.97$, $TLI = 0.97$, $CFI = 0.98$, and $RMSEA = 0.05$. The model estimates are shown in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2 and Table 3, the findings suggest that all but three (H1b, H2c, H3a) of the hypotheses may be accepted. The relationships predicted by the remaining hypotheses are significant. Perceived service sincerity has a positive relation-

ship with positive emotions (0.69**), service satisfaction (0.75**), and intention to repurchase (0.29**). Positive emotions have a positive relationship with life satisfaction (0.44**) and service satisfaction (0.21**) but not with intention to repurchase. Service satisfaction has a positive relationship with intention to repurchase (0.68**). The findings indicate no significant direct relationship between service satisfaction and life satisfaction (H3a) or any direct significant relationship between perceived sincerity and life satisfaction (H1b). However, further examination indicates that perceived sincerity moderates the relationship between service satisfaction and life satisfaction. When perceived sincerity is low (i.e., 1 SD below the mean), there is no relationship between service satisfaction and satisfaction with life ($\beta = 0.030$, $p = 0.448$). When perceived sincerity is at the mean there is a significant positive relation between service satisfaction and satisfaction with life ($\beta = 0.085$, $p < 0.05$). When perceived sincerity is high there is a significant, positive relationship between service satisfaction and satisfaction with life ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion, Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

The study's findings contribute to the literature on service sincerity by introducing a measure of the construct and testing its relationship with emotions, satisfaction, and intention to repurchase. Much of the existing literature concerned with authenticity and sincerity in service provision focuses mostly on the perception and measurement of genuine smiles (Grandey et al., 2002). Clearly, in service contexts, a positive, smiling disposition is often part of the job and not always a true reflection of the service provider's mood state (Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Sincerity	8.23	1.23	1				
2. Positive emotions	7.90	1.58	0.405**	1			
3. Life Satisfaction	7.91	1.48	0.312**	0.337**	1		
4. Overall satisfaction	8.22	1.44	0.649**	0.331**	0.214**	1	
5. Intention to repurchase	8.63	1.70	0.557**	0.309**	0.161**	0.703**	1

Significant at 0.01 level.

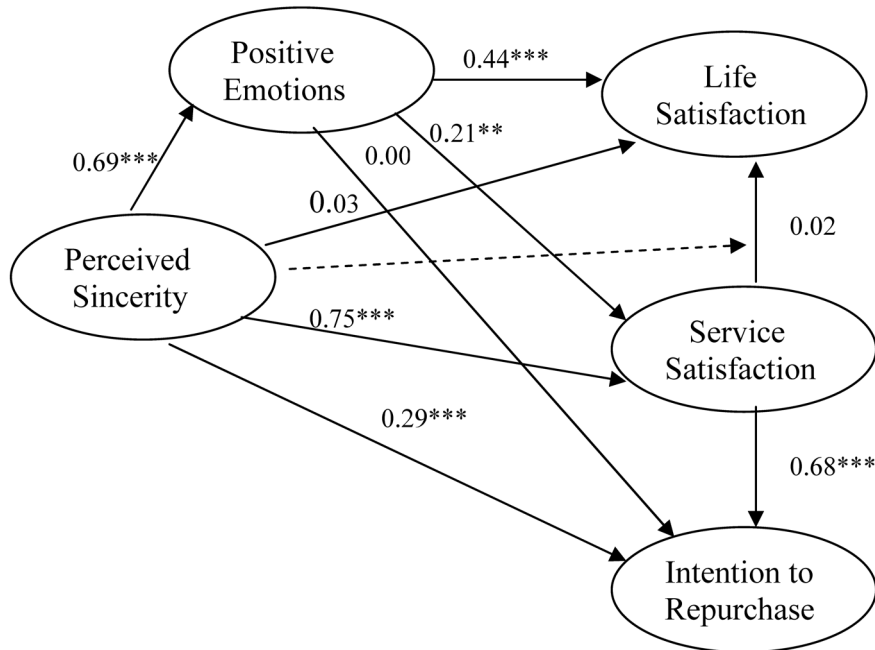


Figure 2. The proposed model estimates.

& Sutton, 1987). Customers understand this and appreciate the semblance of a sincere effort, which positively influences their satisfaction (Hochschild, 1983). While genuine smiles are undoubtedly important in the perception of sincerity, they may not be the only indicator in many contexts (Biland et

al., 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993; Lemink & Mattsson, 2002; Price et al., 1995; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Certain situations may require more serious, somber expressions as part of a sincere acknowledgement of the other's feelings and emotions. The extent to which a simple service contributes towards satisfaction with life may be very limited. However, the need for sincerity is an innate part of being human (Aaker, 1997; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). This implies that the need for sincerity is a fundamental rather than a superfluous benefit. If this is so, then the presence or absence of sincerity is likely to have incremental implications for life satisfaction as well as consumer satisfaction, particularly in high-involvement, high-affect, extended duration services (Neal et al., 1999; Price et al., 1999). From the service provider's and management perspective it is necessary to understand the components of sincere service display in order to manufacture its appearance (Collishaw et al., 2008). Therefore, greater understanding of the indicators of perceived sincerity is useful in service provision, particularly since this relates to other service characteristics and evaluation. Overall, the findings suggest that the link between perceived

Table 3
Summary of Results

Hypothesis	R ²	Sig.
H1: Perceived sincerity has a positive association with:		
a) Positive emotions during the service	0.69	$p < 0.01$
b) Life satisfaction	0.03	$p = 0.483$
c) Overall service satisfaction	0.75	$p < 0.01$
d) Intention to repurchase	0.29	$p < 0.01$
H2: Positive emotions have a (direct) positive relationship with:		
a) Life satisfaction	0.44	$p < 0.01$
b) Overall service satisfaction	0.21	$p < 0.05$
c) Intention to repurchase	0.00	$p = 0.958$
H3: Service satisfaction is positively associated with:		
a) Life satisfaction (direct)	0.02	$p = 0.452$
b) With intention to repurchase	0.68	$p < 0.01$

service sincerity and positive emotions is crucial to increased service satisfaction and a feeling of well-being associated with life satisfaction. The constructs also have an effect on intention to repurchase.

Managerial Implications

The implications of the findings for organizations and managers are substantial, particularly when one considers the many and far-reaching consequences of perceived insincerity in service delivery on both frontline staff and customers. The managerial implications relate to the scripting of services, staff selection, and training. For example, the pressure to follow scripts and even fake emotions can lead to emotional burnout and, in extreme cases, even to employee depression (Erickson & Wharton, 1997). Perhaps the relative overemphasis on service “quality” has resulted in problems between service providers and consumers such as overly standardized scripts and false smiles (Lynch, 1993). The development of service scripts is the service providers’ common response to introducing a measurable quality in service delivery, yet the very nature of a script implies that genuine or sincere behavior is obliterated. However, it seems that sincerity or authenticity of service provision is being questioned more frequently (Dubinsky, 1994; Grandey et al., 2002; Lynch, 1993). Such questions may be a reflection of consumers’ ever-changing needs and demands and/or part of the marketers’ search for ways to refine, improve, and differentiate their service products. In asking, “Are those happy smiles of good service cracking up?” Lynch (1993) discusses whether the quest for Total Quality Management (TQM) has produced a “monster of pseudo care,” which uses the “right” words but lacks a “humane attribute of genuine care” (p. 379). The routinization of human interaction, in the form of script delivery, means that sincerity is compromised as it is surely impossible to “act” sincere even though such acting it is a common requirement of service workers. This is part of the staged performance involving impression management. Grandey (2003) refers to impression management strategies used by service providers to engender satisfaction and repeat business.

The customer’s need for belief and trust in the

service provider implies that emotions perceived insincere, consciously or unconsciously, negatively influences perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, and even intention to repurchase. Sincere displays are likely to be associated with trustworthiness, confidence (Frank, Ekman, & Friesen, 1993), ultimately customer loyalty, and positive word of mouth. Inauthentic behavior is likely to lead to reduced job satisfaction and customer orientation (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Lings, Durden, Lee, & Cadogan, 2009). This is an important consideration given that customer orientation is related to customer satisfaction (Susskind, Kacmar, & Borchgrevink, 2003).

In high-involvement, affective services of a more personal nature such as the tourism industry, perceived sincerity may be essential to trust building. Clearly, efficiency is often paramount in service provision, and in low-involvement services such as fast food, perceived sincerity may not be an essential component of the transaction to result in customer satisfaction. Therefore, training staff to understand and identify the appropriate display characteristics for any given service is essential. Selecting the right staff that is suited to service interaction with customers, and training staff to understand and recognize the signs of perceived sincerity as part of their service provision should contribute to increased customer satisfaction.

Expectations of a sincere display may also play a part in the perception of sincerity in a similar way to which expectations affect satisfaction. If one has a long-term relationship with a service provider, perhaps sincere display is an understated but key component in the formation of the relationship, which indicates empathy, understanding, and mutual benefits. In addition, the way in which sincerity is expressed may require different emphasis or quality according to the service and situation. Service situations vary in context, complexity, depth, and regularity. Some services are merely fleeting encounters between the provider and the consumer (e.g., a taxi ride), while others are based on an extended duration, high-involvement, high-affect relationship that may last for a considerable time (e.g., touring, cruising, or adventure holidays) where the interaction between the service provider and customer is likely to be an important component of service satisfaction. In the first case, the

“relationship” is more likely to be between the consumer and the service organization. For example, the consumer may use the same taxi company frequently but never have the same driver twice, in which case the company rather than the individual’s characteristics may take precedence. In extended duration services, the consumer’s relationship is with the individual with whom the contact is taking place. Therefore, managers need to understand consumers’ expectations of sincerity and manage them within the services marketing mix.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are that it is a single study in a particular service industry, the airline industry, and the research methods utilize only limited qualitative research followed by a quantitative survey. The airline industry is the focus of past studies, which have yielded important insights and expanded the body of knowledge concerning service provision (Hochschild, 1983). However, we cannot claim that every airline passenger will be affected by sincere or insincere service provision. Therefore, further testing in other contexts, particularly services of a high-involvement and extended duration nature such as holiday resort and escorted touring holidays, should be useful in offering further insights into the perception of service sincerity and its effects on customers’ evaluation.

Future Research

The question of whether perceived sincerity is taken as a given and if perceived insincerity is actually more influential in consumers’ service evaluations should be fully explored. This should also include research into the accumulative effects of insincere service experience on the consumer’s subjective well-being or perceived life satisfaction. In addition to quantitative research, experimental research such as that conducted by Grandey et al. (2002) would allow closer inspection of the indicators of sincerity. Settings such as holiday resorts would provide opportunities to test the importance of perceived sincerity in a range of simple and complex services such as room service, reception, restaurant services, leisure activities, and organized tours.

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