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Emotional Labor, Domination, and Resistance Pratices in Hotel Businessess: A Semiotic Analysis of the Film My Blind Date with Life

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Article History	Abstract
	Although there is research on emotional labor, domination, and resistance in tourism literature, it is thought that semiotic analysis has been overlooked in this area. This study aims to reveal the use of emotional labor, domination, and resistance practices in the hospitality industry through film. For this purpose, the film Mein Blind Date mit dem Leben (My Blind Date with Life) was analyzed. According to the findings, the film's most prominent practices of domination were material domination and status domination. At the same time, it was observed that the main character openly resisted these. It was determined that Sali, the main character of the film, exhibited emotional labor by hiding her visual impairment for the majority of the film to meet the business's demand for "visually healthy people.
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INTRODUCTION

The behavior of service sector employees towards customers is one of the most important factors determining customer satisfaction. Therefore, businesses seek to control their employees' behavior toward customers. Employees adopt behaviors that consider the interests of the business by controlling their emotions to comply with existing behavior rules. Over time, these managed emotions have become a "bargaining element" (Kart, 2011). Including employees' emotional labor in the service process during customer-employee interactions has become a significant factor (Güngör, 2009). As in all service businesses, in tourism businesses, due to the nature of the tourism sector, employees are expected to be polite and friendly towards customers (Chu & Murrmann, 2006). A significant portion of the labor provided by employees in the tourism sector can be classified as emotional labor. (Keleş & Tuna, 2018).

Duran and Gümüş (2013) argue that the tourism sector is among the industries that most require emotional labor. Yeşilyurt (2022) states that tourism employees are the external face of businesses and represent the business. Kozak and Güçlü (2008) indicate that in the service sector, employees are paid not only for the technical work they do but also for the emotional labor they display during the service process. In other words, emotional labor, in addition to physical and mental labor, plays an important role in the work process in the service sector.

Many studies have been conducted on emotional labor in the tourism sector, which is an important sub-branch of the service sector, and the issue of emotional labor in the tourism sector has been considered from different perspectives. Baş and Kılıç (2014) evaluation of emotional labor in the disabled tourism; Işık (2015) relationship between emotional labor and work-family conflict; Karakaş (2015) the effect of emotional labor on work behavior; Kurt (2013) the effect of emotional labor on alienation; Yakar (2015) the relationship between emotional labor and burnout; Yürür and Ünlü (2011) the relationship between emotional labor, emotional exhaustion and intention to quit, Keleş and Tuna (2018) dealt with the issue of emotional labor with a critical approach.

Another topic in the tourism literature that has been neglected but deserves attention is the domination imposed on employees. Domination, defined as "oppression, bullying, and ruling" (TDK, 2024), involves individuals imposing their desires on others through physical or psychological pressure (Gelirli, 2009). In the tourism sector, it is observed that managers, customers, and even team members, whether consciously or not, exert domination over employees (Albin, 2017; Kiril, 2020; Çıvak & Besler, 2022; Çıvak, 2021). Poulstan (2008) noted that women working in the tourism sector on a daily or part-time basis are in a more vulnerable position. Aslan and Kozak (2012) reported that employees with lower status are more frequently subjected to domination compared to other employees. It is stated that individuals who experience domination, sexual harassment, or physical violence from customers or managers in work environments are more likely to quit their jobs and suffer from psychological distress (Ram, 2018).

How tourism employees react in the face of harsh working conditions, the problem of insecurity, the practices of domination are also an important issue. It is seen that hotel employees are often forced to obey in response to labor exploitation and domination, but they respond with everyday resistance practices (Çıvak, 2021). In various studies conducted in the literature on this subject, the domination practices and forms of resistance to which employees are exposed have also been discussed and similar findings have been obtained (Çıvak & Besler, 2018; De Certeau 1984; Efthymiou, 2010; Erköse, 2020; Kiril, 2020; Prasad & Prasad, 2000; Tucker, 1993).

When semiotic research in tourism is examined, it includes marketing topics such as hotel logos (Toktaş, 2021),

tourism cartoons (Civelek & Türkay, 2019), advertisements (Aydın & Aydın, 2016), the symbolic representation of tourism destinations (Sezerel & Taşdelen, 2016), and destination image (Hunter, 2016). Additionally, Çıvak and Kale (2024) examined the phenomenon of alienation through semiotics. However, while studies on emotional labor, domination, and resistance are noteworthy in the literature, it is observed that research using semiotic analysis has been overlooked. This gap in the literature has been a motivating factor for designing this study. Based on this gap, this study aims to reveal the emotional labor behaviors exhibited by hotel employees, the domination practices they are subjected to, and how they resist these practices through semiotic analysis. The movie Mein Blind Date with Life was chosen for analysis in this study because it effectively reflects the emotional labor of employees in tourism businesses, the domination they are exposed to, and their resistance to this domination.

Although a film may not reflect reality exactly, it can represent everyday practices of society and real-life events. Moreover, films serve as significant tools for conveying messages to audiences in a quick and clear manner. However, films also have certain drawbacks, including box office concerns, artistic influences, exaggeration, and the distortion of reality, making it impossible to assert that they are direct reflections of reality. For this reason, film analyses should be examined from this perspective and presented to the reader accordingly. In this study, the messages conveyed by the film are analyzed and presented to readers from this standpoint. In fact, in film analyses using semiotics, the messages intended to be conveyed beyond what is seen are carefully examined. Meanings are derived from the signs and symbols used. Additionally, the phenomenon being addressed, the main theme, and the messages intended to be conveyed to the audience are deciphered (Çilingir & Can, 2021; Sayıcı, 2021; Aydıngüler, 2023). This study, unlike other studies in the literature, aims to reveal the emotional labor behaviors of tourism workers, the domination they are exposed to, and the reflection of their resistance to domination in the media. From this perspective, this study is expected to contribute to the literature on tourism and media.

Literature Review

Emotional Labor

The concept of emotional labor was brought to attention in 1983 with Arlie Russel Hochschild's work The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling. The core argument of the work is that human emotions have become commercialized and commodified. In other words, employees in the workplace transform their emotions into a commercial asset that meets customer expectations (Keleş & Tuna, 2018). Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labor as the display of facial and bodily movements required from individuals in exchange for a specific payment. Morris and Feldman (1996) describe emotional labor as regulation of emotions and the display of appropriate behaviors according to the job. Robbins (2005), in addition to these definitions, emphasizes whose interests these behaviors serve by stating that employees regulate their emotions and behaviors to fulfill the business goals. As seen, emotional labor, which involves displaying emotions expected by the business, often does not reflect the individual's true feelings (Akçay & Çoruk, 2012). In other words, emotional labor relies on the control of individuals' emotional behaviors. People adapt to this system by mimicking emotions they do not feel or hiding the negative emotions they feel (Kart, 2011). There are factors that affect employees in showing emotional labor. While Steinberg and Figart (1999) stated that these factors could be factors such as gender, age, and culture; Özkaplan (2009) evaluated the emotional labor behaviors of employees only as women and men and only addressed the gender factor. Oral and Köse (2011) evaluated emotional labor factors under three main headings: organizational factors, individual factors,

and interaction characteristics, and stated that individuals' emotional labor levels may vary depending on these three factors. Ezilmez and Eroğlu (2019) concluded similarly in their studies with healthcare workers that employees' emotional labor levels are affected by individual and organizational factors.

The first distinction in the management of emotions was made by Hochschild (1983), who divided it into surface and deep acting. Later, Ashforth and Humprey (1993) added the dimension of genuine acting to these categories.

Surface Acting

Surface Acting is when an individual suppresses their true emotions and behaves as if they are feeling emotions they do not experience (Ashforth & Humprey, 1993; Grandey, 2000). Diefendorff et al. (2005) provided the example of an employee who continues to communicate politely and with a smile towards a dissatisfied and rude customer, despite the service being good. In surface acting, the individual tries to suppress negative emotions and act with positive behaviors. It is stated that when employees predominantly engage in surface acting and do not display deep or genuine behaviors, discrepancies between the emotions they feel and the emotions they display will emerge over time (Baş & Kılıç, 2014). Additionally, it is noted that the constant display of surface acting by employees can lead to tension in the workplace (Cote, 2005). It is thought that the reason for this is that emotion regulation increases the level of tension in individuals (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Pugh, 2002). It is thought that individuals who exhibit superficial behavior make more effort to regulate emotions than individuals who exhibit deep behavior, so it has been inferred that those who exhibit superficial behavior may have higher levels of tension (Kanfer & Kantrowitz, 2002). In this regard, Cote (2005) suggested that managers train their employees to adopt deep behavior.

Deep Acting

When individuals attempt to genuinely experience and feel the behavior expected of them, it is defined as deep behavior (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). According to Yürür and Ünlü (2011), in deep behavior, the employee intends to present a sincere appearance to customers. For this reason, deep behavior is seen as "well-intentioned behavior," because the employee is genuinely trying to empathize with the customer and behave sincerely. Hochschild (1983) stated that there are two ways to demonstrate deep behavior. The first is when the employee forces themselves to feel the expected behavior, and the second is when the employee recalls past experiences in their mind to exhibit the expected behavior. In the second one, the individual makes an internal effort, going beyond merely managing facial expressions, and exerts mental effort to deeply feel the emotions (Diefendorff et al., 2005). It is noted that deep behavior increases employees' levels of happiness (Cote, 2005) and work performance while reducing the likelihood of negative emotions (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2003)

Genuine Acting

When the behaviors expected from employees by businesses are not conditioned (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), when the individual exhibits the behaviors that he/she truly feels, and when there is no difference between the emotions felt by the employee and the behavior expected by the business, sincere behavior occurs (Chu & Murrmann, 2006; Morris & Feldman, 1996). It is thought that individuals with this behavior behave in the desired manner without requiring any effort due to their extroversion and high level of harmony with their environment (Diefendorf et al., 2005). However, the absence of negative conditions in working conditions and individuals' daily lives is also a

contributing factor.

Emotional Labor in the Tourism Industry

The tourism sector involves intensive communication between employees and customers. As a result, emotional labor is seen as a part of the job in the tourism industry. Employers expect employees to be polite and cheerful towards customers (Busoi et al., 2022; Pala & Sürgevil, 2016) because employee behavior determines customer satisfaction. Therefore, pragmatist studies on emotional labor often include suggestions aimed at encouraging employees to display emotional labor. For example, Başlar and Göktepe (2021) suggested that managerial support positively influences emotional labor. Keleş and Tuna (2018) emphasized that managers should encourage employees to exhibit emotional labor. However, they also stress that deep acting by employees can only occur under appropriate organizational conditions.

The topic of emotional labor in the tourism sector has been predominantly addressed through tourist guides (Akdu & Akdu, 2016; Güzel et al., 2013; Kaya & Özhan, 2012), hotel staff (Aslan, 2018; Karakaş, 2017; Keleş & Tuna, 2016; Yakar, 2015; Yürür & Ünlü, 2011), and food and beverage establishments (Cinnioğlu & Salha, 2017; Korkmaz, Sünnetçioğlu & Koyuncu, 2015). It has been observed that recent studies on emotional labor focusing on tourist guides have increased (Özgen, 2010). Given the nature of their profession, tourist guides are reported to exhibit a wide range of emotional labor behaviors (Adib & Guerrier, 2001). However, it is also noted that tourist guides, who are in constant contact with people, are at a higher risk of experiencing emotional burnout (Adib & Guerrier, 2003).

Yakar (2015) found that emotional labor dimensions vary according to factors such as gender, age, and monthly income. Yakar revealed that deep behavior, one of the emotional labor dimensions, is adopted more by men than women. Hochschild (1983) stated that businesses expect women to exhibit more emotional labor and that the reason for this is that women are naturally more sensitive and have higher emotional control abilities than men. On the other hand, when the change in emotional labor dimensions is examined according to age, it is determined that employees between the ages of 26-30 have the lowest levels of sincere behavior, while employees between the ages of 41-45 have the highest levels of sincere behavior. It is thought that the reason for this may be that the person's experience increases as their age increases (Yakar, 2015). Robbins (2009) suggested that this phenomenon occurs because individuals' tendency to express negative emotions declines with age. On the other hand, it is stated that there is a positive relationship between individuals' age and emotional control regulations (Urry & Gross, 2010; Kaya & Özhan, 2012). In addition, it has been determined that employees with higher monthly incomes in the food and beverage department show more genuine acting towards customers compared to other departments (Yakar, 2015). This is attributed to the fact that employees in roles offering opportunities for additional earnings (e.g., tips) believe that displaying friendliness toward customers will enhance their income (Güngör, 2009).

On the other hand, there are positivist studies in the literature addressing the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. Eroğlu (2014) noted that emotional exhaustion is positively related to surface acting. Kaya and Özhan (2012) found in their study with tourist guides that tourist guides have a high tendency to engage in emotional labor, and their levels of burnout are low because they do not experience negative emotions during interactions with tourists. Yakar (2015) revealed a positive relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, while there was no significant relationship between deep acting and emotional exhaustion. Xu, Cao, and Huo (2020) found that hotel employees with high emotional intelligence and social support adopt surface acting to avoid depleting their energy.

They also identified a strong correlation between deep acting and customer orientation, while surface acting had no negative relationship with customer-oriented behavior. Amissah, Blankson-Stiles-Ocran, and Mensah (2022) examined the impact of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among frontline workers in hotel businesses. They found that surface acting is positively related to emotional exhaustion, whereas deep and genuine acting are negatively related to emotional exhaustion. Additionally, both genuine and deep acting were positively related to job satisfaction, while surface acting was negatively related to job satisfaction.

Domination and Resistance

Domination is defined as "ruling through coercion or tyranny" (TDK, 2024). Domination is a form of power, often social power, meaning it involves the application of power over other people. Therefore, it includes power imbalances or asymmetries (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018). Domination has persisted in various forms from ancient times to the present. In antiquity, it was evident in master-slave relationships, in feudal societies as landowners and serfs, and today in the relationships between employers and employees in businesses. It fundamentally arises from class distinctions. The conditions of dominance and subjugation clearly illustrate this (Scott, 2018). During the Roman era, there were two fundamental distinctions regarding republicanism: Imperium and Dominium. The sovereignty of the state was opposed to the sovereignty of private parties (Pettit, 1997, p. 31). Here, the dominance and power exerted by a master over a slave is evident, and it requires having a true dominus. Additionally, in patriarchal societies, we observe domination in gender relationships, such as women walking behind men. Moreover, the overt exclusion and condescension of individuals of minority statuses in the social realm also represent a form of domination.

Scott (2018) examines domination under three distinct categories. The first is material domination, which refers to the deprivation of material resources; the second is status domination, which involves individuals in higher positions making derogatory remarks towards those in lower positions (such as humiliation and insults); and the third is ideological domination, where individuals in dominant positions express discriminatory and racist rhetoric by asserting their privileged status. Scott's classification specifically pertains to the relationships between masters and serfs in feudal societies. However, other forms of domination practices also exist. For example, there are practices of physical domination that involve harassment and violence (Guerrier & Adib, 2000). Additionally, there is symbolic violence, described as a refined aspect of domination (Bourdieu, 2018). Symbolic violence is not perceived as oppression due to its normalization and acceptance within society (Han, 2017). Çıvak (2021) notes that, in contemporary businesses, employers exert domination over employees more through symbolic violence rather than physical violence, ultimately achieving their desired outcomes. In the workplace, power asymmetries arising from hierarchical relationships such as employer-employee or manager-employee inevitably lead to the emergence of domination practices.

It is observed that there are limited studies addressing domination experienced by employees in tourism businesses in the literature. Reviewing studies on domination practices in the literature, there are works on issues such as bullying experienced by women in tourism businesses (Falomir, 2022), authoritarian tourism planning problems (Wrangham, 1999), exploitation, domination, and resistance relationships (Çıvak, 2021), simple control (Erköse, 2020), and the transformation of control mechanisms into tools of exploitation and domination (Çıvak & Besler, 2022). However, it is noteworthy that there seems to be a lack of research specifically focusing on domination relationships through

the lens of a film.

Regarding resistance practices, domination and resistance are part of a cyclical process. Studies on the dialectic of domination and resistance view resistance as an inevitable outcome of working under control (Friedman, 1977; Edwards, 1979). Workplaces are areas of conflict characterized by class-based relationships, such as subordinate-superior dynamics (Edwards, 1979: 16), and actions occur in what Scott (2018) describes as public and hidden scenarios (Çıvak, 2021). In the hospitality industry, behaviors exhibited by those in subordinate positions as desired by the authority can be referred to as public scenarios (Scott, 2018, p. 27). As Goffman (1959) observed, individuals often strive to create impressions aligned with societal role expectations. In a way, those who are subordinate present their theatrical performances behind masks. In contrast, hidden scenarios take place in settings where individuals feel secure, facing minimal or no risk of surveillance or reporting (Scott, 2018). Çıvak (2021) classified forms of resistance occurring in hotels. According to this classification, actions are divided into individual and collective based on whether they are performed by a single person or a group. The presence or absence of violence (violent or non-violent) is also considered as a dimension. Additionally, actions are expressed as either explicit or hidden resistance based on whether they are displayed in public or not. While explicit resistance refers to the individual's actions in the public sphere, hidden resistance refers to the individual's secret reactions (Scott, 2018).

Methodology

In this study, semiotics, one of the qualitative research methods, has been used. Semiotics can be defined as the scientific field that studies various signs (Efe, 1993). Semiotics explains the dynamic nature of a work rather than describing its structure (Barthes, 1981). Studies on signs and their meanings date back to the Middle Ages. Contemporary semiotic analysis is considered to have begun with Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce (Zorlu, Çakı, & Karaca, 2017). Saussure explains semiotics using three concepts: signifier, signified, and the sign itself. He states that the sign is the fundamental unit of meaning and consists of two elements: the signifier and the signified (Mutlu, 2012). According to Lotman (2012), a sign is the physical representation of objects that individuals identify during information transfer within society. He describes signs as a tool for understanding and interpreting what is visible and what is behind the visible. According to Barthes (2005), meaning has two dimensions: denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the reflection of the object in the mind, while connotation refers to the interaction of signs with the excitement felt by individuals and their cultural values.

Although semiotics can be applied in many fields, it is frequently used in film analysis. It allows for the interpretation of a work through various symbols, images, and signs present in films (Agocuk, 2014). There are three different approaches in semiotic analysis methods used in film analysis. The first approach focuses on visual elements, the second on auditory elements (İnceoğlu, 2013; Güneş & Baylan, 2016), and the third approach is a combined approach that suggests using both visual and auditory elements together (Koçak, 2015). According to Agocuk (2014), cinema is one of the most powerful art forms in terms of meaning production. This is related to the fact that the storytelling process in cinema encompasses all other arts, providing opportunities for meaning-making and interpretation. In cinema, semiotic analysis can focus on cultural codes and symbols, as well as actors' facial expressions, dialogues, and sentence intonations (Aydıngüler, 2023). In this study, both visual and auditory elements were analyzed together to examine employees' emotional labor behaviors, the domination practices they are subjected to, and the forms of resistance they exhibit against such domination.

Findings

Fundementals About "My Blind Date with Life"

My Blind Date with Life is a 2017 German comedy-drama film based on the true story of Saliya Kahawatte. The film is directed by Marc Rothemund. It tells the story of a young man who, despite being nearly blind, refuses to let his disability define or limit his ambitions. One day, Sali loses a significant portion of his vision and is left with only 5% of normal sight. During this time, Sali insists on completing his education at a regular school, works hard, and graduates. Determined to pursue his dream job, he begins applying for internship positions in the hospitality industry. In his initial applications, Sali honestly mentions his visual impairment and receives a series of negative responses. He then applies to a large and luxurious hotel, the Baversicher Hof, without mentioning his visual impairment. After passing the preliminary screening and interview, Sali earns the internship and undergoes various tasks and tests in front office, housekeeping, service, and kitchen departments. Except for his family and a friend, no one knows about Sali's blindness. He makes a great effort to fulfill the job requirements. However, the emotional labor he exerts and the pressure he faces become unbearable. Even though he tries to resist in various ways, things eventually go off track. Sali, who makes consecutive mistakes at work, is fired by the restaurant manager. Emotionally exhausted, Sali experiences negative outcomes.

The protagonist, Sali, serves as a symbol of resilience and determination. Despite losing most of his vision at a young age, he refuses to let this impairment dominate his life. Instead, he attempts to assert control by hiding his blindness to pursue his dreams. Sali's journey is about taking control of his destiny. By concealing his blindness, he challenges social norms and expectations and while striving to shape his future. The film presents a story of resistance against societal norms. It shows how Sali begins to master various skills to compensate for his visual impairment. During this process, Sali has to continuously manage his emotions and maintain an image of normalcy to prevent his colleagues and employers from discovering his disability.

Emotional Labor Indicators

Before Sali and his sister go for a job interview, they rehearse how Sali should behave. This rehearsal, while intended to ensure that Sali's visual impairment goes unnoticed, includes dialogues reflecting power dynamics. His sister asks him, "No matter how they behave, are you ready to be polite to the customers?" emphasizing that he should respond kindly even to rude behavior from customers, thus encouraging him to exhibit surface acting as a form of emotional labor. Sali responds, "I will address every whim politely," showing that he has accepted emotional labor as part of his job. His behavior of being polite, smiling, and remaining calm in the face of all types of rudeness demonstrates that these actions are considered doxa in the field. Scott (2018) likens the behavior, attitudes, gestures, and expressions under power in work environments to a theatrical performance. Sali is rehearsing for the theatrical performance he will present in the workplace. Sali's statement about addressing all whims politely represents symbolic violence, which is often not even perceived by individuals (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This indicates that the individual becomes inclined to exhibit the expected behavior without even realizing it as a necessity or pressure and that their habitus is shaped by the job. This situation demonstrates that the structure initially shapes the actor's behavior.

Visual 1. Prepare for Business Situation (00:13:04)

Table 1. Indicator of Adaptability to Job Requirements

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Dialogue between brothers	Getting Sali ready for the job	Sali's pre-conception of performing emotional labor behaviors before starting work

Denotation: Her sister gives a speech to prepare Sali for the work environment.

Connotation: Employees in tourism adopt emotional labor behaviors as part of their job duties.

From the beginning to the end of the film, the main character Sali's effort to conceal his visual impairment while performing various roles in the hotel is an example of deep behavior in terms of emotional labor. Despite his blindness becoming an obstacle to working at the hotel, he exerts a significant effort to act as if he can see. This goes beyond emotional labor, as Sali must adjust not only his emotions but also all of his behaviors to meet the expectations of the business.

When the restaurant chef describes the duties of the interns in the restaurant, he says, "You will be modest and, most importantly, cheerful. Remember, if you smile from the heart, customers will understand that you love your job. I will not tolerate superficiality, slowness, laziness, or anything that will damage the hotel's reputation!" Here, while the interns are asked to be modest and cheerful, they are also expected to engage in emotional labor. These doxas, basic rules of the field, which have become norms in the service sector, ensure that the rules in the field are accepted without question (Calhoun, 2016). The chef's directive to "not be superficial" implies that they should adopt deep behavior. The statement "I will not tolerate superficiality, slowness, laziness, or anything that will damage the hotel's reputation!" acts as a means of intimidation for those who do not meet the job's requirements, turning into a tool of domination. This threat of dismissal indicates the presence of material domination. Çıvak, Besler, and Sezerel (2024) note that dismissal in hotels represents a form of material domination. In this film, the interns' job errors appear as warnings/intimidations. The threat of dismissal is frequently used by a despotic chef.

Visual 2. Restaurant Chef Explaining Job Descriptions (00:47:53)

Table 2. Indicators of Emotional Labor

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Job description	Explanation of the behaviors expected from interns by the manager	The manager's expectation that employees should exhibit emotional labor behaviors

Denotation: The manager explains the job descriptions in detail to the interns.

Connotation: The manager indicates that employees need to adopt deep behavior regarding emotional labor behaviors.

Feeling emotionally exhausted and physically tired after enduring practices of domination, Sali tries to smile at customers during orders. The smile displayed here resembles a theatrical performance and clearly shows surface acting. Sali is exhibiting the smiling behavior that has become a norm in the field by suppressing his true feelings. This situation causes tension in the individual's inner world over time and erupts in the work environment. This is because employees consistently displaying surface acting can lead to tension in the work environment (Cote, 2005).

Visual 3. Sali Exhibiting Surface Acting (01:17:03)

Table 3. Indicators of Surface Acting

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Facial Expression	Smile	Emotional labor

Denotation: Sali smiles during interactions with guests.

Connotation: Even though Sali is unhappy and tired, he continues to serve without lacking the smile imposed on him as part of his job.

Indicators of Domination

Sali honestly discusses his visual impairment during a job interview. However, the manager's comments that working in the hospitality field is unsuitable for someone with a disability are exclusionary. Statements suggesting that it is unlikely for a disabled individual to work in the hospitality industry reflect material and status domination. When Sali, who dreams of working in a five-star hotel, is told by the manager: "A five-star hotel? Please be realistic. With such a serious impairment (referring to vision impairment), your only options are a receptionist internship or massage therapy in a facility for disabled people. I would advise you to stop dreaming," the manager is distancing a disabled individual from the workforce, indicating material domination, and making demeaning remarks about working only in certain job areas due to disadvantage, pointing to status domination. According to Scott (2018), derogatory statements made by individuals in dominant positions towards those in subordinate positions are considered status domination.

The jobs given in businesses may not be suitable for individuals according to their disability (visual impairment, hearing impairment, etc.). In other words, individuals may need to work in different jobs depending on their disability. For example, employing a visually impaired person in jobs that require speed or heavy manpower may have negative consequences for both the employee and the business. However, with the use of devices suitable for the individuals' disability, it can be made possible for visually impaired individuals to work in jobs that require speed or heavy manpower (Bengisu & Balta, 2010). The situation that is criticized in this scene is the employer's mocking and degrading attitude towards Sali. The manager's degrading attitude towards his subordinate is referred to in the literature as status domination.
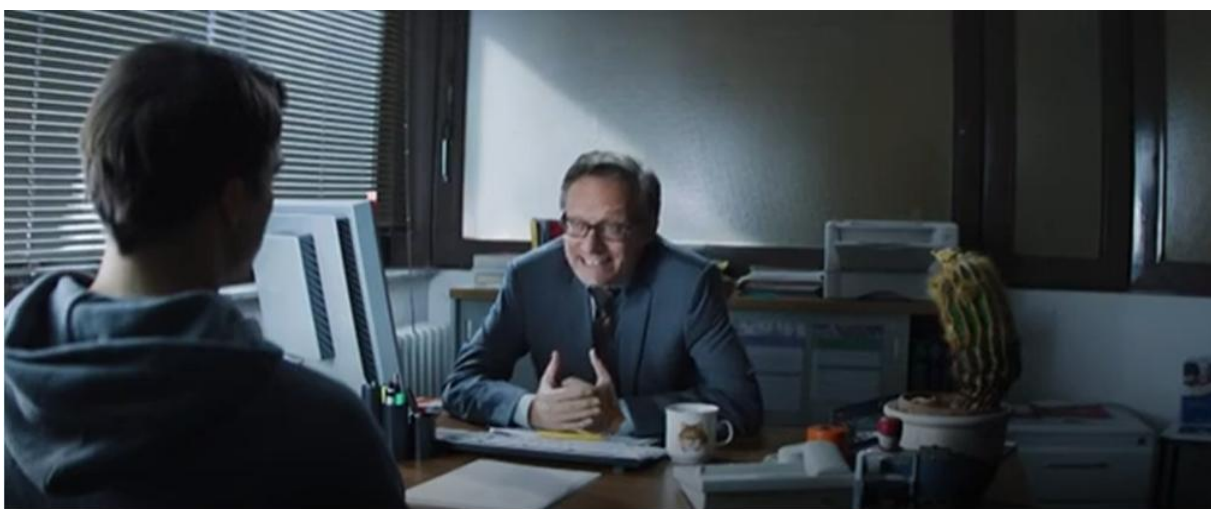

Visual 4. Job Interview (00:11:14)

Table 4. Indicators of Domination in the Job Interview

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Job interview	The manager interviewing Sali	The manager imposes material and status domination on Sali

Denotation: Sali goes to a job interview, and the manager interviews him.

Connotation: During the interview, the manager imposes material and status domination on Sali. By highlighting his visual impairment, the manager demeans Sali, urging him to give up on his dreams and stating that he does not possess the qualities required for the job.

When individuals in managerial positions threaten employees with termination or deprivation of financial benefits, it reflects material domination. For example, the restaurant chef threatens the intern by saying, 'This is your third warning. You might finish your internship at a youth hotel and never return!'—thus imposing material domination on the intern. This behavior indicates a despotic regime in the field. In such a system, employees are in a position of merely receiving and executing orders, while managers are in a status of commanding, warning and taking necessary actions. Additionally, a high-power distance between employees and managers is evident.

Visual 5. The Restaurant Chef Warning the Employee (0:18:08)

Table 5. Indicator of Material Domination

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Conversation between the manager and the employee	The manager warned the employee	The manager applies material domination by threatening to terminate the employee

Denotation: The restaurant chef warns an intern to perform their job properly.

Connotation: The restaurant chef applies material domination by warning the intern and threatening termination.

The head of housekeeping threatens the intern attempting to sit while being listened to her. She says 'I don't ever want to see this again! If I catch any of you sitting, you will face the consequences" This sentence indicates that the manager is despotic. The high-power distance between the manager and the employee is evident from the harsh tone used towards the intern's attempt to sit. Additionally, the phrase 'you will face the consequences' represents material domination aimed at potential termination.

Visual 6. The Head of Housekeeping Warning the Intern (00:25:43)

Table 6. Indicators of Despotic Management

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Communication between the manager and the intern	The manager warned interns about their behavior during work	The manager applies material and status domination to interns

Denotation: The manager warns the intern.

Connotation: The manager applying material and status domination through threatening statements to the intern.

According to Braverman (2008), control mechanisms have become tools of domination. Çıvak and Besler (2022) have noted that control mechanisms in hotels have turned into instruments of exploitation and domination. Being monitored by managers creates pressure on employees. In this case, the dishwasher is supervising the work of new interns from a distance. Approaching the intern and saying, "Clean this properly, or we'll all be in trouble!" implies a threat of termination or deprivation of financial benefits.

Visual 7. Employee Observing Another Employee (00:33:21)

Visual 8. Experiencing Pressure from a Colleague (00:33:41)

Table 7. Indicators of an Intern Being Observed and Warned by an Employee

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Warning	The experienced employee warned the intern	Material domination
Remote monitoring	Remote surveillance of the intern	Surveillance pressure

Denotation: The dishwasher remotely monitors and warns the new intern starting their shift in the kitchen.

Connotation: The dishwasher applies pressure on the intern. By warning, 'We'll be in trouble,' the dishwasher is exercising material domination over the intern. The threat implies consequences if the intern does not perform the job properly, serving as a form of intimidation.

Despite Sali's extraordinary effort to keep up with other interns despite his disadvantage, his vision loss leads to some mistakes. The kitchen department, being one of the most common areas for workplace accidents, requires utmost attention for safety. Sali cuts his finger in a kitchen accident, and the kitchen chef realizes there is a problem. The chef tells Sali, 'What's your problem? You have only two options. Either you tell me what's wrong, or you won't be able to come back here tomorrow!' The kitchen chef exercises material domination over Sali by threatening him with termination and conveying this through his words, gestures, and expressions. In this situation, Sali has no choice but to explain his condition. Once the chef learns about Sali's situation, he helps him and explains the use of the machines. The chef practices positive discrimination by giving Sali a chance to complete his kitchen internship.

Visual 9. The Kitchen Chef Warning Sali (00:39:36)

Table 8. Indicator of Material Domination

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Communication between the chef and the intern	The chef warning the intern	Material domination

Denotation: The chef warns the intern.

Connotation: The chef exercises material domination by threatening to terminate Sali.

The restaurant chef is not satisfied with the cleanliness of the glasses the intern has washed and repeatedly asks Sali to rewash and polish them three times. By using expressions such as 'Are these glasses clean? Are you blind?' the manager displays mocking behavior and imposes status domination over the intern.

Visual 10. The Restaurant Chef's Arbitrary Behavior (01:04:04)

Table 9. Indicators of Status Domination by the Restaurant Chef

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Cleanliness of the glasses	The manager's imperious demands and condescending attitude	Status domination

Denotation: The manager is warning the employee to perform their job properly.

Connotation: The manager applies status domination through mocking attitudes and behaviors towards the intern.

The restaurant chef, who is never satisfied with the cleanliness of the glasses the intern has washed, makes the intern wash and polish the glasses repeatedly. Still unsatisfied, the chef threatens the intern by saying, 'This is your first warning; if you get a third one, you'll be out!' At this point, the manager is seen imposing material domination over the intern by threatening termination.

Visual 11. Threat of termination (01:06:12)

Table 10. Indicator of Material Domination

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Communication between the manager and the intern	The manager warning the intern	Material domination

Denotation: The manager warns the intern and threatens with termination.

Connotation: The intern is being subjected to material domination through threats of termination.

The restaurant chef, addressing Sali for being late, says, 'This is your second warning. You will receive this in writing. You are too close to the red line.' Through these statements, the chef imposes material domination on Sali and the other interns present. By threatening Sali with termination, the chef intimidates the other interns as well. Additionally, the written warning demonstrates the chef's authority. The chef uses legal power to illustrate the power distance between the manager and the employees.

Visual 12. Physical Intervention (01:13:18)

Table 11. Indicator of Physical and status domination

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Behavior and speech	Adjusting the tie	Physical and status domination

Denotation: The manager warned the intern about the dress code.

Connotation: The manager intervenes with the intern's tie and uses mocking attitudes to impose status domination.

The restaurant chef, addressing Sali for being late, says, 'This is your second warning. You will receive this in writing. You are too close to the red line.' Through these statements, the chef imposes material domination on Sali and the other interns present. By threatening Sali with termination, the chef intimidates the other interns as well. Additionally, the written warning demonstrates the chef's authority. The chef uses legal power to illustrate the power distance between the manager and the employees. After seeing that Sali's tie is not properly positioned, the restaurant chef approaches him and says, 'What's wrong with this tie? What should we call it from now on?' The chef uses mocking attitudes to impose status domination over Sali. Additionally, the chef roughly adjusts the tie with his hand, applying physical domination. Correcting the tie shows how much importance the on appearance. Especially in the tourism sector, attention is drawn to the issue of being presentable. At the second warning, Sali simultaneously experiences physical, material, and status domination.

Indicators of Resistance

In the hospitality industry, managers use control mechanisms to ensure that operations proceed smoothly. Specifically, through direct supervision, department heads monitor their subordinates and intervene in the process when necessary (Erköse, 2020; Kiril, 2020; Çıvak, 2021). These practices, referred to as simple control, involve directives and supervision regarding what employees should or should not do (Edwards, 1979). In the hospitality sector, simple control is implemented through department heads (Çıvak, 2021). However, these simple control practices can evolve into arbitrary applications, condescending attitudes, imperious demands, yelling, humiliation, and threats of termination, thus becoming tools of domination (Çıvak & Besler, 2022; Çıvak, Besler & Sezerel, 2024). In response, employees are left with two options: to either comply or resist in front of their peers.

In the film, Sali initially complies with the exhausting surface-level emotional labor and domination practices. However, as the difficulties in both his work and social life become unbearable, Sali begins to resist. Emotionally exhausted, Sali starts to provide political responses to the pressures from the restaurant chef. The tension between the manager and the employee escalates. One of the interns uses the hotel's towels for cleaning and suggests this to Sali, instructing him to keep it discreet. They use cleaning supplies excessively. The expectations of completing tasks within a specific timeframe and achieving perfection lead to practices that ultimately cause financial damage to the business. These practices developed by the employees represent a form of hidden resistance.

Visual 13. Room Cleaning (00:28:02)

Table 12. Indicators of Hidden Resistance

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Cleaning supplies	Window Cleaning	Hidden resistance

Denotation: The interns clean the windows of the rooms.

Connotation: The interns engage in hidden resistance by using excessive and incorrect cleaning products while cleaning the windows, thereby causing financial damage to the business.

Unable to cope with the bullying he has faced, Sali expresses his frustration to his boss by saying, 'I'm so tired, I'm so overwhelmed!' This resistance directed at a person in a dominant position at his workplace is referred to as public or explicit resistance.

Visual 14. Complaining About the Manager's Pressures (01:06:07)

Table 13. Indicator of Explicit Resistance

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Dialogue	Responding to pressure	Explicit resistance

Denotation: The intern responds to the manager's pressures after reaching his breaking point.

Connotation: Unable to fight the bullying any longer, Sali eventually engages in explicit resistance by beginning to complain to his manager.

Seeing that Sali, who is late for work, has his tie out of place, the restaurant chef makes mocking remarks and physically adjusts the tie. In response, Sali engages in explicit resistance by replying with sarcastic comments.

Visual 15. Adjusting the Tie and Warning (01:13:29)

Table 14. Indicator of Explicit Resistance

Indicator	Indicant	Indicated
Dialogue	Mocking and sarcastic remarks	Explicit resistance

Denotation: The intern responds to what the manager says.

Connotation: Sali shows explicit resistance by responding to his manager's sarcastic attitude with sarcastic and sarcastic expressions.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, emotional labor, domination, and resistance practices in the hospitality industry have been analyzed using semiotics through the film My Blind Date with Life. The film narrates the internship of a young man who has lost 95% of his vision in a hotel. Sali, who failed to pass job interviews at hotel businesses due to his visual impairment, is accepted for a job at a subsequent application where he does not mention his disability. This indicates that finding employment for disabled individuals in hotel businesses is quite challenging. Disadvantaged individuals cannot be expected to live a life away from social life, production and work life by only benefiting from social services. Disadvantaged individuals should also take part in economic activities in order to live a free life and be employed under equal conditions to earn their own money (Kaya, 2017). If suitable jobs for their disability are provided, disabled people can better integrate into society and live a fairly.

The film includes many segments involving emotional labor. It is evident that emotional labor practices inherent to the service sector, which have become accepted as doxa in the field, are imposed on employees in every environment. The film reveals that employees' authentic feelings are suppressed and replaced by surface acting (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000) to conform to the expectations set by management. Although managers encourage employees to develop sincere behaviors, intense monitoring and the high tempo of work lead to a deterioration of these behaviors into superficiality. When there is a discrepancy between the real feelings of employees and the behaviors expected by the organization, maintaining sincere behavior (Chu & Murrmann, 2006; Morris & Feldman, 1996) over the long term becomes difficult. Constant surface acting can contribute to tension in the work environment (Cote, 2005).

Furthermore, the film highlights the use of simple monitoring mechanisms that turn into instruments of

domination. According to Braverman (2008), monitoring mechanisms have become tools of domination. Çıvak and Besler (2022) have indicated that in hotels, monitoring mechanisms have turned into tools of exploitation and domination. Similarly, the film shows that simple monitoring practices create pressure on employees. It is observed that department or section heads monitor interns continuously and give directives. During direct supervision, managers use arbitrary decisions, exert legal power capriciously, and use termination as a trump card. Both material and status domination are evident, with frequent use of threats like job termination and demotion. The normalization of symbolic violence through gestures, facial expressions, and statements, which are not perceived as violence in society, is also noted (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The analysis reveals the presence of symbolic violence practices between managers and employees as well as between customers and employees, especially where the power distance is high and employees are subjugated. Managers' use of their status to make demeaning comments is a significant indicator of this.

The film illustrates a despotic management style rather than a democratic one. In environments with despotic regimes, subordinates who are forced to obey develop hidden resistance practices (Scott, 2018). Domination and resistance are dialectically related, and research shows that resistance practices emerge as an inevitable result of strict supervision (Friedman, 1977; Edwards, 1979). The film demonstrates that the certification given at the end of the training process acts as an illusio (Bourdieu, 1987) and directs interns towards obedience. However, individual and hidden resistance by employees is also observed. Issues such as material waste due to time pressure and work intensity reflect hidden resistance practices. Additionally, Sali's sarcastic responses to the condescending and mocking attitudes of managers indicate the presence of explicit resistance. No collective or violent resistance practices are found in the film.

While the literature on emotional labor, domination, and resistance is available, studies using semiotics have been overlooked. This research has addressed this gap, and the analysis of My Blind Date with Life provides significant insights for readers and viewers. Although media tools do not directly represent reality itself, they possess the power to influence audiences through the messages they convey. Therefore, carefully analyzing the messages intended to be delivered through the media holds importance in the field of communication. This research is expected to contribute both to the field of communication and to the tourism sector.

Declaration

All authors of the article contributed equally to the article process. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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