



# Rules of engagement: The role of emotional display rules in delivering conservation interpretation in a zoo-based tourism context



Aaron J.C. Wijeratne<sup>a,\*</sup>, Pieter A. Van Dijk<sup>a,1</sup>, Andrea Kirk-Brown<sup>a,2</sup>, Lionel Frost<sup>b,3</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Management, Monash University, Berwick, VIC 3805, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Department of Economics, Monash University, Berwick, VIC 3805, Australia

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Emotional display affects the delivery of zoo conservation outcomes.
- Zoo display rules for recreation are clearer than those for conservation.
- Tensions between recreation motivations and zoo conservation messages persist.
- We offer a framework for understanding emotional display responses to role demands.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 17 May 2013

Accepted 22 November 2013

### Keywords:

Emotional labour  
Display rules  
Interpretation  
Conservation outcomes

## ABSTRACT

The shifting strategic focus of zoos from sites of recreation and entertainment to predominantly visitor conservation education entails a change in the design and delivery of conservation interpretation strategies. As the primary conveyers of conservation messages, zoo guides are expected to display appropriate emotional expression (emotional labour) to establish a connection between the object of interpretation, the conservation message and the visitor. The emotional display responses of guides to role demands may not be consistent with zoo conservation-based objectives beyond delivering a service-based positive visitor experience. We examine organisational expectations for emotional display in directing the delivery of conservation-based visitor outcomes. Findings from 21 semi-structured interviews with managers and guides at an open-range zoo indicate that sources and types of display rules for visitor entertainment remain more clearly communicated than those related to conservation. Theoretical and managerial implications for the delivery of conservation messages are discussed.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Since the early 1990s zoos have been in a state of transformation, shifting their strategic focus from recreation and entertainment to conservation-based education (Ballantyne, Packer, Hughes, & Dierking, 2007; Patrick, Matthews, Ayers, & Tunnicliffe, 2007; WAZA, 2005) in response to changing community attitudes and values. This shift has been argued to elicit a 'crisis of identity' for zoos (Frost, 2011, p. 5) as demands of revenue raising are at times seen to conflict with conservation initiatives. While it is

not universally accepted that the foremost role of zoos (as perceived by zoo management) is conservation-based (Carr & Cohen, 2011), many zoos offer educational programmes designed to challenge and change the attitudes and behaviours of visitors (Smith, Weiler, & Ham, 2011). Zoo-based education relies heavily upon a guide's management of emotional display (emotional labour) and interpretation skills (in addition to interpretation through static and interactive signage and panels) when attempting to influence visitor behaviour, attitudes and values (Perdue, Stoinski, & Maple, 2012; Smith, Broad, & Weiler, 2008; Van Dijk, Smith, & Cooper, 2011). Research on zoo visitor-related outcomes has remained largely confined to service-based outcomes, including word-of-mouth advertising, visitor satisfaction and repeat patronage (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001; Sharpe, 2005; Van Dijk et al., 2011; Wong & Wang, 2009). No research to date has examined the impact of the shifting purpose of zoos in terms of emotional display demands (display rules) on guides during visitor interactions. In this article we argue that zoo-based positively-

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 3 99047209; fax: +61 3 99047130.

E-mail addresses: [Aaron.Wijeratne@monash.edu](mailto:Aaron.Wijeratne@monash.edu) (A.J.C. Wijeratne), [Pieter.VanDijk@monash.edu](mailto:Pieter.VanDijk@monash.edu) (P.A. Van Dijk), [Andrea.Kirk-Brown@monash.edu](mailto:Andrea.Kirk-Brown@monash.edu) (A. Kirk-Brown), [Lionel.Frost@monash.edu](mailto:Lionel.Frost@monash.edu) (L. Frost).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +61 3 99047153; fax: +61 3 99047130.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +61 3 99047094; fax: +61 3 99047130.

<sup>3</sup> Tel.: +61 3 99047068; fax: +61 3 99047130.

derived emotion management strategies, such as delivering a positive visitor experience, are associated with service-based visitor outcomes and may not be representative of the conservation-based objectives that zoos seek to meet during visitor-based interactions. We begin with an overview of emotional labour, followed by a discussion of its application to guide-mediated visitor interactions. A discussion of emotional display rules in the zoo-based context and the potential role they serve in influencing the cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes associated with conservation-based interpretation is then presented.

### 1.1. Emotional labour

To respond to the requirements associated with their roles, guides enter in to a form of communication with visitors that requires them to manage emotional display (Hochschild, 1983; Van Dijk et al., 2011). This management of emotional display is called *emotional labour* and is used by guides to display, suppress or modify felt emotions to elicit desired responses in others that facilitate organisational objectives (Fiebig & Kramer, 1998; Hochschild, 1983). Display rules determine how employees should feel when executing their roles (happiness or concern), but primarily dictate behaviours that are necessary for effective job performance (Hsieh & Guy, 2009).

Emotional labour has become an important tool in the delivery of guide-mediated interpretation. Interpretation in a zoo is an educational activity that aims to illustrate the meaning of what visitors observe and its relationships to people and the environment (Ham & Weiler, 2005). Zoo-based guides use interpretation to deliver nature-based conservation messages through a range of emotional displays as a vehicle 'to awaken human's potential ability to connect with nature and pave the way to developing or enhancing conservation ethos' (Catibog-Sinha, 2008, p. 165). In comparison with other forms of tourism-based interpretation (e.g. heritage, eco-tourism, and adventure tourism) the potential competing tensions between nature-based conservation education, positive visitor experience expectations and pecuniary imperatives are more clearly pronounced due to the multiple purposes of zoo-based activities and their long-established history as places of recreation and entertainment (Van Dijk et al., 2011; Wearing & Jobberns, 2011). Zoo interpretation extends beyond the delivery of information and experience that satisfies a visitor's expectations, to influence three broad categories of outcomes that are cognitive, affective, and behavioural in nature (Ham & Weiler, 2005; Van Dijk et al., 2011). Cognitive outcomes are focused on encouraging visitors to think more broadly about a conservation issue, improve knowledge about the plight of a species or change beliefs about long-held behaviours and their contribution to preserving a species. Affective outcomes focus on how visitors *feel* about the interpretive messages delivered. This may include visitor satisfaction, motivation to change behaviours or attitudes towards the topic of interpretation. Behavioural outcomes are the most sought after visitor outcomes as they focus on what visitor may subsequently do in response to interpretation (Orams, 1996). Though it may be important for the long-term viability of a site to satisfy visitors' hedonistic motivations and encourage a 'feel-good' factor that promotes repeat and extended patronage (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001), it is equally, if not more important from a conservation/education perspective for zoos to promote behaviour change from visitors in relation to the environmental impact of human interaction with flora and fauna (Perdue et al., 2012).

Guides act as role models for emotional expression (Sharpe, 2005), and the influence of guides' emotional display on visitors outcomes has become paramount to the strategic objectives of zoos. The guide has to convey appropriate messages to visitors by

carefully selecting verbal and non-verbal cues that identify an appropriate emotional expression that is relevant to the intended conservation outcomes (Mann, 1997; Sharpe, 2005; Van Dijk et al., 2011). This establishes an emotional connection between the visitor, the zoo, species, and the conservation-based message (Farmer & Knapp, 2008; Sharpe, 2005; Van Dijk & Kirk-Brown, 2007; Wong & Wang, 2009). For instance, guides may display a range of positive emotions, such as happiness or enthusiasm, or negative emotions, such as concern and guilt, in order to elicit desired visitor responses (Smith, Curtis, Mair, & Van Dijk, 2013; Smith, Curtis, & Van Dijk, 2010). In the context of emotional labour the organisation assumes control over how the employee displays emotions (display rules) in influencing predetermined outcomes (Cropanzano, Weiss, & Elias, 2003; Van Dijk & Kirk-Brown, 2007). Research has generally overlooked the ways in which zoos direct a guide's emotional expression in pursuit of cognitive, affective, and behavioural interpretation outcomes. This article examines where these rules are derived from and how they function in directing the emotional display (emotional labour) of the zoo-based interpretive guides engaged in delivering conservation-based messages.

### 1.2. Display rules

As extensions of social conventions (Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009), *display rules* are grounded in cultural, occupational and vocational, or situational and contextual norms relevant to workplace interactions (customers, visitors, patients) (Brotheridge & Taylor, 2006; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). These implicit and explicit norms are imposed through mechanisms such as recruitment, induction, training, organisational culture, and formal employee guidelines (Diefendorff, Erickson, Grandey, & Dahling, 2011). Although it is generally accepted that customer-service employees are required to display positive emotions when engaging with patrons (Cropanzano et al., 2003) there is no research to date that identifies templates or 'reference points' (display rules) to direct the emotional display of zoo guides when executing the varied responsibilities they have as a zoo employee. Variations in required emotional display may be influenced by the type of tour, type of presentation (conservation or appeal for donations), types of visitor (school group compared to families) and behaviour of the visitor (angry, dissatisfied or distracted) (Ap & Wong, 2001; Ham & Weiler, 2006; Lugosi & Bray, 2008; Salazar, 2005; Van Dijk, Smith, & Weiler, 2012; Wong & Wang, 2009).

Three categories of display rules have been identified in the literature, each with a different focus in relation to anticipated outcomes: integrative, masking and differentiating emotions. The display of integrative or positive emotions to engage customers and 'pull people together' is common to service-based roles (Cropanzano et al., 2003, p. 53; Wharton, 1993). A tour guide may display excitement to generate a group-level sense of expectation and cohesion. Doctors, judges and therapists place less emphasis on the expression of emotions, with such professions requiring the maintenance of a neutral expression by *masking* emotions (Cropanzano et al., 2003). In the tourism context, guides mask felt emotions by regulating facial expression in spite of visitor behaviour. One example drawn from the study by Van Dijk and Kirk-Brown (2007) is the presentation of a neutral disposition by a guide during a visitor protest against banning hunting of specific species, despite the guide personally endorsing a global hunting ban on all species and feeling anger at the protest. Differentiating emotional display is common to employees such as police officers or debt collectors who often interact with difficult or dangerous people, and are required to display negative emotions, such as anger or urgency in doing so (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Wharton, 1993). In delivering interpretation guides may be required to

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1012024>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1012024>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)