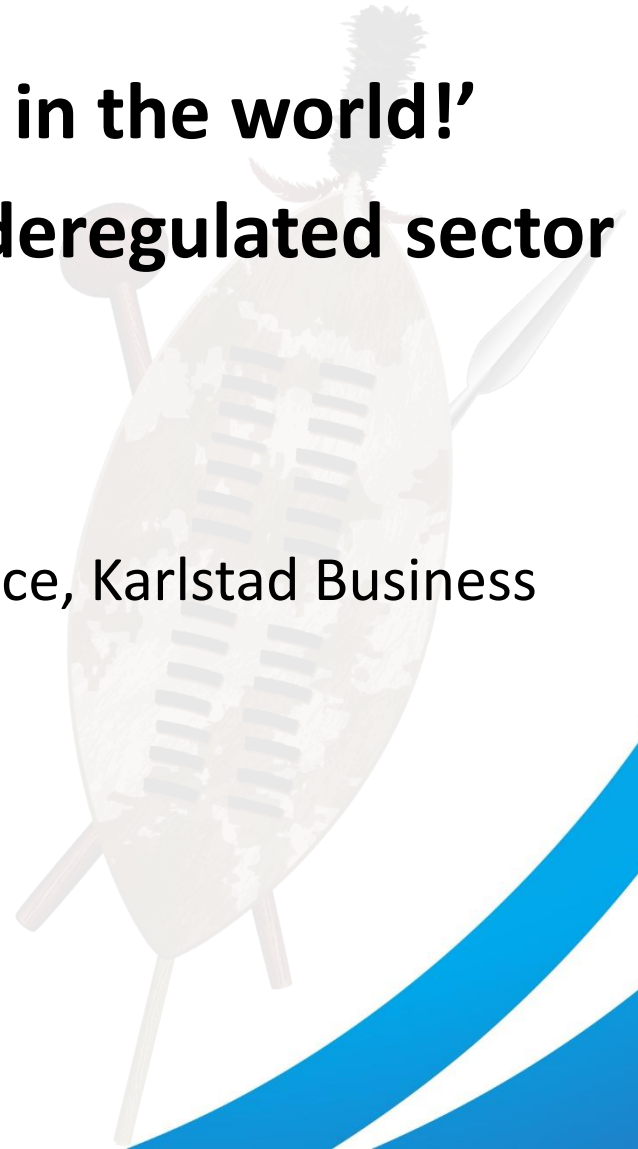


‘It used to be the best shit job in the world!’ Cabin attendants and ageing in a deregulated sector

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A shift from the service relation and emotional labour to working conditions

The impact of Hochschild's *The Managed Heart* (1983)

The focus on emotional labour and the service work and service relation and on femininity

(c.f. Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Curley and Royle, 2013; Spiess and Waring, 2005; Taylor and Tyler, 2000; Williams, 2003)

“The double burden” – combination of cost cutting and service excellence

(Taylor and Moore 2015)

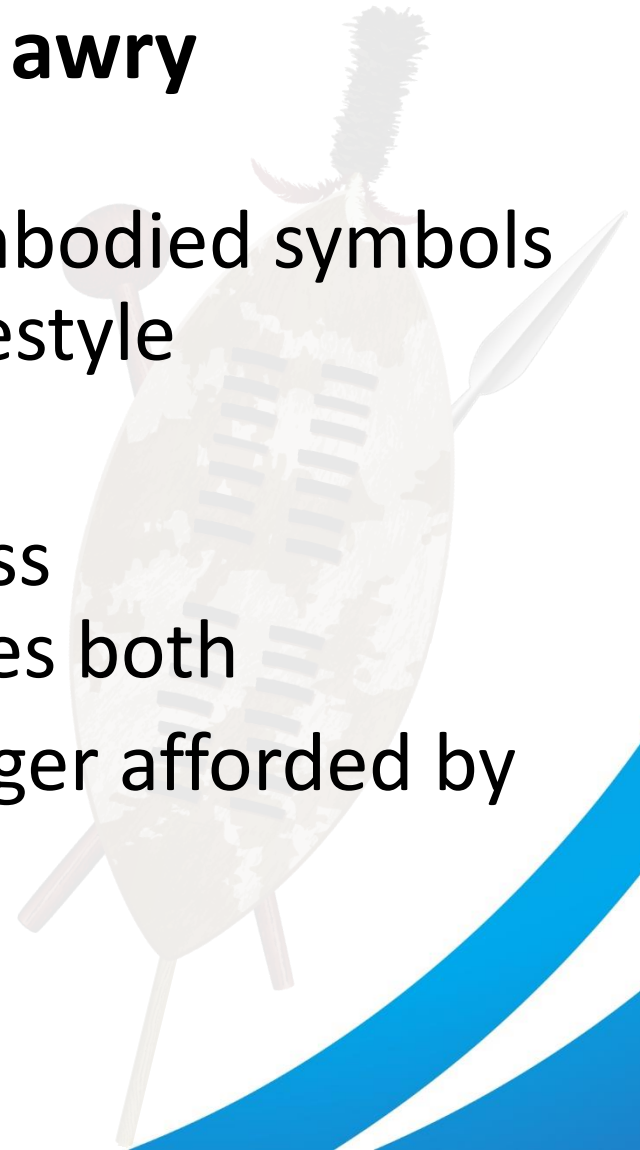
Cabin attendants' *own* concerns as a point of departure

- * inductive approach
- * unstructured in-depth interviews with 7 women
- * age 50 to 55 years
- * 24 to 30 years in the occupation
- * last 15 -23 years working for Scandinavian Airlines
- * Lower middle-class background



“Dream job” going awry

- Cabin attendant as airline's embodied symbols and a ticket to an attractive lifestyle
- Deregulation
- From service excellence to mass transportation – and sometimes both
- An attractive job that is no longer afforded by the airline company



The years rolled by and everything was great

‘It used to be the best shit job in the world! I’ve really loved doing my job. It’s lively, with people on the go, and constantly new encounters.’

‘Sure, we worked a lot and we were away a lot. On the other hand, however, I was at home a lot, too. My children never complained that I was away, and they also have a dad, too. It was more that they wondered from time to time if it would soon be time for me to go away on long haul. Then, I’d been at home too long!’

Chosen, competent, and with head held high

‘Even though this wasn’t the most qualified of jobs, I was still proud of being a flight attendant. I stood tall in my uniform and was able to walk with my head held high. All the time, we were reminded that we’d been chosen’.

‘We received enormous support from the company. We were their public face and we always heard that we’d been chosen and how important and skilful we were. Imagine the 80s! Imagine the moment of truth! That was us!’

An increased work load and a status drop

‘Am I supposed to be this safety-conscious person, which is really the primary focus of my job, or am I supposed to do things in an economical way?’

‘The loops we work are such that you can’t believe they’re true. We have a loop of 14 hours in which you first fly from Stockholm to Copenhagen and then back and forth to Fuerto Ventura on the Canary Islands, and then direct to Luleå in northern Sweden. And you’re not entitled to any rest and recovery then, it’s just a matter of getting right back to work again the very next day. ‘

Worn out, locked in, and unwanted

‘I’ve been proud of myself, my profession, my team, my workplace, my employer. It meant something working for SAS. Now, I don’t feel that anymore. It’s just gone. Those at the top don’t care about us at all. If things don’t suit us, we can leave – and that’s exactly what they want.’

‘I’ve realised, after having applied for as many jobs as I have done, that I’m no longer of interest as I don’t have any certificates and I’m old.’

‘Bloody hell, that’s enough’

‘Our bosses are offended at us because we don’t like our situation. They want us to carry on working and look happy, and think it’s completely alright to work 14 hours a day without complaining.’

‘I feel enormous contempt towards those people who just look at us and say: Things will turn out fine.’

‘I know that I’ll be worse off. I earn (SEK) 34 k today and I know I won’t get that in a new job. I’ll have to drop to at least (SEK) 22 - 23 k a month. But “fine”, I’ll take it. For my part, it isn’t worth what it’s costing me to stay there in terms of body and soul.’

A general trend or a specific example?

- Good working conditions and work life balance
- Status fundamentals in- and outside the organisation
- Satisfaction and harmony with the work and lifestyle, and ageing in the occupation

Deregulation, increasing demands and work intensification

- Worsen working conditions – high demands of temporal and spatial availability
- Undermined status fundamentals, undignified
- Collective experience of the past, a point of reference
- Locked in, ageing, coping , searching for alternatives