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# The Effect of Supervisor-Focused Impression Management Behavior of the Cabin Crew on Perceived Customer Empathy\*

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study was done to analyze the effect of supervisor-focused impression management behavior of the airline cabin crew on perceived customer empathy. It focused on verifying dual meanings of the crew's emotional expression divided into surface acting and deep acting. **Research design, data and methodology:** The survey was conducted on cabin crews of two major Korean airlines. The reliability and validity of each variable used in the questionnaire were verified. Then, each hypothesis was analyzed through multiple regression analysis. **Results:** Firstly, the crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior had a significant effect only on surface acting of the crew's emotional labor behavior. Among the crew's supervisor-focused IM behaviors, verbal IM behavior had a greater influence on surface acting than non-verbal IM behavior. Secondly, there was no relationship between the crew's supervisor-focused IM behavior and the crew's deep acting. Thirdly, the crew's emotional labor behavior (surface acting & deep acting) had a significant effect on perceived customer empathy. Fourth, the crew's deep acting had a greater influence on perceived customer empathy than surface acting. **Conclusions:** Cabin crews receive double evaluation from their immediate supervisors and customers. As a result, it was confirmed that the crew's supervisor-focused IM behavior, the crew's emotional labor behavior, and perceived customer empathy were connected process.

**Keywords :** Impression Management Behavior, Surface Acting, Deep Acting, Customer Empathy.

**JEL Classification Code:** L8, M0, M1, M3, Z0.

## 1. Introduction

As the service industry's share of the entire industry increased, emotional labor became more important as a task role (Hochschild, 1983). Among service companies, the

aviation industry is highly dependent on human resources. For example, there is a tendency to perceive the quality of service provided crews as the service quality of the airline (Bienstock, DeMoranville & Smith, 2003).

In the service process, the cabin crew tries to provide authentic service by adjusting his/her feelings (if necessary) according to the company manual. From customers' viewpoint, surface acting without authenticity is perceived as fake and do not trigger a positive response from customers. On the other hand, deep acting contains the authenticity of understanding the customer. Therefore, customers recognize this and show a positive response (Kim, 2009).

In the context of service providers and receivers, empathy can be formed between employees and customers. Empathy can also alleviate conflicts that are likely to arise in the process of providing services (Clark et al., 2013).

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Customer empathy is a factor that has a more positive effect on customer satisfaction than service employee empathy (Wieseke et al., 2012).

However, there is insufficient research on the antecedent variables that influence the emotional labor behavior of cabin crews. In this study, the crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior was presented as a leading factor in the crew's emotional labor. The cabin crew must work during the designated working hours on the aircraft with limited time and space. Therefore, the intensity of sending under the direction or supervision of the boss is very high. This means that the cabin crew herself becomes the subject of double evaluation, which must show good appearance to both supervisors and customers. Therefore, the impression management behavior performed by the cabin crew to the supervisor could affect the emotional labor behavior of the crew. Since the service is delivered to the customer through the emotional labor behavior of the crew, it will also have a significant influence on the customer's judgment (empathy).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior on perceived customer empathy through the crew's emotional labor behavior. In particular, the customer empathy set as the dependent variable in this study deviates from the existing SERVQUAL category and presents a more in-depth and multifaceted perspective. Moreover, by applying the results of this study, service companies will be able to consider more advanced human service provision and qualitative management plans. In this study, it is possible to establish a marketing strategy that can lead to emotional satisfaction beyond general satisfaction to customers. At the same time, it is expected to provide a new perspective on how to approach human resource management in order to bring out the authentic service of employees.

## 2. Literature Reviews

### 2.1. Impression Management Behavior

People tend to be very sensitive to what they see about others (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Currently, the importance of the 'other' is higher if it is the case of the supervisor who oversees his or her job at work. Therefore, it is taken for granted that subordinates want to present a good image of themselves in their supervisors. Previous researchers have a common opinion on defining impression management as an attempt by employees to regulate others' perceptions of themselves within an organization (Rosenfeld, Giacalone & Riordan, 1995; Schlenker, Forsyth, Leary & Miller, 1980). Specifically, it is defined as follows: actions taken to be

seen by the supervisor (Liden & Mitchel, 1988), actions taken by subordinates to seek consent from the supervisor and obtain work rewards (Deluga & Perry, 1991), and deliberate behavior to influence the perception of others within the organization (Bolino et al., 2008; Elsbach, Sutton, & Principe, 1998).

As such, it is generally accepted that impression management is not uncommon in the relationship between subordinates and supervisors within an organization (Bolino et al., 2008; Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter & Ammeter, 2002; Higgins, Judge & Ferris, 2003; Rosenfeld et al., 1995).

In this study, impression management is limited to the relationship between the cabin crew and the immediate supervisor, and it is conceptualized as verbal and non-verbal actions deliberately taken by subordinates to instill a positive image about themselves in the eyes of the supervisor.

Types of impression management are generally divided into individual and organizational levels (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Tedeschi & Norman, 1985). In this study, only impression management of subordinates at the individual level was being focused upon. Herewith, from the results of previous research and discussion, the H1 is that the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior will positively influence the crew's surface acting.

**H1:** The cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior will have a positive effect on the crew's surface acting.

**H2:** The cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior will have a positive effect on the crew's deep acting.

In the study of Wayne and Ferris (1990), based on the study of impression management that occurs when subordinates and supervisors interact, two sub-factors of supervisor-focused impression management are organized. This includes verbal impression management and non-verbal impression management.

Verbal impression management is classified into assertive and defensive actions (Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). The assertive impression management behavior is divided into other-focused tactics and self-focused tactics. Other-focused tactics appear in the same way as praising others, emphasizing a positive image of yourself to others, and sympathizing with others' opinions. Self-focused tactics emphasize one's own abilities rather than attractiveness to emphasize one's own strengths (Howard & Ferris, 1996; Kacmar et al., 1992; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991). The defensive impression management behavior is an act expressed with excuses, denial,

justification, and apology. It is used to recover or protect one's damaged image (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Higgins et al., 1990). In this study, since impression management was defined as an action deliberately taken by subordinates to instill a positive image on the supervisor, defensive impression management with relatively low correlation was excluded from the configuration items.

Non-verbal impression management was mainly dealt with in previous studies assuming job interview situations (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Weiss & Feldman, 2006). The non-verbal impression management behavior is an action taken by the interviewer to show a good appearance to the evaluator, but it is judged that it can be sufficiently substituted for the relationship between subordinates and supervisors. Therefore, this study attempted to accurately measure the degree of impression management by categorizing impression management into two dimensions: verbal impression management and non-verbal impression management by adding it as a sub-element of individual-level impression management behavior. Following the above discussion, the following hypothesis was established.

**H1-1:** Among factors of the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior, verbal impression management will have a greater effect on the crew's surface acting than non-verbal impression management.

## 2.2. Emotional Labor

Emotional labor has become an important part of the organization as the expectation for "service with a smile" in service enterprises has grown (Grandey, 2000; Pugh, 2001). The researcher who started the study of emotional labor was Hochschild, who defined emotion management as "publicly controlling visible facial and body expressions" in her book *The Managed Heart* (1983). In other words, emotional labor is an employee's use of his or her values to receive wages, and emotional labor and emotional management are considered as the same concept. Hochschild argued that emotional management occurs through two actions, surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting refers to the process of expressing emotions that employees do not actually feel but they have to display it as if they are feeling it in order to show the emotions that the company demands. In contrast, deep acting refers to a process in which an actual effort is followed to change an individual's emotions in order to express an appropriate emotion.

Morris and Feldman (1996) emphasized individual characteristics and external environment as causal variables of emotional labor, and conceptualized emotional labor based on their interactions. Grandey (2000) also coincided

with Hochschild's (1983) research, defining emotional labor as a process that regulates the expression of emotions felt by individuals, and argued that this is expressed through surface and deep acting.

As such, since Hochschild's (1983) study of emotional labor, many researchers have discussed the surface acting and deep acting as the behavior of emotional labor. Since it is persuasively accepted that emotional labor is divided into two independent dimensions: surface acting and deep acting, in this paper, the study was conducted by dividing emotional labor behavior into two elements: surface acting and deep acting.

According to the results of previous studies on emotional labor, deep acting of service employees has a positive effect on employee well-being and customer outcomes (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Chi, Grandey, Diamond & Krimmel, 2011; Grandey, 2003; Groth, Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2009), surface acting negatively affected the employee's well-being and customer perception of the service experience (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987).

Looking at the results of specific empirical analysis, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) measured the degree of participation in surface and deep acting for 238 full-time service employees. According to their research, emotional labor was found to be highly related to factors such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. Surface acting showed positive correlation with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but negative correlation with personal achievement. In the case of deep acting, there was a positive correlation with personal achievement, but not with emotional exhaustion or depersonalization.

Similarly, Brotheridge and Lee (2002) conducted an emotional labor analysis of 236 employees in various service occupations. It was concluded that the surface acting reduced the authentic emotions of an individual, leading to emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, it was confirmed that the deep acting had a positive relationship with the authenticity of the individual and played a role in reducing emotional exhaustion.

In other words, when engaging in the deep acting, employees add a conscious effort to control an individual's inner emotions in order to meet the needs of the organization. In this paper, the research was conducted by assuming such efforts of employees as the concept of authenticity, and a hypothesis was established that it would have a significant effect on customer empathy. The specific hypotheses are as follows.

**H3:** The cabin crew's surface acting will have a positive effect on perceived customer empathy.

**H4:** The cabin crew's deep acting will have a positive effect on perceived customer empathy.

### 2.3. Customer Empathy

Empathy is the process of understanding the experiences of others from the perspective of others as if they were your own and putting yourself in the position of others (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). It also means the ability to understand and respond to the other's psychological experiences (Decety & Jackson, 2006; Eisenberg, 2000; Singer & Lamm, 2009). Empathy is a process that enhances understanding of the other person and experiences the other person's emotions on behalf of the other person (Bylund & Makoul, 2005; Shin, Stotzer & Gutierrez, 2013). In other words, empathy can be explained as a kind of transfer of sharing emotions experienced by others (Kim, 2006).

Empathy is generally classified into cognitive empathy and affective empathy (Wieseke et al., 2012). Cognitive empathy refers to the understanding of the experience or inner state of others as a dimension of cognitive intelligence (Barrett-Lennard, 1981; Giacobbe et al., 2006; Homburg, Wieseke & Bornemann, 2009a), affective empathy encompasses intuitive feelings toward others and is accompanied by non-verbal understanding (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Kerem et al., 2001).

Researchers agree that empathy is best understood when approaching empathy with a multidimensional structure that includes both cognitive and affective empathy (Kerem, Fishman & Josselson, 2001; Smith, 2009). Therefore, this study defined empathy including both cognitive empathy (Rogers, 1959) and affective empathy (Duan & Hill, 1996; Moore, 1990; Redmond, 1989).

As mentioned above, empathy is a topic mainly dealt with in social and clinical psychology, but it is being newly defined and studied as occurring between customers and service providers that have passed into sales and marketing.

Wieseke et al. (2012) presented empathy for the first time in the relationship between customers and service providers. He defines the empathy felt by a service provider as "understanding the customer's thoughts and emotions while the employee is interacting with the customer and experiencing or sharing the customer's emotions on the behalf of the customer." Therefore, in this study, this empathy was converted to the customer's position and defined as "the customer's perception of the degree to which the employee (cabin crew) understands the customer's thoughts and emotions and tries to experience or share the customer's emotions on behalf of the customer."

Previous studies have clarified that such customer empathy is a factor of high importance in terms of corporate marketing. First, empathy makes it possible to predict the other's reactions, and accordingly, the individual can elicit a mutually beneficial reaction by presenting the other's desired reaction. As a result, friendly interpersonal relationships are formed (de Waal, 2008). In addition,

empathy can alleviate conflicts that are likely to arise in the process of providing services (Clark et al., 2013), and depending on the level of empathy, the tendency to forgive employees for unsatisfactory services may vary (Wieseke et al., 2012), and this empathy is also an important factor in handling customer complaints (Simon, 2013). In other words, customer empathy is a factor that has a more positive effect on customer satisfaction than service employee empathy (Wieseke et al., 2012). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was established.

**H5:** The cabin crew's deep acting will have a greater effect on perceived customer empathy than surface acting.

### 2.4. Research Model

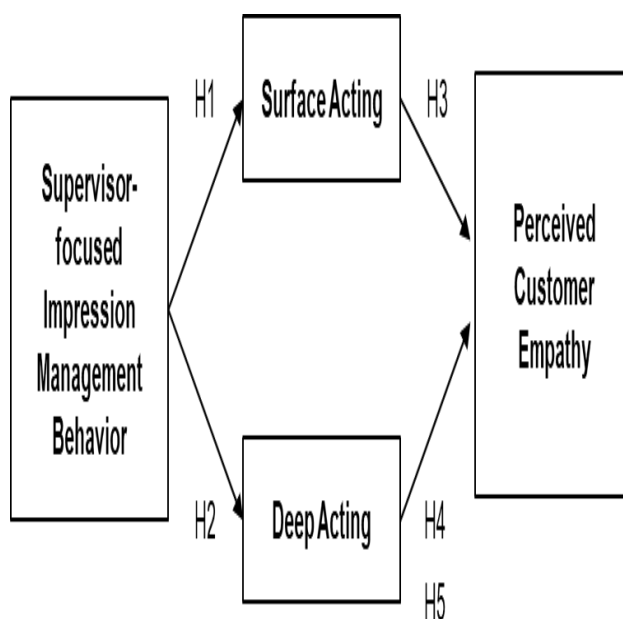


Figure 1: Research Model

## 3. Data and Research Methodology

### 3.1. Data

For the research, employees of large domestic airlines (Company K, Company A) in Korea participated in the survey. A total of 170 people were subjected to a self-report questionnaire, and a total of 165 people's responses were used, excluding the data of 5 people with missing or unfaithful responses among the collected questionnaires. The time needed to complete the survey was about 10 to 15 minutes.

## 3.2. Measure

For all questions, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables (1=most disagreeable, 5=most agreeable). The measurement and the concept of the manipulative variable are as follows.

### 3.2.1. Impression Management Behavior

In this study, supervisor-focused impression management behavior was defined based on the concept of impression management behavior strategy of Wayne and Ferris (1990). Specifically, impression management is limited to the relationship between the cabin crew and the immediate supervisor, and it is conceptualized as verbal and non-verbal actions deliberately taken by subordinates to instill a positive image on the supervisor. The supervisor-focused impression management behavior item was used in the study of Bolino et al. (2006). Based on the research of Kristof-Brown et al. (2002) and Erdogan (2011), the sub-elements of the supervisor-focused impression management behavior item were classified into verbal IM and non-verbal IM.

### 3.2.2. Emotional Labor

Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) questionnaires were used to measure emotional labor behavior. In this study, the questionnaire was modified to suit the work environment of the cabin crew. The emotional labor behavior consisted of 6 items for surface acting and 5 items for deep acting. A sample sentence of surface acting is as follows: "I treat passengers as if they have specific emotions due to business needs", "I tend to express emotions that are not actually felt". A sample sentence of deep acting is as follows: "As part of my job, I really want to feel the emotions that should be shown to the passengers", "I try to feel the emotions that I have to express to the passengers in my mind".

### 3.2.3. Customer Empathy

Customer empathy was defined based on the study of Kim (2006). Customer empathy is an effort to understand the other person, and it means the ability to understand the relationship between you and the other person in the other person's position. Empathy was divided into two elements: cognitive empathy and affective empathy.

Customer empathy was measured based on the studies of Mehrabian & Epstein (1972), Ketrow (1991), and Plank, Minton & Reid (1996). A total of 16 questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale of 'most disagreeable' and 'most agreeable', with 10 items for cognitive empathy and 6 items for affective empathy.

**Table 1:** Measurement of Scales

Variables	Items	Num. of Items	References
Supervisor-focused Impression Management Behavior	Verbal, Non-verbal	9	Bolino, Varela, Bande & Turnley (2006) Erdogan (2011) Kristof-Brown et al. (2002) Wayne & Ferris (1990)
Emotional Labor Behavior	Surface Acting, Deep Acting	11	Brotheridge & Grandey (2002)
Perceived Customer Empathy	Cognitive Empathy, Affective Empathy	16	Ketrow (1991) Kim (2006) Mehrabian & Epstein (1972) Plank, Minton & Reid (1996)

## 3.3. Method: Analytical Strategy

In this study, analysis was conducted using SPSS 22.0, and the detailed analysis method used is as follows. Firstly, prior to the main survey, a preliminary survey was first conducted on 30 cabin crew members of Company K. In the preliminary survey, the questionnaire was systematized, excluding items with low reliability or validity, and then the main survey was conducted. Secondly, to confirm the reliability of each variable used in the study, a reliability test was conducted to calculate the Cronbach's alpha. And to verify the validity of each variable, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Thirdly, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to verify the effect of the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior on perceived customer empathy through the crew's surface acting and deep acting.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. Reliability and Validity

In this study, in order to measure the reliability of each variable, the reliability of the variable was measured using the Cronbach's alpha value to examine the internal consistency based on the average relationship between the items for the same measurement. In social science, it is generally considered that there is internal consistency, or reliability, when the Cronbach's alpha is 0.6 or higher. Prior to verifying the hypothesis of this study, the reliability of the independent variable (the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior), the double-path variable (the cabin crew's emotional labor behavior), and

the dependent variable (perceived customer empathy) was analyzed. As a result, it was confirmed that the intrinsic consistency among the items constituting each study variable was high.

**Table 2:** Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis Results

Variables (Cronbach's Alpha)		Items	Factor1	Factor2
Supervisor-focused Impression Management Behavior	Verbal IM .826	VIM1	.865	
		VIM2	.810	
		VIM3	.725	
		VIM4	.706	
		VIM15	.599	
	Non- verbal IM .834	NVIM1		.862
		NVIM2		.796
		NVIM3		.795
NVIM4			.725	
Emotional Labor Behavior	Deep Acting .937	DA1	.914	
		DA2	.909	
		DA3	.877	
		DA4	.860	
		DA5	.853	
	Surface Acting .886	SA1		.886
		SA2		.863
		SA3		.812
		SA4		.804
		SA5		.709
		SA6		.658
Perceived Customer Empathy	Cognitive Empathy .962	CE1	.926	
		CE2	.893	
		CE3	.888	
		CE4	.887	
		CE5	.869	
		CE6	.858	
		CE7	.856	
		CE8	.854	
		CE9	.846	
		CE10	.670	
	Affective Empathy .927	AE1		.911
		AE2		.896
		AE3		.882
		AE4		.856
		AE5		.808
		AE6		.741

The validation of the validity is to determine whether the observed values of each variable were accurately observed in the study. And it is to analyze whether the actual measuring tool (questionnaire) is properly measuring the concept (variable) to be measured. The validity of this study was verified through factor analysis. The number of factors adopted was confirmed through reliability analysis and previous studies, and then confirmative factor analysis was performed. Sub-factors with cross-loaded values for each factor were deleted and only variables with good factor loading were extracted.

## 4.2. Hypothesis Tests

Multiple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses of this study. H1 is whether the cabin crew's supervisor-focused IM behavior has a positive effect on the crew's surface acting. Multiple regression analysis was performed with verbal and non-verbal IM as independent variables and surface acting as the dependent variable. The analysis results are shown in <Table 3>. The F value for the entire model was 6.814, which was found to be significant when the significance level was 0.01. Therefore, H1 was adopted. In addition, in the case of H1-1, that among factors of the crew's supervisor-focused IM behavior, verbal IM has a greater effect on the crew's surface acting than non-verbal IM. Since the beta value of the standardized coefficients for verbal IM is 0.212, which is greater than the beta value of the standardized coefficients for non-verbal IM (0.186), it can be considered to have a greater effect. Therefore, H1-1 was adopted.

H2 was that the crew's supervisor-focused IM behavior will have a positive effect on the crew's deep acting. The analysis results are shown in <Table 4>. The F value for the entire model was 1.377, which turned out to be insignificant even if the significance level was 0.1. Therefore, H2 was rejected.

H3 was that the crew's surface acting will have a positive effect on perceived customer empathy. The analysis results are shown in <Table 5, 6>. For the model using cognitive empathy as a dependent variable, surface acting did not have a significant effect on cognitive empathy ( $t=-0.771$ ,  $p=0.442$ ), but it was found that it had a significant effect on affective empathy ( $t=3.524$ ),  $p=0.001$ ). Hence, H3 was partially adopted.

H4 was that the crew's deep acting will have a positive effect on perceived customer empathy. With reference to <Tables 5, 6>, the analysis result of the hypothesis was derived. The model with cognitive empathy as dependent variable showed  $t=3.410$  and significance probability=0.001, while the model with affective empathy as dependent variable showed  $t=2.200$  and significance probability=0.029, all of which had a significant effect on each empathy. H4 was adopted.

Comprehensively considering H3 and H4, the regression model for the effect of the crew's emotional labor behavior on perceived customer empathy was judged to be overall significant ( $F=6.137$ , model's significance=0.003).

For H5, it was expected that the crew's deep acting would have a greater impact on perceived customer empathy than surface acting. The crew's surface acting

resulted in a causal relationship only with affective empathy. In contrast, the crew's deep acting had a significant effect on both cognitive and affective empathy. When judged based on whether two actions (surface acting and deep acting) had an equal effect on cognitive empathy and affective empathy evenly, deep acting showed a greater influence on customer empathy than surface acting. Therefore, H5 was adopted.

**Table 3:** Supervisor-focused IM → Surface Acting

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	F	Model's Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	.003	.077		.036	.971	6.814	.001
Non-verbal IM	.186	.077	.186	2.417	.017		
Verbal IM	.213	.077	.212	2.767	.006		
DV: Surface Acting, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> :.069, ***P<.01							

**Table 4:** Supervisor-focused IM → Deep Acting

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	F	Model's Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	-.008	.079		-.102	.919	1.377	.255
Non-verbal IM	.129	.079	.130	1.634	.104		
Verbal IM	.022	.079	.022	.276	.783		
DV: Deep Acting, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> :.005, ***P<.01							

**Table 5:** Emotional Labor Behavior → Perceived Customer (Cognitive) Empathy

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	F	Model's Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	.011	.078		.144	.885	6.137	.003
Surface Acting	-.060	0.78	-.060	-.771	.442		
Deep Acting	.263	.077	.264	3.410	.001		
DV: Cognitive Empathy, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> :.061, ***P<.01							

**Table 6:** Emotional Labor Behavior → Perceived Customer (Affective) Empathy

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	F	Model's Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	.004	.077		.050	.960	8.556	.000
Surface Acting	.271	.077	.269	3.524	.001		
Deep Acting	.168	.076	.168	2.200	.029		
DV: Affective Empathy, Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> :.088, ***P<.01							

## 5. Conclusions

This study was conducted to investigate the process of connecting the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior to perceived customer empathy through the crew's emotional labor behavior. The contents of the research results are as follows.

### 5.1. Summary of the Research Results

H1 verified the effect of the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior on the crew's surface acting. The supervisor-focused impression management behavior had a positive effect on the surface acting. Among factors of the independent variable, verbal impression management had a greater influence on the surface acting.

H1-1 compared the degree of influence of verbal and non-verbal impression management on the crew's surface acting among factors of the crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior. It was confirmed that verbal impression management had a greater effect on surface acting than non-verbal impression management.

H2 verified the effect of the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior on the crew's deep acting. The supervisor-focused impression management behavior did not significantly affect the deep acting. In the case of the deep acting with authenticity added by the crew's voluntary efforts, it is judged that there is no correlation with the impression management behavior done by the crew for the purpose of creating a good image of themselves in the minds of the supervisor.

H3 verified the effect of the cabin crew's surface acting on perceived customer empathy. The crew's surface acting had a positive effect only on affective empathy among perceived customer empathy factors. The surface acting is simply the degree to which the service provider simply follows the manual, which is the rules for expressing emotions required by companies. Therefore, it is judged that it had a significant effect only on affective empathy, which is relatively easy to measure.

H4 verified the effect of the cabin crew's deep acting on perceived customer empathy. The crew's deep acting had a positive effect on both cognitive and affective empathy among perceived customer empathy factors. It can be expected that customers will differentiate between simple service provided by cabin crews and high-level service with authenticity. Accordingly, it can be expected that customers will evaluate two types of service behavior differently in the future.

H5 compares the degree of influence of the crew's deep

and surface acting on perceived customer empathy, respectively. The crew's deep acting had a significant effect on both cognitive and affective empathy, whereas the surface acting had a causal relationship only with affective empathy. Therefore, it was confirmed that the deep acting had a greater influence on perceived customer empathy than the surface acting.

### 5.2. Implications

First, if the cabin crew's supervisor-focused impression management behavior has a positive effect on the crew's surface acting, it can be seen that the better crews are more proficient in externally exposed behavior, the better they adapt to the basic services required by the company (defined as surface acting in this paper). In the case of the superficial service of the cabin crew, it is meaningful for the fact that it can give basic satisfaction and affective empathy to customers, although it is lower than that of deep acting that is exhibited with the inner authenticity. In previous studies, the supervisor-focused impression management behavior occurring within the organization was considered to have only negative consequences (Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Schlenker et al., 1980). However, in this study, it was found that the impression management behavior of airline crew members can have a positive effect on improving the quality of superficial service behavior. In other words, it is considered that it suggested a new direction of research in the way that it proved the positive aspect of the impression management behavior.

Secondly, if the emotional labor behavior, which is the act of expressing emotions by cabin crews, directly affects the judgment of passengers who are external customers. This has great marketing implications. Previous studies have mainly analyzed the emotional labor of cabin crews by focusing on personal factors such as job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intention, and job burnout as internal customers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Grandey, 2000). However, this study is differentiated in the way that the target of the emotional labor behavior reaction is expanded to the domain of the customer. The results of this study can be reflected in the airline's management activities as follows. The emotional labor of the cabin crew is recognized as an important variable that directly affects customer empathy, and it will be an opportunity to make efforts to manage human resources at the organizational level in preparation for this.

Third, this study evaluated the process of employee emotional labor behavior as a factor that influences customer empathy. As a result, it is expected to provide a new perspective on establishing a marketing strategy that can lead to cognitive and affective satisfaction beyond the



existing one. Specifically, the value of the service cannot be fully realized only by the superficial actions of employees. Therefore, it is important to elicit customer empathy through genuine service that comes from the inside of the employee. Also, services should not be limited to external forms. The act of showing the spirit of service that considers and respects customers can minimize negative emotions of customers and increase service commitment.

### 5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

In this study, it was assumed that the supervisor-focused impression management behavior for cabin crew members of large domestic airlines was a leading factor in the emotional labor behavior of cabin crews. And the influence of the crew's emotional labor behavior on perceived customer empathy was investigated.

In this process, for the consistency of the survey, the crew was selected as the subject of the survey. However, in principle, the subject of customer empathy is the customer. Although perceived customer empathy was measured due to temporal and spatial constraints, it will be meaningful to directly measure customer empathy in the future. Therefore, after cross-measurement of what the cabin attendant perceives and what the customer directly feels, it is judged that comparing the two will show more reliable results.

In addition, the number of samples applied to the research model measurement is only 165, so it can be said to be on a small level compared to the total cabin crew population. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out the same study with more samples in the future.

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