The validity of the Wong-Law Emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS) in Taiwanese tour guide sample

Min, Jennifer Chen-Hua
Professor, Department of International Business
Ming Chuan University, Taipei, Taiwan
E-Mail: jennifer_min.tw@yahoo.com.tw

Huang, Chun-Hung
Assistant Professor, Department of Information Management
Ming Chuan University, Taoyuan, Taiwan

Abstract

Emotions play an important role in the workplace, and there has accordingly been a great deal of interest among the scientific community as well as the general public regarding how, exactly, emotions can influence employees’ performance and the workplace environment overall. In recent decades, there has been much interest in a new form of intelligence pertaining to emotions, which concerns one’s ability to manage emotions and the resulting benefits in both work and personal life (Parmentier et al., 2019). This is called Emotional Intelligence (EI), a term first coined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990.

As an industry, the tourism industry is considered a typical service industry, one that involves high-contact encounters and significant interaction among customers, staff, and facilities (Lovelock & Wright, 1999). The labor-intensive nature of the tourism industry means that its success depends heavily on employees’ EI competence because it can enable them to perceive and understand others’ emotions while effectively managing their own emotions in a difficult work environment. Accordingly, EI has been frequently studied as an antecedent of emotional labor in the tourism industry (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2021). For Taiwan, tourism is one of the major service sectors, and the government has implemented policies to improve inbound tourism during the recent decade. These efforts were successful, resulting in a considerable increase of international arrivals—though this growth trend has been interrupted by COVID-19 since the beginning of 2020.

Tour guides, the front-line service providers in the tourism industry, lead, communicate with, and inform visitors about the destination in an efficient, safe, and interesting way in the language of their choice. They act as intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment, thus playing an important role in the success or failure of a tour experience and influencing tourists’ perceptions of the host destination (Caber, Ünal, Cengizci, & Güven, 2019). Tourists’ affective responses are shaped strongly by the performance of tour guides, and these responses in turn influence encounter-level satisfaction. In addition, because the tourism industry is characterized by high-contact encounters and considerable interaction with customers, it is especially crucial for professionals in this industry to have the ability to manage, regulate, and control their emotions in order to interact with others constructively and effectively (Min, 2017).

Despite a growing body of evidence of tour guides’ considerable influence in the tourism industry, there has been relatively little scholarly attention devoted to researching the EI competencies of tour guides (Caber et al., 2019). In particular, there are no firmly established EI measurement instruments for tour guides. To address the gap, the purpose of the study is to examine the construct validity and reliability of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) in the Taiwanese tour guide settings, which is considered theoretically sound and one of the most commonly used EI instruments among self-report measures. The WLEIS was originally designed and developed by Wong and Law (2002) using samples of students and employees in Hong Kong. The scale consists of four dimensions with four items in each dimension: Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Regulation of Emotion (ROE), and Use of Emotion (UOE). The current study has received permission from Professors Wong and Law to adapt and modify the measurement items for application in this study.

In total, 530 surveys were distributed to tour guides, and due to the generous support of the Taiwan Tourist Guide Association, 520 surveys were returned. After accounting for invalid questionnaires (n=38), a total of 482 individuals who completed all items were included for analysis, yielding an effective response rate of 90.9%. The collected data were analysed and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. According to the results, the Taiwan version of the WLEIS retained the original four-factor structure and evidence of the generalizability of the WLEIS in tour guide settings. The validation of the WLEIS can give researchers a useful measure for assessing how specific aspects of EI tend to affect Taiwanese tourism-related settings.

References


