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### EMOTION MANAGEMENT IN SMALL HOTELS: MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF FLEXIBILITY AND INFORMALITY

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#### Abstract

This paper shows that in small hotels, hotel owners interpret 'hospitality' more broadly than mere commercial concerns. Hoteliers engage with three interdependent hospitality domains, commercial, social and private (Lashley, 2000), an approach that enables them to perceive guest interactions as informal; characterised by hoteliers wanting to 'know' and 'relate to' their guests. The findings here, drawn from a study of small hotels in the UK, show how owners manage this form of the 'host-guest relationship' (Tucker, 2003) by employing a range of emotion management strategies. These mirror Bolton's 4Ps framework (2009) of pecuniary, professional, presentational and philanthropic emotion management roles. Adopting this fluid approach, rather than relying on emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), enables the hoteliers to respond flexibly to meet the needs of their different types of guest. The findings in this paper validate Bolton's argument (2005) for using agential flexible emotion *management* that captures but goes beyond emotional *labour*.

**Keywords:** Emotion Management, Emotional Labour, Host-Guest Relationship, Hospitality, Informality, Small Hotels, Flexibility

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#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide insights into how owners of small hospitality businesses manage the service encounter using emotion management, where the service encounter constitutes the host-guest relationship (Benmore, 2009; Benmore, 2010). Findings from a qualitative study of 21 small hotels in major UK resort between 2004 and 2007 revealed that the hotel owners interpret the host-guest relationship as an informal interaction. Arguably this results from their engagement with the three interdependent hospitality domains, commercial, social and private (Lashley, 2000 as illustrated in studies by for example Lynch *et al.* 2009). Owners emphasised the importance of 'knowing' and 'relating to' guests through their interactions with them. Hence they did not perceive the interaction to be purely 'commercial' but more nuanced in character, with the service provided being influenced by owners' own styles of private hospitality and how they construct the particular social and cultural settings of their hotels. This broad and fluid interpretation of the host-guest relationship contrasts with how it is commonly experienced by staff in larger corporate hotels. Here, emphasis on the commercial imperative means that the host-guest relationship is perceived as an essentially transactional monetary exchange (Lashley, 2000). This is generally facilitated by using emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979; Ritzer, 2004) to regulate the standard and manner of the service provided through the use of strict feeling rules governing how the hotel expects their employees to behave toward guests.

Owners of small hotels in this study generally eschewed the twinned notions of non-reciprocal commercial hospitality and non-reciprocal emotional labour (Constanti and Gibb, 2005; Lashley, 2000; Seymour, 2000) as too restrictive for managing service encounters in their businesses. Rather, their engagement with hospitality domains other than solely the commercial arena together with their more informal interpretation of the service encounter demanded the use of a wider range of emotion management strategies. Their experiences mirror Bolton's 4 Ps framework of pecuniary, professional, presentational and philanthropic emotion management (Bolton, 2009). The study findings thus suggest that Bolton's (2005) emotion management framework provides these owners with scope to exercise the necessary autonomy and agency to manage the myriad of interactions with guests they confront, flexibly. This meant for example, that they could "read" each guest's needs and respond appropriately, rather than treating them all as a homogenous group (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005, p.685). In contrast to the use of emotional labour, feeling rules governing how these owners employed different emotion management strategies were influenced by owners' personalities, motivations (often a combination of lifestyle and business) and values, and the social rules they constructed that fashioned the social setting of their particular hotel and how they provide hospitality. Further, owners could choose which host role they wished to adopt, their preferences being mainly for 'professional' and/or 'facilitator' styles. They suggested that both these were characterised by friendliness, informality and a degree of intimacy which resonates with Bolton's emphasis on recapturing "human connectedness" through the use of emotion management strategies (Bolton, 2008) and reflects their interpretation of the host-guest relationship.

The paper is grounded in a discussion of literature pertaining to emotion management and the host-guest relationship in the hospitality industry. Data from the study reveals how small hotel owners adopt professional and/or facilitator roles to employ a variety of emotion management strategies to manage interactions with guests. These findings suggest the use of agential flexible emotion *management* to manage interactions with customers (that is, guests) rather than relying solely on emotional *labour* (Bolton, 2005). These insights can inform similar challenges for managing the service encounter in other small hospitality business (such as pubs, and restaurants), as well as small businesses in the wider service sector, nationally and internationally.

## 2. Emotion Management – Emotional Labour and Beyond

Conceptualisation of emotion management necessarily begins with examining the notion of emotional labour, described by Hochschild (1983, p.7) as the appropriation of employees' private emotion work by the employer. Within this context, "feeling rules" governing the process of everyday social exchanges for private emotional systems are created and reinforced by employing organisations, to signal to organisational actors what emotional displays they are required to perform. Hochschild (1979, p.551) explains that this demands emotion management, where this means "...the type of work it takes to cope with feeling rules". Where these rules are imposed by organisations, private emotion management becomes transmuted by the profit motive to become a "public" act, and the emotion work expended takes the form of emotional labour, whose purpose is "...to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others..." (Hochschild, 1983, p.7) Consistent with Hochschild's early research that investigated emotional labour in service providers, such as US airlines seeking to 'control' and standardise emotional display to enhance competitive advantage, 'others' commonly constitute external customers though may also include colleagues and fellow professionals (for example, Harris, 2002; Mann, 1997). Hochschild (1983) raises several concerns about adherence to feeling rules that are subject to managerial control, such as lack of mutuality of the 'non-reciprocal' transmuted emotional exchange, and the potential mismatch between displayed emotion and inner feeling that can result in an assault on the employee's sense of 'self', manifested as emotional dissonance. These concerns about the impact of organisational control are reflected in Lashley's (2001, p.180) observation that front-line employees' adherence to feeling rules can require the 'act' they perform to be as diverse as creating a party atmosphere, to having to deal with difficult customers, and may involve surface or deep acting (after Hochschild, 1983). Noon and Blyton

(2007, p.184) highlight the continued relevance of emotional labour to the service sector, as evidenced by studies illustrating its pervasiveness within commercial hospitality and tourism (for example, Constanti and Gibbs, 2005; Seymour, 2000).

In contrast to this portrayal of prescriptive control through the rather narrow scope of the concept of emotional labour, Bolton (2005) conceptualises 'emotion work' in organisations as 'emotion management', where this comprises not only emotional labour but also wider interpretations of the emotion work involved in organisational social interactions, including those between service provider and customer. Bolton offers a typology of four emotion manager roles: pecuniary, prescriptive, presentational and philanthropic. *Pecuniary* emotion management is shaped by commercial feeling rules where the motivation can be considered "instrumental" and the performance one of "cynical compliance" (Bolton, 2005, p.93). Bolton's description here echoes depictions of emotional labour by other writers such as Hochschild (1983). *Prescriptive* emotion management may be instrumentally motivated but its origin also lies in motives associated with professionalism, such as "altruism" or "status", and it may also arise from cultural hegemony as may be evident in organizational socialization. Bolton suggests that performances can range from "cynical" to "sincere", and be associated with feelings varying from "consent" (to the prevailing rules) to "commitment" (to them) (Bolton, 2005, p.93). Bolton further proposes that the "identity" of the social actor in these two cases is not wholly the individual's "self", but may include an "imposed" self in the case of pecuniary emotion management and a "professional" self in the prescriptive form.

The two other forms of emotion management described by Bolton both imply the social actor presenting his or her 'self' in an organisational performance, with both being shaped by 'social' feeling rules. In *presentational* emotion management, the social actor is motivated by a desire to maintain an "interaction order" which offers "a sense of stability and ontological security to participants" (Bolton, 2005, p.97). Such motives and consequent emotion management reflect the informal nature of organisations where sub-cultures, misbehaviour, and emotionalized zones (Hearn, 1993) contribute to the complexity of organisations as negotiated orders (Strauss, 1978). Performances range from 'sincere' to 'cynical' and are associated with feelings ranging from 'commitment' to 'consent', mirroring the similarly complex prescriptive form. With *philanthropic* emotion management, the social actor's motivation is one of providing a 'gift', resonating with the notion of 'gift exchange' (Hochschild, 1983) although the gift here is offered 'philanthropically', that is with no expectation of reciprocity. Bolton suggests that for this form of emotion management the performance is likely to be 'sincere' with concomitant feelings of 'commitment' to the performance.

Bolton emphasises the fluidity of emotion management within the context of organisations as negotiated orders, arguing that "The typology of emotion management displays how boundaries are continually being crossed", and actors "constrained by organisational structures, are still capable of possessing 'multiple selves'" (Bolton, 2005, p.98). Choice of emotion management approach will be fashioned by the origins of the different forms, manifested as four types of feeling rules: commercial, professional, organisational and social. In contrast to Hochschild's emphasis on employee responses to feeling rules being subject to managerial control, Bolton emphasises how the role of agency allows organisational actors to shape the nature of social interactions in which they engage. For example their motivation may change through the course of the interaction, affording them scope for some control over how they respond to prevailing feeling rules. Hence, individual organisational actors have the potential to negotiate how they 'present' themselves in organisational social interactions.

Bolton's emotion management studies are not limited to hospitality but include for example her 2000 and 2008 studies in nursing. However, her 2003 study of airline cabin crews with Boyd was instrumental in developing her conceptual framework, uncovering an image of "emotional labour" that revealed "...blurring of boundaries and the blending of different roles" (Bolton and Boyd, 2003, p.291). Similarly fluid images of emotion management are reflected in Seymour and Sandiford's (2005, p.561) study of public houses where employees were expected to be "...skilled emotion managers, flexible enough to move between different service contexts, delivering different emotional performances on demand", and Guerrier and Adib's (2003) evidence of holiday reps who could 'self-regulate' their service delivery. These examples of emotion management in the hospitality industry support the argument advanced in this paper

that Bolton's ideas offer more flexible interpretation of emotion management than can be accommodated through emotional labour, and that this more nuanced approach is more appropriate for managing the service encounter in small hospitality businesses.

### 3. Host-Guest Relationship in the Hospitality Industry

To understand the host-guest relationship in the hospitality industry, it is necessary first to explore the meaning of 'hospitality'. Brotherton (2000, p.139) defines this as "...a relationship of two social roles – host and guest...a relationship that is both voluntary and non-commercial". This depiction seems far removed from more familiar representations of commercial hospitality, but is further reflected in Brotherton's (2000, p.135) observation that hospitality involves "...not only the demonstration of appropriate, hospitable, behaviour, but the reciprocation of that behaviour, such that hospitality comprises a two-way exchange process". Scrutinising the reciprocal notion of "hospitableness", Telfer (1996, p.83) emphasises the role of hosts' motives here; that hospitableness requires an "appropriate" motive toward the guest, where the host does not seek to profit from his relationship with the guest and where his motives are not shaped by self-interest. Such portrayals of how hospitality is understood are further mirrored in Lashley's (2000) argument that hospitality can be considered to occur through three overlapping domains: commercial, social and private.

The social domain of hospitality to which Lashley (2000) refers does not necessarily involve reciprocal exchange but emphasises instead that social relations and establishing and reinforcing social order are integral to that exchange (Brotherton and Wood, 2000, p.139). The social domain also highlights tensions that are intrinsic to the concept of hospitality, which as Selwyn (2000, p.26) argues is itself "coupled" with its "twin sister", hostility. Guerrier and Adib (2000, p.266) reinforce this portrayal of hospitality being inherently fragile, observing that for commercial hospitality providers, whilst the interaction between host and guest may be a satisfying experience where the expectations of both align, they suggest that the service provider is "extremely vulnerable" if guests choose to step over the boundaries. This example of how social domain hospitality can influence commercial provision reflects Lashley's (2000) argument that in reality the three domains he depicts – private social and commercial – interrelate and are interdependent.

For Lashley (2000, pp.13-14), the commercial domain is characterised by little expectation of reciprocity and mutual obligations between host and guest, where hosts' motives are mostly "ulterior", meaning they want to provide just enough hospitality to ensure the guest is satisfied, will not complain, and will hopefully return, whilst also making a profit. Further, Lashley argues that the guest has "little sense of mutual obligation of the domestic context" since exchange of money in commercial hospitality "absolves the guest of mutual obligation, and loyalty". The influence of commerciality is also reflected in smaller establishments. Referring to her study of small rural hospitality providers in New Zealand, Tucker (2003, p.87) for example reports that

By handing over the payment upon their departure...[guests]...regain the freedom and independence they desire...The payment marks something of a cleaning of the slate, so that 'commercial hospitality' may take place again between the two parties in the future.

Further, instead of suggesting that economic and social exchange are mutually exclusive in such small businesses, Tucker (2003, p.88) concludes that the hosts need to acknowledge that commercial and social exchange can co-exist "quite comfortably", again illustrating overlap between hospitality domains. Tucker (2003, p.88) goes on to explain that the act of commercial exchange constitutes a "let out clause" for guests when the "social intensity is such that they need to reclaim their freedom and independence from their hosts". Thus here she reveals the influences of social and private hospitality in the commercial setting of the small bed and breakfast provider. This image of establishments where hospitality provision is influenced by both commercial and private concerns resonates with how owners of small hotels in this study interpreted service provision in their businesses.

Against this depiction of how 'hospitality' is both understood and manifested, it is instructive to turn to Murray's (1990, p.17) depiction of hospitality as a relationship "between two social roles" (host and guest). This interaction is fundamental to hospitality, irrespective of the social, cultural, psychological and economic context in which it occurs. Lashley *et al.* (2007, p.174) describe it as the "host-guest transaction", which captures the notion that whatever form the hospitality takes, there is some "crossing over" between host and guest. They also define the parameters of the transaction within which this "crossing over" occurs as the host's responsibility for "the care and management of a guest" and the potential for the guest to accept or reject the authority of the host. This portrayal highlights the agential role of both host and guest in this transactional relationship. Lashley *et al.* (2007, p.174) explain that as a socially constructed phenomenon, the host-guest transaction can take different forms, depending on the manner of the "crossing over" between the key parties and the active role they play in that interaction. Each might "negotiate" the nature of hospitality to meet their respective needs and expectations, and/or the relationship may be "transformative", exemplified by the idea of converting a "stranger into a friend" (Selwyn, 2000, pp.26-27). A further possibility is "transgression" where host or guest breach expected "boundaries" of their social relationship, for example by engaging in inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour (Sheringham and Daruwalla, 2007, p.33). The many forms that this fundamental interaction may take supports Lashley *et al.*'s (2007) claim that the nexus of the host-guest transaction constitutes the core of hospitality and as such provides a meaningful interpretation of the service encounter in this context.

#### **4. Context and Methodology**

The study informing this paper explored how owners of small hotels (World Tourism Organisation, 2000) employed emotion management to construct and negotiate the host-guest relationship. Semi-structured conversational interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 1995) were conducted with owners of 21 small hotels in a major UK seaside resort (coded A-H, J-N, P-T and V-X). The sample was identified through a non-probability approach using snowballing, with interviewees recommending one another through their shared membership of the local hotel association. Whilst this approach reflects Arber's observation (2001) that snowballing is appropriate where participants are involved in some kind of network, it is recognised that this can introduce bias. For example, in relation to respondents' accounts of views from the area's wider hospitality community, or, it could be argued that as members of that network, participants might tend to portray more 'positive' or 'professional' images of hotel life than might emerge from a wider population of hoteliers in the resort. Nevertheless, the voice of the wider community was to some extent evident through participants' reference to 'other hotels' in their narrative accounts.

Narrative inquiry was employed within an interpretive stance, since as Gibbs (2002, p.174) suggests narrative and stories enable social actors "to represent and contextualise their experience and personal knowledge". Additionally, Fineman (1993, p.221) observes that narrative can provide "a data-set from which the interlayering and unfolding of emotional experience can be defined". Data were analysed primarily through narrative analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Reissman, 1993), to generate three analytic themes: emotionalities of the host-guest relationship context; emotion management in construction of the host-guest relationship; and emotion management in negotiation of the host-guest relationship.

#### **5. Discussion of Findings: Emotion Management in Small Hotels**

Within the theme of emotion management in negotiating the host-guest relationship, three sub-themes are discussed – managing boundaries relating to:

- informality with guests
- 'knowing' guests
- 'relating' to guests

### 5.1. Managing Boundaries of Informality

The degree of informality within host-guest interactions is shaped by the ambiguous and fragile nature of the host-guest transaction itself. As Lashley *et al.* (2007, p.176) highlight, "...The interactional nature of the transaction is multi-faceted; social, cultural, psychological, economic etc. and captures the idea of 'crossing over' between host and guest". The extent of informality depends upon the nature of the 'crossing over' with which both host and guest feel comfortable; for example whether guests are seen strictly as 'paying customers' or viewed more as 'family friends'.

K clearly enjoyed the latter approach:

It's just like family really, you're all ready for them to come...and we've had five or six people who've broken down in tears because they've had to go home. It's quite upsetting

Conversely Q adamantly rejected the idea of guests as 'friends':

I don't like this thing of "Come as guests, leave as friends" attitude ...I think it's awful

A related issue is how hotel owners (as hosts) interpret hospitality in terms of 'hospitable' and 'reciprocal' behaviour.

N liked the idea of interacting with guests in a 'relationship':

People respect you more if you interact with them...as soon as you start introducing extra things, extra costs, that's when things start to change and they know it's a business and it ruins the relationship

Others went as far as encouraging guests to behave as if they are at home. R commented:

It's actually quite nice when people say "I feel like I'm at home" when they come down in their slippers...we've even had people who've come down to breakfast in their pyjamas

However, yet others refuted such sentiments. H remarked:

You're not in the business just to interact with people...when they go on about their family and days out, I mean we're really not interested in listening

D similarly rejected any sense of reciprocity:

I don't like the sort of guests that hug you...I'll shake their hand but I don't necessarily want a hug and a kiss or anything

Hence owners' interpretation of 'informality' in their interactions with guests is fashioned both by how they define hospitality and engage in it as a process. These tensions in the host-guest relationship are particularly evident where private and commercial hospitality converge, as in small hotels. Hoteliers in this study universally sought to be hospitable by being responsible for meeting guests' needs, and commonly adopted a facilitator role to do this. However some would go out of their way to interact regularly with guests whilst others kept this to a polite minimum.

L exemplified the former approach:

From the moment they call, to when they get here, to who serves them at breakfast and who sees them off, they see me

In contrast A explained:

I do not try to pursue relationships with people...I'll be friendly and polite

Sheringham and Daruwalla's (2007, p.43) emphasis on the host's "sense of place" being negotiated between host and guest is also relevant to small hotels where inclusivity and intimacy are negotiated areas. Sheringham and Daruwalla (2007, p.39) suggest that host and guest can navigate these issues through a "journey of negotiations", where, they contend, host and guest negotiate social and emotional boundaries to ensure continuation of the established social order (of the hotel). Strangers may be converted to guests but they warn that this should fall short of guests becoming "integrated" into the household. Interestingly, in this study a minority of commercially-focused hoteliers recoiled at the idea of having a 'relationship' with guests. As A contended:

I think that's a chimera to be honest...we've developed a kind of rapport, which is fine... but I would say "relationship" is completely the wrong idea...when I stay in bed and breakfasts of this kind and you get that, a person trying to create a relationship with you, it really turns me off

Nonetheless, all agreed that they were involved in day-to-day interactions with guests and for most hotel owners this meant employing presentational emotion management.

N's observation was typical:

I find it very easy...it's just natural for me to interact with people and go out and talk to anyone

However for those who found interacting difficult, a prescriptive approach tended to prevail, with the hotelier presenting a 'professional self' rather than *being* himself. The 'professional' role adopted here tended to focus on 'doing things properly'.

As X explained:

I want them to feel they have a host... to feel that they can count on me and rely on me and that if they get any stuff that I will sort it out

For others whose primary interest was commercial, interactions with guests tended to be more pecuniary in tone (Bolton, 2005).

As A commented:

We're at a distance...obviously we have to smile at them and stuff like that, but it's not that we have to spend two hours at the breakfast table trying to chat them up

Informality did not equate to intimacy, with many appearing to behave as "active knowledgeable agents" (Bolton, 2005, p.3), skilled at "reading" the guest to gauge what level of intimacy was permitted, such as calling the guest by his first name.

J explained:

You've got to be given permission to call people by their first name...it's just good manners...it's respecting people

The sincerity conveyed here accords with the presentational style of emotion management most hosts appeared to adopt in this context.

## 5.2. Managing Boundaries of 'Knowing' the Guest

The ambiguity inherent in hospitality was reflected in the differing extents to which hotel owners in this study sought to 'know' their guests. A key factor in determining an hotelier's approach was his underlying motives for running the business. For some this involved a very deliberate strategy. L was pursuing a long-term plan of refurbishment to create a boutique hotel. He took every opportunity to talk to guests about his project.

I've talked about what we're doing here to anyone who'd listen...We get them to buy into the project, the whole idea...I have just talked to people relentlessly and they have been genuinely interested...we tell them about costs and why we can't afford some things and so on, that it's "work in progress" and we hope they will come back again

A different deliberate strategy was adopted by Q and her family to build their clientele.

...this year we need to get to know the guests while we've got the time to be friendly with them. So with my daughter and her partner, we'll take it in turns getting to know people

Illustrating how such hotel owners varied in their management of such interactions, the former showed the sincerity of presentational emotion management whilst the latter was unashamedly pecuniary in approach, not hiding the family owners' ulterior purpose, namely the "profit motive" (Telfer, 2000, p.42).

In a similar vein others used 'tactics' to underpin their commercial interests. D recalled:

I remember things about them...They'll say "Oh it's so and so" and I say "Oh from Littlehampton" And they love that...and like we always send a Christmas card, that's really good, that really gets them back

Yet others nurtured the impression of 'friendship' whilst not becoming 'friends' *with* their guests, suggesting a desire to maintain an "emotional distance" to avoid guests "intruding" into the owner's private life, not unlike how matrons coped with emotional demands in Allan and Smith's study (2005, pp.20-24).

R captured this particularly well:

We really do try to really get to know people and make them feel like we're friends to them

This sort of approach reflected hoteliers' choice of a professional role but which many described as being both 'professional' and 'friendly'.

As S explained:

I suppose we try to come across as professional as we can...if you come across friendly, and try and make people as comfortable as you can



However, B warned about needing to maintain a balance between professionalism and friendliness.

...you need to keep a distance; you need to keep a professional level and if you're drinking with them in the bar and stuff like that...I think the old familiarity breeds contempt

Other hoteliers were clear that becoming 'friends' with guests tended to 'just happen' rather than being engineered. Q explained:

..we make friends and we have people come back year after year, but... it's something that just happens rather than us going out of our way to ensure they come back

For V such an outcome seemed at first unlikely. She recalled:

I've got six people that have been coming for five years. When they first came...they vetted me for over an hour. They said "We want the same rooms every year and the same tables" And now they're like friends, they're really close friends...they come every year, same two weeks...same bedrooms

For some hotel owners, guests did transgress the boundaries of 'knowing' by becoming 'too nosy' or asking inappropriate questions. For a gay couple guests were curious about their relationship. Such inquiries did not faze the couple however who instead delighted in deflecting them.

H explained:

They pry a bit. They're dying to get something out of you! "So are you two brothers?!"... "No, we live together. We're business partners and we live together" you know, just to make it clear! And they say "Oh, oh!"...probably think we're "a couple of nice boys"

R felt that a guest's interest in her and her family was inappropriate and required a firm but polite rebuttal.

..we get guests, we had one recently, extremely demanding...needed to talk all the time and she got very personal about my son and us...just too interested...I just sort of said "Look that's not something you need to know"

Both these cases suggested the use of presentational emotion management to strongly reaffirm the boundaries that hoteliers considered 'reasonable' for interactions with guests.

### **5.3. Managing Boundaries of 'Relating' to Guests**

For many hotel owners finding that their guests had become 'friends' seemed to be a pleasure they had not anticipated but nonetheless enjoyed.

T commented:

We've got more friends now...although we've in no way encouraged it...That's the nice side of being in a small hotel, you do meet and make friends

E similarly recalled:

I think we've made some really good friends

Others positively nurtured such friendships to cultivate their 'regular' guests. This sort of approach generally meant adopting a facilitator role with hoteliers looking after their guests by 'being friendly'

C reported:

Our own regular guests that we've made feel that they want to come back... they send Christmas cards to us...that's quite nice

Sometimes 'cultivating' relationships with guests appeared to be motivated by a need to compensate for being unable to find time to develop a social life outside the hotel.

R explained:

It's frustrating at times that you're so tied...we've got a lot of friends who are people who come here and see us ...they're our friends. It's very difficult to make friends because it's very difficult to get out, simply because of the hours we work. And the life we have

For some the depth of friendship attained with guests aligned almost with that of 'family' relationships, with hotelier and guest engaging in regular contact about their respective personal lives.

V exemplified:

My regulars are great. They're more like family. They ring me up and tell the whole lot and tell me who's died and tell me what's going on

For G, two incidents revealed the depth of her relations with guests:

One customer...said he was really worried that they hadn't heard from me about the baby (G's forthcoming grandchild)...So I wrote immediately and said that "I'm sorry I missed you off the list" sort of thing

And:

We had a couple a few weeks ago and my son was terribly upset because she came up to tell him she had cancer and she wouldn't be coming anymore... within a few weeks she had died and her husband phoned of course because I said to let us know if anything happens. Because they'd been coming for years. And you do get attached to customers like that

While this level of intimacy could often mean that the hotelier was at times an "emotional sponge", absorbing emotions whilst not being "sucked in" (Allan and Smith, 2005, pp.20-24), listening to all the guest's news, these owners did nonetheless appear to like the idea of such relationships. Hotel owners' behaviour here strongly suggests a relational approach to hospitality provision (Selwyn, 2000) and implies a heavy influence of social and private hospitality (Lashley, 2000) with the host-guest relationship almost "non-commercial" in character, or as Murray (1990, p.17) suggests, a relationship between two social roles, host and guest.

For hotel owners who extended this 'social' relationship to something akin to family relationships, Bolton's typology of emotion manager roles did not fully explain the host-guest dynamics evident in this study. Such situations almost appeared to involve co-relational reciprocity, mirroring the gift exchange of private emotion work rather than philanthropic emotion management where there is no expectation of a 'return gift'. Hochschild (1983, p.83) explains

the gift exchange as involving “psychological bowing” where each “actor” pays “respect” to one another through the “currency of feeling”, such as enquiring about each other’s families. This form of emotion management thus more closely reflects the fifth profile developed by Benmore (2010), that of a ‘personalised’ role.

However, a minority of hotel owners believed that for hoteliers to contemplate ‘being friends’ with guests showed a mix of arrogance and/or lack of commercial sense.

Q argued:

...you’ve got to be a bit big-headed to imagine that everyone who leaves here is going to leave as your best friend

And D asserted:

...all our guests, we’re friendly to them, but they’re not our friends. We’re their servants when they’re here and they’re our source of income. To put it coldly.

D went on to criticise fellow hoteliers for being overly familiar with guests:

Some of them are far too chummy...you need to keep a professional sort of respect

These views infer an element of pecuniary emotion management coupled with a preference for keeping relations on a solely ‘professional’ footing. This generally involved employing a mix of pecuniary and prescriptive emotion management.

## **6. Concluding Comments**

In contrast to large corporate enterprises the small hotel setting both demands and permits hotel owners to interpret ‘hospitality’ more broadly than being solely concerned with commercial pursuits. Hoteliers’ consequent engagement with three interdependent hospitality domains, commercial, social and private (Lashley, 2000) enables them to perceive interactions with guests through the host-guest relationship (Tucker, 2003) as informal, characterised by wanting to ‘know’ and ‘relate to’ the guest. This approach to guest interactions contrasts sharply with the more regulated regime common in large corporate hotels, where the hotel prescribes strict feeling rules governing staff interactions with guests through the use of emotional labour. Hoteliers in this study found that compliance with emotional labour was too restrictive to manage the myriad of host-guest interactions they encountered. Instead, as the findings in this paper show, owners employed a range of emotion management strategies to manage host-guest relations, which mirrored Bolton’s ‘4P’s typology (2009) of pecuniary, professional, presentational and philanthropic emotion management approaches. In particular, the considerable use of presentational emotion management reflected the strong influence of private and social domain hospitality in these businesses.

To implement these different emotion management strategies, hotel owners in this study revealed that they could choose a host role, professional and/or facilitator, that best suited their own personality and motivation and each guest’s needs. They described these roles as friendly, informal and to some extent intimate, reflecting Bolton’s emphasis on the need to capture “human agency” (Bolton, 2005, p.61) and “social connectedness” (Bolton, 2008, p.17). Further, appearing to typify Bolton’s depiction (2005, p.3) of emotion managers as “purposive agents”, flexible in their reading of and response to interactions with, guests, these hoteliers used both emotion strategies and host roles to differentiate between various ‘types’ of guest, such as those wishing to be ‘just customers’ and those who could become ‘friends’, or even ‘close friends’, mirroring Bolton and Houlihan’s customer analysis (2005, p.685).

The depictions in this paper of owners of small hotels employing emotion management strategies flexibly to manage the host-guest relationship, together with their ability to choose

appropriate host roles, support Bolton's argument (2005) for using agential flexible emotion *management* that captures but goes beyond emotional *labour*. The insights provided here of managing the service encounter in small hotels can inform how to manage similar challenges in other small hospitality businesses (such as pubs and restaurants) as well as management of the service encounter in small businesses across the wider service sector in national and international contexts.

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