

Full Length Research Paper

The effect of emotional intelligence on salesperson's behavior and customers' perceived service quality

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This study discusses salespersons' emotional intelligence, one of the key abilities necessary to meet customers' needs effectively, and express positive emotions in frequent interactions with customer. Emotional intelligence refers to self-controllability and social ability emphasizing pro-social aspect and understanding of others. This study investigates how salespersons' emotional intelligence affects adaptive selling and positive emotional expression during the process of interaction with customers, and how such adaptive selling and positive emotional expression affects the quality of service perceived by customers. The result shows that greater salespersons' emotional intelligence results in better adaptive selling and positive emotional expression. Such adaptive selling and positive emotional expression had significant effects on the quality of service perceived by customers. These results are important in that they address emotional intelligence as salespersons' emotional ability, which has been overlooked as an antecedent variable for improving adaptive selling and display of positive emotion, consequently provide another factor to help salespersons improve their selling behavior.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, salesperson, adaptive selling, service quality.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important intangible assets for a company is the formation of social relationships, which is an essential condition for a company in maintaining productivity. The most important aspect in such social relationships is the relationship between employees and customers. In recent years, emotional intelligence is one of the employees' ability attracting attentions for a good relationship with customers (Prati et al., 2003).

Many theories of organization or management have emphasized the rationality of an organization and taken much interest in members' intellectual ability (Fineman, 1993; Pinder, 1998). However, recent studies indicate that it is an individuals' emotional ability that is of importance in maximizing personal performance. Researchers in organizational psychology have begun to accept members' emotional ability, particularly emotional intelligence, as an important subject for study and are also showing much interest in the influence of individuals' emotional intelligence on organizational performance. This emphasizes that in addition to members' intellectual ability, emotional intelligence is a variable that can never be excluded because of its significant effects on many organizational behaviors such as motivation to perform tasks, display of leadership, and devotion and commitment to a job.

In other words, employees with great emotional ability demonstrate higher organizational commitment and devotion to a company, which can then enable the company to improve its long-term productivity (Bardzil and Slaski, 2003). Therefore, it is important for members to possess emotional intelligence in order to get excellent performance and how to manage this ability is connected directly with organizational success.

Despite such significant influence of emotional intelligence on employees' performance, it is difficult to find marketing approaches to emotional intelligence. To influence customers in experiencing positive emotions, employees interacting directly with customers are required to recognize and regulate their own emotions and understand customers' emotion; it is emotional intelligence that is the ability indispensable for this requirement. This is because emotional intelligence refers to the competence of recognizing and regulating one's own emotions, understanding others' emotions, and maintaining good personal relationships with others.

Emotional intelligence is particularly needed by employees in close relationships with customers. Since salespersons interacting frequently with customers are typical of service employees, a high level of emotional

intelligence is very important for these people. It is important to request salespersons to acquire considerable knowledge of sales but it is more important for salespersons to obtain sales performance, have competence in settling social conflict amicably, have social problem-solving skills, and possess a flexible way of thinking. Emotional intelligence refers to self-controllability such as recognizing and regulating of self and to social competence such as understanding and empathy of others, each of which serves as an important factor in allowing salespersons to enhance adaptability and positive emotion expression to customers. In other words, salespersons with higher emotional intelligence can more accurately recognize and regulate their own emotions, have a better understanding of customers' emotions, meet customers' needs more effectively, and are more likely to express positive emotions to customers, all of which are more likely to result in positive effects on salesperson performance and overall corporate performance (Cherniss and Goleman, 1998; Goleman, 1995). To cope effectively with the diverse needs of customers during interaction with customer, salespersons are required to use society-friendly emotional ability as well as intellectual ability (Tomer, 2003).

However, previous studies on salespersons' positive selling behaviors have provided cognitive factors including the will to attain excellent performance, selling skills, and monetary and non-monetary incentive as factors in inducing positive behaviors, but have overlooked emotional factors. If salespersons accurately recognize and regulate their own emotions and understand customers' emotions, significant effects will be exerted on their selling attitude and behavior toward customers (Fatt and Howe, 2003). This study, therefore, investigates the effects of salespersons' emotional intelligence on adaptive selling behaviors and positive emotional expression, effect of salespersons' adaptive selling behavior and positive emotional expression on customers' evaluation of service quality. This demonstrates that salespersons with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit adaptive selling behaviors sufficient to meet the diverse needs of customers, express positive emotion, and ultimately improve the quality of service perceived by customers. An empirical test of this will be able to provide an opportunity to take interest in salespersons' emotional intelligence and its development from both a practically and academically.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Emotional intelligence

Components of emotional intelligence

Traditional studies on intelligence fail to mention emotional

intelligence. However, recent studies insist that intelligence is not the only variable used for predicting life satisfaction, happiness, personal productivity, and positive relationship with family and the beloved, mentioning another variable is emotional intelligence. It is insisted that the concept of intelligence is not only concerned with cognitive intelligence, but should include personal relationships, environmental adaptability, practical skill, and social competence. Therefore in recent years, research on intelligence began to take interest in emotional intelligence rather than being limited to cognitive ability. Mayer and Geher (1996) mentioned that emotional intelligence is different from general intelligence and that the former is differential intelligence that needs to be investigated in the future.

Emotional intelligence suggested by Salovey and Mayer (1990) is a concept in an improved form based on Thorndike's (1920) social intelligence. Social intelligence which ranges too widely from personal studies and human relations to moral perceptions was hard to measure (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). So Salovey and Mayer (1990) developed the concept of social intelligence into more elaborate one, suggesting the concept of emotional intelligence. They defined emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions".

Since there was criticism that their initial definition provided discussion only in terms of recognition and control of emotion but mentioned no ability of thinking of emotion and that the concept was still ambiguous, Mayer and Salovey (1997) revised the definition to complement it. They defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth". Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Mayer and Salovey (1997) conceptualized emotional intelligence as composed of four distinct dimensions: 1) Appraisal and expression of emotion in the self. This relates to the individual's ability to understand their deep emotions and be able to express these emotions naturally. People who have great ability in this area will sense and acknowledge their emotions well before most people. 2) Appraisal and recognition of emotion in others. This relates to peoples' ability to perceive and understand the emotions of those people around them. People who are high in this ability will be much more sensitive to the feeling and emotions of others as well as reading their minds. 3) Regulation of emotion in the self. This relates to the ability of people to regulate their emotions, which will enable a more rapid recovery from psychological distress. 4) Use of emotion to facilitate performance. This relates to the ability of individuals to make use of their emotions by directing them towards constructive activities and personal performance.

Emotional Intelligence closely is associated with expression ability, so salespersons as the target of this study need this ability. Expression methods for customers are very important during the process of interaction with customers. Customers' perceived quality of service depends on what behavioral and emotional expression a salesperson gives to customers. While it is important to select salespersons with high emotional intelligence at the corporate level, possibility of improving salespersons' emotional intelligence through training can lead to higher possibility of cultivating able salespersons and securing satisfied customers. In this respect, this study intends to adopt a viewpoint of the ability model, using four emotional areas (self- emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, use of emotion) suggested by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Mayer and Salovey (1997).

Salesperson's emotional intelligence

Despite such contributions of emotional intelligence to an organization, there has been little research relating to the effects of emotional intelligence on service organization. Service organizations are settings that require interpersonal interaction. For salespersons frequently interacting with customers, in particular, emotional intelligence is an important emotional ability that can affect how to serve customers in a selling situation; however, there is insufficient research relating to this statement. The salespersons' job is to interact with customers in a selling situation; the core of sales is how a salesperson serves customers. Service employees' emotional intelligence can affect method of providing service to customers. Salesperson with high levels of emotional intelligence manages their interactions with customers in a more effective manner. Affective commitment toward other people is a necessary component of social interaction and argued that the showing of positive emotions is associated with a high likelihood of success at work (Nikolaou and Tsaousis, 2002; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1990). Abraham (1999), based on her own earlier observation that optimistic insurance salesperson would perform better than pessimistic salesperson, proposed that emotional intelligence is directly related to performance. In the process of interaction with customers, employees should show an interest in customers and grasp their needs. Effective interaction may be expressed as broad interpersonal competencies, for example: adaptive selling, positive displayed emotion. Adaptive selling and expression of positive emotion are service providers' behavioral response by which intangibility of service is revealed in a tangible form. These are reflected in their observable physical behaviors and displays of initiative motivation, effort, appearance, and so on (Bardzil and Slaski, 2003). The Integrated ability afforded by high levels

of emotional intelligence is interpreted as the antecedent variable of excellent service behaviors, and is thus central to the delivery of positive service at the level of the individual and the development of a climate for services at the level of the organization. After all, for relationship between service providers' emotional intelligence and behavior, the higher emotional intelligence is more likely to result in effective customization, adaptive behavior, and expression of emotion required by an organization. So service providers' emotional intelligence and behavior (adaptive selling behavior and expression of positive emotion) are closely correlated.

Effect of emotional intelligence on adaptive selling

Taylor (1983) says that adaptation is a process of coordination based on interaction and has three factors: inquiry into knowledge obtained from personal experience, efforts to solve a problem, and self-fulfillment and appraisal of the result. Taylor indicates that adaptation depends on level of individuals' acceptance of changes in a situation and condition, and on personal abilities to take well advantage of this change.

For salespersons, adaptation means that to customers. They should present a selling method to fit each of customers during the process of interaction with customers. That is, it is related to adaptive selling. Adaptive selling is defined as change or correction selling behaviors during the process of interaction with customers on the basis of perceived information (Weitz, 1981; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan, 1986). Adaptive selling is to make differential and special sales presentations to each customer while nonadaptive selling is to make the same sales presentation to all customers (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002). The basis of adaptive selling behaviors is to understand the character of selling situations (Spiro and Weitz, 1990; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan, 1986), which means salespersons' adapt sales approaches flexibly to customers and situations during the process of interaction with customers. Humphrey and Ashforth (1994) indicate that salespersons who serve customers thoughtlessly in the same way can easily make a mistake and find difficulty in meeting their personal needs. Szymanski (1988) also says that employees with higher performance may examine the needs of each customer for goods and for a selling situation, before setting a sales strategy. Therefore, the most significant core of adaptive selling is to select a proper sales strategy according to a selling situation, and make appropriate correction during the course of interaction with customers (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002).

Antecedent variables mentioned by previous researches in adaptive selling include organizational characteristics (Vink and Verbeke, 1993), learning orientation and performance orientation (Sujan, Weitz,

and Kumar, 1994), salespersons' knowledge structure (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan, 1986), differences in adaptive selling according to salespersons' demographics (Levy and Sharma, 1994), and scales to measure adaptive selling (Spiro and Weitz, 1990). In addition to these antecedent variables, however, salespersons' emotional intelligence is likely to affect adaptive selling behavior. Salespersons are required to have the ability to grasp and manage self-emotions, understand customers' emotions, use emotion to fit the character of selling situations during the process of interaction with customers (Spiro and Weitz, 1990). Goleman (1995) emphasizes that the higher the level emotional intelligence, the greater a spirit of sacrifice and altruism by sacrificing one's personal interest for others. Emotional intelligence cannot only be applied to oneself, but also to others, those with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to be very sociable (Liff, 2003; Zhou and George, 2003). Salespersons serving customers may represent a company; the quality of service perceived by customers and customer behavior can vary depending on how they serve customers. To effectively meet customers' needs which are gradually changed, salespersons are required to have the ability to understand customers, grasp and regulate self-emotions, understand customers' emotions, use emotion to achieve a goal and maintain good relationships with customers, in addition possessing considerable knowledge of sales.

Greenbaum (2000) says that today's customers demand positive, emotional, and impressive experience and that salespersons supplying such experience can enjoy more competitive advantages than those simply supplying high-quality service. He insists that salespersons who grasp customers' emotions accurately and serve them effectively according to their emotion in a shopping situation, can obtain greater customer loyalty. This demonstrates that salespersons with high emotional intelligence are more likely to grasp customers' emotion accurately and thus adapt their emotions to fit the situation, that is, salespersons that have high emotional intelligence are more likely to conduct adaptive selling behaviors. Hence;

Hypothesis 1: Salesperson's emotional intelligence (self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, use of emotion) will be positively associated with salesperson's adaptive selling.

Effect of emotional intelligence on positive salesperson-displayed emotion

Positive mutual relationship between customers and salespersons is important to customers for having positive experiences during contact with salespersons, and the emotion salespersons display to customers is very important in making such mutual relationship (Staw and Barsade, 1993). Employees of hotels, airlines, and

department stores that place more importance on human service represent an organization and influence customers' satisfaction and purchase intention during contact with customers. Therefore, the emotion service employee express is becoming an important concern for management.

Then, which employees can effectively express such positive emotion suggested by the organization? Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) mention that previous researches provide managers with no solution for hiring employees able to communicate their positive emotions effectively, and emphasize the need of research relating to this topic. That is, what is necessary is consideration of salespersons' emotional ability, not consideration of cognitive factors, as presented by prior researches, and it is emotional intelligence that is particularly attracting attention among emotional ability.

Emotional intelligence is related to the ability to recognize and regulate one's own emotions, motivate oneself, understand others' emotions, and use emotion. People with higher emotional intelligence can more display their ability to skillfully reach a goal, even in a negative situation and motivate themselves and others to have a useful goal (Mayer and Salovey, 1993; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Although salespersons have negative experience through interaction with customers in a selling situation, salespersons with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to perform their tasks and express positive emotions without being disappointed or discouraged. Also, if the salespersons have a positive experience during the process of interaction with customers, they are more likely to actively express this experience. Salovey, Mayer, and Caruso (2002) proposed that emotional intelligence consists of the ability to perceive one's own and others' facilitate thought and problem solving through use of emotion, understand the causes of emotion and relationship between emotional experiences, and manage one's own and others' emotions. A Service provider who manifests these abilities is likely to display of positive emotion during interaction with customers. Hence;

Hypothesis 2: Salesperson's emotional intelligence (self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, use of emotion) will be positively associated with the display of positive emotions by a salesperson during interactions with customers.

Customer service quality perceptions

Effect of adaptive-selling on customers' service quality perceptions

Since quality is strongly correlated with organizational performance, such as profitability, market share, or productivity, the role of quality is a very important factor in companies' competitive advantage. The service quality is

also becoming the core of long-term strategies of companies in that it is a source of vitality in building new customers, maintaining existing customers, and sustaining long-term profitability (Gr nroos, 1984). Therefore, quality is now an important factor directly connected with corporate survival, rather than simply a factor of competitive advantage.

Today it is difficult to differentiate products; the quality of service perceived by customers can also be a very important condition for company's success. Since service provided by salespersons can be directly connected with companies' survival, it is more important than ever to draw up a strategic plan to improve service quality.

According to Humphrey and Ashforth (1994), salespersons who serve customers in the same way may have customers perceive service quality as low, since they can easily make a mistake and have difficulty in satisfying individual needs of customers. In other words, the more adaptive selling behaviors salespersons can do to meet customers' needs, the higher the service quality perceived by customers. Therefore, salespersons' adaptive selling behaviors can be strongly correlated with customers' evaluation of service quality. Hence;

Hypothesis 3: Salesperson's adaptive selling will be positively associated with customer service quality perceptions.

Effect of positive salesperson-displayed emotion on customer service quality perceptions

Salespersons' positive emotional expression during the process of interaction with customers can be regarded as a service component from the viewpoint of the customer. If a salesperson displays positive emotion toward a customer during interaction, it is a relevant input into an evaluation of service (Pugh, 2001). Therefore, customers consider salespersons' positive emotional expression as critical evaluation factors in evaluating service quality (Hochschild, 1983). That is, radiant smiles, cheerful looks, eye contact, and cheerful greetings may result in customer's greatly appreciating the service and improving the service quality perceived by customers during the process of service. Hence;

Hypothesis 4: The display of positive emotion will be positively associated with customer service quality perceptions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection and procedure

Data for this study were collected from department store salespersons and customers served by them, regardless of age and gender. Two separate sources of data were used for this study: (1) Data about emotional intelligence and adaptive selling were collected from department store salesperson. The purpose of the

study was kept secret because it is hard to receive true response if the purpose was explained during the process of data collection. So following explanation that it is a study to understand psychological conditions of people whose occupation requires frequent interaction with others, salespersons were asked to answer the questions. (2) Data about positive salesperson-displayed emotion, service quality were collected from customers served by the salesperson who responded to emotional intelligence and adaptive selling. The customers were served by the salesperson for at least 10 min. This is because customers would need somewhat close interaction to evaluate salesperson-displayed emotion and service quality provided by salespersons. When customers provided with service at a store came out, the researcher asked them to move to another place and answer the questions under their consent. This is because they are likely to fail to give accurate response if asked to answer the questions with a salesperson present at the store. Salespersons are also likely to fail to make true selling behavior if they are aware of the presence of the researcher. 232 responses were collected from department store salesperson, 232 from customers served by the salespersons. The customer response and the salesperson response were matched to create a single data set.

When questionnaires with a lot of missing data were excluded, the final sample size for analysis was 211. The customer respondents' ages ranged from 21 - 58, with approximately 50% of the respondents aged between 25 and 37. More than half of the total respondents were female (67%), and more than a half of the customers conducted shopping once or twice a week on average (55%). Salesperson respondents' age 27 - 45, with approximately 50% of the respondents aged between 27 and 36. More than half of the total respondents were female salesperson (53%), and more than a half of the salespersons had a selling career between 1-5 years (52%).

Measure

All constructs were operationalized as multi- item constructs. Scale items from previous research on emotional intelligence, adaptive selling, display of emotion, and service quality literature, were adapted and used. The measures of emotional intelligence were adapted from Wong and Low (2002). Employees indicated their agreement with each item, using a seven-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores reflect a greater degree of employee emotional intelligence. The measures of employee-displayed emotion adapted from the work of Rafaeli and Sutton (Rafaeli, 1989; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1990; Sutton and Rafaeli, 1988). Two verbal and two nonverbal behaviors were assessed: 1) Greeting is a salesperson's response to a customer who enters a store. 2) Smile is a salesperson's warm response to a customer when they interact with each other. 3) Eye contact is a salesperson's gaze into a customer's eyes and face while they interact with each other. 4) Thanking is a salesperson's courteous response to a customer at the end of transaction. Customers indicated their agreement with each item, using a seven-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores reflect a greater degree of employee positive-displayed emotion.

Adaptive selling measures were adapted from Hartline and Ferrell (1996), who modified the 10-item adaptive selling scale developed by Spiro and Weitz (1990) by dropping 6 redundant items and changing the wording of the remaining items to eliminate the personal selling aspects within each statement. Employees indicated their agreement with each item, using a seven-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores reflect a greater degree of employee adaptability. Customer perceptions of service quality were assessed with a modified version of the SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1994), adapted from Hartline and Ferrell (1996), who developed a ten-items that specifically assess employee-related

aspects of service quality. Our measure asks customers to rate each item, using a seven-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores reflect higher perceived service quality.

Data analysis

Measurement items were tested as to whether they had the appropriate properties to represent each construct via confirmatory factor analysis. Path analysis was then employed to examine the structural relationships in the model. For the model test, χ^2 , the comparative fit index(CFI), the non-normed fit index(NNFI), and the standardized root mean square residual(SRMR) were examined.

Measurement model and structural relationships in the model

The results of confirmatory analysis indicated that the measure had acceptable construct validity and reliability. The χ^2 of the measurement model was 488.39 with 198df. The overall fit statistics (GFI = 0.95, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.94, NNFI = 0.96, and SRMR = 0.042) suggested that the measurement model had a good fit. All the factor loadings to their respective constructs were higher than 0.65. The composite reliability of each scale exceeds the 0.70 thresholds for acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978), which suggests that the measures are internally consistent. Convergent validity is indicated when path coefficients from latent constructs to their corresponding manifest indicators are statistically significant (that is, $t > 1.96$). All items load significantly on their corresponding latent construct. All scales exceed Nunnally's (1978) suggested Cronbach's alpha level of 0.70. This is presented in Table 1. The correlation matrices of the constructs are presented in Table 2. The results of path analysis are presented in Figure 1 and Table 3. As shown in Figure 1 and Table 3, all fit indices show that the model has a good fit (χ^2 with 98 df = 195.74; GFI = 0.94, AGFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.94, NNFI = 0.93, and SRMR = 0.043).

RESULTS

Effect of EI on adaptive selling

Others' emotion appraisal ($\beta = 0.613$, $t = 11.141$, $p < 0.01$), regulation of emotion ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 7.918$, $p < 0.01$), use of emotion ($\beta = .504$, $t = 9.834$, $p < 0.01$) have a positive effect on adaptive selling behavior. However, Self-emotion appraisal ($\beta = 0.054$, $t = 1.125$, ns) is not statistically significant. Therefore, H1 is partly supported.

Effect of EI on positive salesperson-displayed emotion

Others' emotion appraisal ($\beta = 0.378$, $t = 7.875$, $p < 0.01$), regulation of emotion ($\beta = 0.543$, $t = 10.213$, $p < 0.01$), use of emotion ($\beta = .641$, $t = 11.628$, $p < 0.01$) have a positive effect on positive salesperson-displayed emotion. However self-emotion appraisal ($\beta = 0.048$, $t = 1.021$, ns) is not statistically significant. Therefore, H2 is partly supported.

Effect of adaptive-selling on customer service quality perception

Adaptive selling behavior ($\beta=.559$, $t=10.824$, $p<.01$) has a positive effect on customer service quality perceptions. Therefore, H3 is supported.

Effect of positive salesperson-displayed emotion on customer service quality perception

Positive salesperson-displayed emotion ($\beta=.687$, $t=11.938$, $p<.01$) has a positive effect on customer service quality perceptions. Therefore, H4 is supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research finds the relationships among salespersons' emotional intelligence, adaptive selling behaviors, and service quality, the findings of which can be summarized as follows:

First, salespersons' emotional intelligence affected adaptive selling behaviors as a whole. Of variables of emotional intelligence, only self-emotion appraisal had no significant effect on adaptive selling behavior, but the remaining variables, such as others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, and use of emotion had a significant effect on adaptive selling. This shows that the higher social emotional intelligence such as others' emotion appraisal and use of emotion, and the higher personal emotional intelligence such as personal willingness to regulate self-emotion in relationship with others, the better adaptive selling. However, of dimensions of emotional intelligence, self-emotion appraisal had no significant effect on adaptive selling behavior, which demonstrates that awareness of one's own emotions is not sufficient for implementing adaptive selling.

Second, salespersons' emotional intelligence affects positive emotional expression as a whole. Of dimensions of emotional intelligence, self-emotion appraisal had no significant effect on positive emotional expression, while others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, and use of emotion had significant effects on positive emotional expression. This demonstrates that salespersons, who regulate their emotion, motivate themselves, and understand customers' emotion are more likely to display positive emotion to customers in a selling situation. However, self-emotion appraisal had no significant effect on positive emotional expression, which suggests that awareness of one's own emotion is not sufficient for external emotional expression. Beyond self-emotion appraisal, that is, others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion, and use of emotion are necessary factors in positive emotional expression during the process of interaction with customers.

Table 1. Measurement items, standardized factor loadings, and construct reliabilities, Cronbach's alpha.

Items	Standardized factor loading (t value)	Construct reliability	Cronbach's alpha
Self-emotion appraisal		0.74	0.74
1. I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time	0.655 (9.01)		
2. I have good understanding of my own emotions	0.702 (10.24)		
3. I really understand what I feel.	0.687 (9.73)		
4. I always know whether or not I am happy	0.743 (11.01)		
Others' emotion appraisal		0.79	0.80
1. I always know my customers' emotions from their behavior	0.748 (11.58)		
2. I am a good observer of others' emotions	0.712 (10.35)		
3. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others	0.681 (9.28)		
4. I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me	0.735 (11.25)		
	0.698 (10.62)		
Regulation of emotion		0.81	0.81
1. I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally	0.721 (11.83)		
2. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions	0.752 (12.17)		
3. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry	0.761 (12.75)		
4. I have good control of my own emotions	0.717 (11.59)		
Use of emotion		0.74	0.71
1. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them	0.823 (13.54)		
2. I always tell myself I am a competent person	0.751 (12.09)		
3. I am a self-motivated person	0.782 (12.84)		
4. I would always encourage myself to try my best	0.654 (9.24)		
Adaptive selling		0.81	0.77
1. When I feel that my approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach	0.804 (12.14) *		
2. Every customer requires a unique approach	0.838 (12.97)		
3. I like to experiment with different approaches	0.791 (11.26)		
4. I don't change my approach from one customer to another(R)	0.709 (10.07)		
5. I am very sensitive to the needs of my customers	*		
6. I find it difficult to adapt my style to certain customers(R)	0.773 (10.85)		
7. I vary my approach from situation to situation	0.705 (9.97)		
8. I try to understand how one customer differs from another	0.658 (8.29)		
9. I feel confident that I can effectively change my approach when necessary	0.764 (9.25)		
10. I treat all customers pretty much the same(R)			
Positive salesperson-displayed emotion		0.83	0.85
1. Salesperson's welcome greeting to a customer who enters a store	0.812 (12.26)		
2. Salesperson's warm smile to a customer when the salesperson interact with customer	0.691 (10.21)		
3. Salesperson's proper eye contact to a customer during interact with customer	0.748 (11.32)		
4. Salesperson's courteous thanking to a customer after the end of transaction	0.681 (9.96)		

Table 1. Contd.

Customers' perceived service quality			
1. The salesperson provided prompt service for me	0.831 (12.72)	0.76	0.79
2. The salesperson rapidly did not respond to my requests(R)	0.809 (12.01)		
3. The salesperson behaviors instilled confidence in me	0.763 (11.59)		
4. I felt safety in transactions with the salesperson	0.713 (9.94)		
5. The salesperson was courteous for me	0.752 (11.08)		
6. The salesperson had ability to answer my questions	0.651 (8.51)		
7. The salesperson gave individual attention to me	*		
8. The salesperson gave personal attention to me	0.704 (9.31)		
9. The salesperson was concerned to my interests at heart	0.748 (10.68)		
10. The salesperson had ability to understand my specific needs	0.729 (10.25)		

² with 198 *df* = 488.39; GFI = 0.95, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.94, NNFI = 0.96, and SRMR = 0.042

Note: * item was dropped during confirmatory factor analysis because of a non-significant t-value.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrices.

	Self-emotion appraisal	Others' emotion appraisal	Use of emotion	Regulation of emotion	Adaptive selling behavior	Positive salesperson-displayed emotion	Customer service quality perceptions
Mean	3.51	3.88	3.63	4.04	4.21	3.83	3.42
S.D.	1.93	1.72	1.21	1.38	1.42	1.51	1.57
Self-emotion appraisal	1.0						
Others' emotion appraisal	0.23*	1.0					
Regulation of emotion	0.25*	0.36**	1.0				
Use of emotion	0.22*	0.24*	0.18*	1.0			
Adaptive selling behavior	0.11	0.59**	0.57**	0.42**	1.0		
Positive salesperson--displayed emotion	0.15*	0.37**	0.45**	0.56**	0.53**	1.0	
Customer service quality perceptions	0.19*	0.24*	0.23*	0.25*	0.49**	0.65**	1.0

** : $p < .01$ * : $p < .05$.

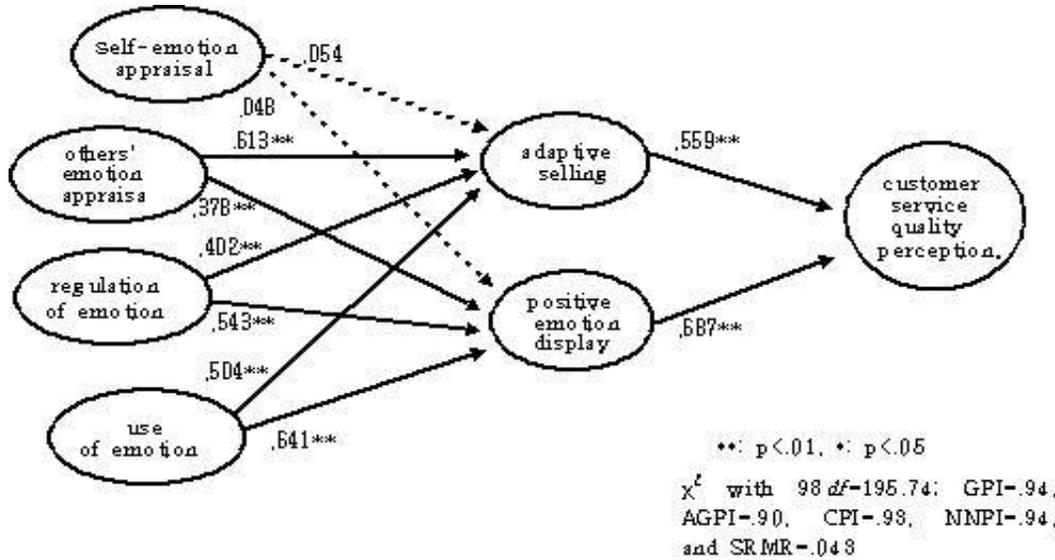


Figure 1. Path analysis results.

Table 3. Path analysis.

Path		(t value)
Self-emotion appraisal	Adaptive selling behavior	0.054 (1.125)
Others' emotion appraisal	Adaptive selling behavior	0.613 (11.141**)
Regulation of emotion	Adaptive selling behavior	0.402 (7.918**)
Use of emotion	Adaptive selling behavior	0.504 (9.834**)
Self-emotion appraisal	Positive salesperson-displayed emotion	0.048 (1.021)
Others' emotion appraisal	Positive salesperson-displayed emotion	0.378 (7.875**)
Regulation of emotion	Positive salesperson-displayed emotion	0.543 (10.213**)
Use of emotion	Positive salesperson-displayed emotion	0.641 (11.628**)
Adaptive selling behavior	Customer service quality perceptions	0.559 (10.824**)
Positive salesperson-displayed emotion	Customer service quality perceptions	0.687 (11.938**)

² with 98 df=195.74; GFI=.94, AGFI=.90, CFI=.93, NNFI=.94, and SRMR=.043

** : p < .01 * : p < .05.

Third, salespersons' adaptive selling behaviors significantly influenced the quality of service perceived by customers. If salespersons conduct adaptive selling behaviors by different and unique sales presentations to individual customers during the process of interaction with customers, the quality of service perceived by customers improves. When salespersons are responsive to customers' needs and flexible in sales approaches, customers are more likely to believe that the salesperson pays attention to them, understands them, and make efforts to conduct safe transactions, thus resulting in higher customer perception of service quality.

Fourth, salespersons' positive emotional expression at service encounters had significant effects on the quality of service perceived by customers. If salespersons express positive emotion during the process of interaction

with customers, customers may consider it as a part of service and use it as a factor for service appraisal, therefore directly improving the quality of service perceived by customers. This indicates that salespersons' beaming smiles, cheerful facial express and greetings are important factors in improving the quality of service perceived by customers.

Marketing implication

Recently, increasing numbers of scholars have argued that emotional intelligence is a core variable that affects the performance of employees. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of a marketing sound for salesperson and management research. There is also little evidence

concerning the effect of salesperson's emotional intelligence on selling behavior. This research shows that the emotional intelligence is positively related to the adaptive selling behavior and the display of positive emotion.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to incorporate this concept into staff selection, performance management, and training policies (Morland, 2001). Service organizations that are successful in today's dynamic business world are likely to be those that take a more proactive approach to the development of a positive service climate. It follows that excellent service, with positive emotional content, is most likely to be facilitated by employees who are emotionally self-aware, self-regulation and who understand others on a more emotional level.

Despite these unexpected finding and limitations, we believe there are both theoretical and practical implications of this research. Theoretically, this research has explained the importance of emotional intelligence in the social interactions in selling situation. As some or most of the social interactions of salesperson is related to job duties, this research hypothesizes a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job outcomes. As an exploratory effort, this research focuses on demonstrating these relationships. As the results of this study provide support for these relationships. Prior studies mainly placed emphasis on salespersons' will to attain the final goal and on their intellectual ability to improve sales techniques, as factors in enhancing their adaptive selling behaviors, but paid no attention to their emotional ability. On the contrary, this study, by focusing on salespersons' emotional ability, indicates that salespersons' emotional ability is also an important strategic variable to be considered in future studies on organizational and personal performance. The results of this exploratory study provide evidence that emotional intelligence tends to be related to important job outcomes that management desires.

Results of this study also have certain practical implication. First, as today's companies use emotion as a tool to achieve organizational objectives, the rate of emotional laborers is gradually increasing. Salespersons implementing emotional labor are more likely to have negative experience during the process of conducting selling activities, which can ultimately have serious negative effects on company performance. Therefore, if salespersons implementing emotional labor are made to consider customers sincerely through constant education causing them to change their thinking, natural positive selling behaviors will increase. This implies that companies need to introduce an education or training programs changing salespersons mentality, rather than simply empathizing visible behavioral skills. Second, since emotional intelligence can be improved by learning (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Wong and Low, 2002), it is necessary to draw up an

effective plan to promote emotional intelligence through continuous education and training for employees within a company. As today's salespersons role is considered more important, salespersons should also regulate their own emotions and read and understand customers' emotion to effectively provide services desired by customers during interaction. Therefore, this study suggests that it is important to review a learning program to promote a salespersons' emotional intelligence. Third, these days, due to the increase of service sector, the task requiring interaction with final consumers is on the rise. With such changes in the industrial structure, service quality perceived by the final consumer depends on the delivery of the service providers. Baker et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of salespersons' roles through research in the effects of the complex store environment on perceived product value and store patronage, which represent the result that customers' perception of salespersons might affect their perception of service and product quality. Therefore today's companies should that one of the important factors, to make customers to perceive the quality of their goods and service positively is salespersons' emotional ability.

It cannot be ignored that corporate competitiveness can be improved by recruiting employees with high emotional ability, and by training them to promote and maintain emotional ability through socializing. In short, emotional intelligence is an essential ability for salespersons who interact frequently with customers and is a subject to be discussed from the marketing viewpoint.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study has implications of the importance of salespersons' emotional intelligence, it also has the following limitations and requirements for future research. First, this study failed to include salespersons from various kinds of occupations in collecting data. Since the sample largely consists of department store salespersons, there are limitations in generalizing the results of salespersons to all occupations. Second, further studies are necessary to investigate the process of forming and developing emotional intelligence. This is because developing and improving this ability should be preceded by the substantial understanding of the mechanism of such formation. Third, this study uses tools of existing organization researcher, to measure emotional intelligence. It is however necessary to develop a tool to measure salespersons' emotional intelligence in a selling situation more accurately. Fourth, of four components of emotional intelligence, self-emotion appraisal and regulation of emotion belong to personal emotional intelligence, while others' emotion appraisal and use of emotion belong to social emotional intelligence (Tomer, 2003). If future researchers divide emotional intelligence into personal emotional intelligence and social emotional

intelligence and thereby differences in influence of these emotional intelligences on other relevant variables are verified, it will be able to provide more strategic implications to companies. Fifth, it is also necessary to test the relationship among each dimensions of emotional intelligence. For example, self-emotion appraisal has no effect on adaptive selling and positive emotional expression; however, it is necessary to note that self-emotion appraisal can affect adaptive selling and positive emotional expression through regulation of emotion. Since regulation of emotion can be implemented through self-emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion is likely to mediate the effect of self-emotion appraisal on salespersons' behaviors. Therefore, it is necessary to examine mutual relationships among dimensions of emotional intelligence.

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