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Boundary Spanning Elements and the Marketing Function in Organizations

Concepts and Empirical Studies

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Managing Boundary Spanning Elements: An Introduction

Sunil Sahadev, Keyoor Purani, and Neeru Malhotra

Introduction

As an organisation expands into different countries as well as to entirely different functions, organisational boundaries are formed, which could eventually restrict synergy and therefore efficiency. As Aaker (2008) extols in his book 'Spanning Silos', organisations could degenerate into 'silos' or organisational units that contain their own management team and talent and lack the motivation to collaborate with or even communicate with other organisational units. Further, with the emergence of complex organisational structures and a strong emphasis on outsourcing, organisational boundaries have become very flexible and difficult to define in rigid inelastic terms (Cilliers 2001; Brusoni et al. 2001). Boundary spanning activities and boundary spanning behaviours have thus become increasingly important and critical to operating successful organisations. Accordingly, a large number of academic studies have looked at boundary spanning behaviour and issues associated with it. These studies attempt to cover important dimensions of boundary spanning activities and bring new ideas and perspectives into this discourse.

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The term 'boundary spanning' has achieved much traction right from its inception in the early 1970s and late 1960s. A number of organisational theorists like Brown (1966), Aldrich (1971), Aiken and Hage (1968), Aldrich and Herker (1977), and Leifer and Delbecq (1978) etc. who pioneered the initial theoretical development in this field, considered boundary spanning as an important construct to explain the boundaries of an organisation, inter organisational exchanges, dependence and in general to explain the concept of an organisation. An important purpose of the boundary-spanning construct was (and still continues to be) to explain the dynamics of the information absorption of an organisation. In fact, as Leifer and Delbecq (1978, pp. 40–41) puts it:

> Persons who operate at the periphery or boundary of an organization, performing organizational relevant tasks, relating the organization with elements outside it, are called boundary spanners. They are primarily responsible for information exchange between the organization and its task environment

By this definition, a broad set of activities and organisational tasks can be included within the framework of boundary spanning responsibilities. It also implies that boundary-spanning activities encompasses a large array of organisational roles and skills across different organisational contexts. Endorsing this view, several authors from diverse spheres of research have used the 'boundary spanning' framework to analyse and explore different types of organisational roles. Typical examples include Gasson (2006) and Lindgren et al. (2008) who used boundary spanning effectiveness to explain the tasks of Information Systems managers in IS design; Tortoriello and Krackhardt (2010) who explain the effectiveness of R&D managers using the depth of their boundary spanning ties or exploring the need for boundary spanning expertise in cross-cultural project management domain by Di Marco et al. (2010).

Research studies spawned by 'boundary spanning theory' can be seen as comprising of two different research tracks. One research track emphasises on organisational theory and focuses more on organisational systems and networks. This line of research takes a general management perspective with greater emphasis on organisational learning, innovation and collaboration. These studies look at boundary spanning roles of organisational actors as they span the boundaries between different organisational functions or networks within a single organisation. Boundary spanning activities that traverse different organisations or autonomous actors representing varied interests are not necessarily included in this stream of research.

Another stream of research that adopts the basic logic of boundary spanning deals with actors that traverse the boundary between an organisation and its customers. Significantly, in this research domain, discourse on boundary spanning behaviour is dominated by issues typical of organisational elements specifically entrusted with the responsibility of interacting with customers. A large volume of studies have appeared in this stream that consider issues related to salespersons, service workers, health care workers like nurses, public sector workers like police officers etc. This is natural given the considerable size of customer facing

employees or frontline employees in the work force. While estimates vary, the percentage of work force employed in some sort of customer facing jobs in developed economies range from 20 to 30 %[1] (D'Agostino et al. 2006). In fact, despite the fast and steady growth of e-services and a strong thrust towards reducing face to face service or sales exchanges, the importance of front line employees has never waned. Customer facing or frontline employees constitute a significant segment of work force and managing these employees efficiently and effectively can go a long way in generating competitive advantage for any firm. Research focused on customer facing employees considers issues that are related to individuals like role-stress, motivation, satisfaction, commitment, etc. of individual boundary spanning employees. In this stream, construct definitions and cause effect relationships relate to perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of individuals rather than organisations or networks.

While the two streams of research emerge from the same definition of boundary spanning and share the same theoretical foundation, there exist important differences in terms of focus variables, theoretical treatments as well as the purpose of the research by way of its practical implications. The research stream that looks at boundary spanning in terms of organisation wide factors aim to contribute insights towards strategy development for organisational level innovation, organisational learning, knowledge management effective collaboration between organisational entities or between different organisations etc. This research stream, that take the premise that spanning boundaries of diverse professional and organizational settings can become a key organizational competence, has received extensive theoretical support (Grant 1996; Kogut and Zander 1992 as quoted in Levina and Vaast 2005) especially in fields like information systems research. On the other hand, the research stream focused on individuals that traverse the boundary between the organisation and its customers mainly looks at how individual attitudes and behaviour are shaped by spanning the boundary between the organisation and its customers. This research stream primarily aims to contribute towards human resources management, service quality, service processes etc. For want of another term, it may be suitable to differentiate the two streams as organisation focused and individual focused.

Even though the two research streams emanating from boundary spanning theory are both crucial in understanding an organisation's existence, growth and relationships with its main stakeholders, the two research streams have completely different focus and seek answers to completely different research questions. However, given the significant importance attached to the boundary spanning activities in general, there is a vast scope for new research studies in this area. There are significant research questions to be addressed and new theoretical perspectives to be integrated.

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[1] Based on the rough estimate of employees working in wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels provided in the working paper authored by D'Agostino et al. (2006).

This book is primarily aimed at scholars who wish to look at the wide range of topics that enrich the field today. The edited volume, therefore, presents a holistic perspective with regard to research that originates from boundary spanning theory. While there is no attempt at developing a unifying or integrating perspective, the book presents studies that both look at individual level issues as well as organisational issues in boundary spanning. The edited volume encompasses topics as wide as disruptive customer behaviour to goal orientation of sales persons to boundary objects. Further, this edited volume presents works of authors from countries as varied as India, Russia and UK and Hong Kong. It is also important to consider that the theoretical issues discussed in the book are very contemporary and hence would help researchers in developing a future research agenda. We present nine chapters that look at different aspects of boundary spanning behaviour both focused on individual issues as well as organisational issues. In the remaining sections, we introduce the studies that follow.

D'cruz and Nornonha's (2014) study looks at call center workers in India and the problems faced by them with respect to angry customers. Their study examines the issue from an employee perspective and discusses different types of abuses and misbehaviour that international call center employees have to face in India. The study adopts hermeneutic phenomenology as its research strategy and reports results from interviews conducted with 59 call center agents in Bangalore and Mumbai. The study vividly describes negative experiences from customers as well as strategies employees adopt to cope with these problems. A detailed and comprehensive analysis of the reasons for customer misbehaviour is also discussed including restrictive SLAs signed with client organisations, socioideological controls used by the employers etc. are all discussed. The study contributes to the larger discourse on problems related to international outsourcing and mass customisation.

Rod, Ashill and Gibbs (2014) considers a similar issue—service worker burnout—from a completely different cultural context-Russia. The study attempts to establish the mediating role of service worker burnout in the job-demand stress, job-performance relationship. Based on role theory and conservation of resources theory, the study tries to show how burnout felt by service workers partially mediates the relationship between job-demand stress and job performance. Job demand stressors are defined in terms of role-conflict, role overload and role ambiguity. The study adopts a survey based research approach and reports results from a survey conducted in a Russian Commercial bank. A total of 186 questionnaires were returned to be analysed. However, contrary to the hypotheses no significant mediating role is found in the analysis. This shows a divergence from the results obtained for similar relationships in studies conducted among western cultures. The divergent result contributes to the extant literature on burnout and role stress studies as it challenges extant notions on the relationships between role stress and job performance. The study also discusses limitations as well as avenues for future research.

Singh and Singh (2014) in their study consider different drivers of customer orientation in sales people. Customer orientation is an important construct in research on boundary spanning behaviour especially since this construct has a

direct relationship in customer interface management. Boundary spanning members with high customer orientation has been known to influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This one of those constructs that have been used both in service employee research as well as research on sales management. Singh and Singh (2014) in this paper contribute to extant literature by identifying two new antecedents—sales persons natural rewards strategy and sales person karma orientation. In the context of selling, natural rewards strategies in salespeople involves choosing a favourable context for their sales job, modifying selling activities into a more enjoyable task (Singh and Singh 2014). Karma orientation is defined as a sales person's behaviour resulting from a sense of selfless action performed while doing his/her work as a duty towards customers (Singh and Singh 2012). The hypothesised relationships were validated through a questionnaire survey conducted among 125 B2B sales people who participated in a sales conclave in India. All the hypotheses were found to have statistical significance. The study contributes to the extant knowledge in sales person customer orientation by focusing on two important and relatively novel antecedents—choice of natural rewards strategy and karmic orientation. The study also validates the scale for measuring salesperson karmic orientation, which can be used for future studies.

Researches on adaptive selling and adaptive behaviour or sales and service sector employees have been shown to be very important in the boundary spanning management studies. Lo and Sharma (2014) considers this important issue among retail sales people through a comprehensive model that incorporate a range of constructs—both individual characteristics as well as individual behaviours. The sales person characteristics considered are attractiveness, communication ability, expertise and trustworthiness and the behaviour variables considered are: service manner, extra role and need identification, willingness to disclose, customer satisfaction and adaptive behavioral intentions. The research design involves querying customers about the retail sales people they had encountered in their visits to a telecom retail outlet. The comprehensive model is validated through a questionnaire based survey conducted among customers in 12 retail outlets. A total of 186 questionnaires were used. The study found customer perception of retail expertise to be the most significant predictor of retail sales person adaptive behaviour as perceived by customers. The results contribute to the discussions on retail sales person adaptive behaviour and have immense practical implications.

Sahadev, Purani and Nair (2014) consider another important aspect of sales person research—goal orientation. Goal orientation in sales persons have been defined in terms of learning orientation and performance orientation. In their study Sahadev, Purani and Nair (2014), the mediating role of perceived role stress in the relationship between sales person goal orientation and job satisfaction is examined. The conceptual model is developed using the assumptions of control theory. The conceptual model is validated through a sample study comprising of 82 sales people from India. Most of the hypothesised mediating relationships are found to be valid. The study contributes to the extant knowledge about the impact of goal orientation of sales people. For instance, it is shown that goal orientation can have a significant on role stress of sales people.

Ackfeldt and Malhotra (2014), in their paper, develop a conceptual model that links managerial interventions to pro-social service behaviours in boundary spanning members. The conceptual model contributes to the extant knowledge about pro-social behaviours since few studies have considered the antecedent s to pro-social service behaviours of service employees in the past. Pro-social service behaviours comprises of in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and customer cooperation. The conceptual model proposes managerial intervention comprising of internal communication, training and development and employee empowerment as antecedents of pro-social service behaviour. This relationship is hypothesised to be moderated by job-attitudes and employee role stress perceived by employees. The paper also discusses directions for future research.

Studies presented in the previous sections looked at individual level factors related to boundary spanning behaviour. In the next section of the book three studies that examine organisational level issues are presented. The organisational level studies take into account organisation level strategies to effectively manage boundaries within the organisation as well as boundaries between the organisation and other stake holders.

Singh and Crisafulli (2014) in their paper consider service recovery strategies of organisations in the context of boundary spanning behaviour. In this paper, Singh and Crisafulli (2014) take an overarching view of research on service failure and recovery experiences from the perspective of customers and critically evaluates related literature. Service recovery from failure is essentially a boundary spanning activity that involves boundary spanning members acting across the boundary to effectively analyse and redress customer complaints. However, what is very important in this process is to account for the affective, cognitive and behavioural attitudes associated with a service recovery event. In their paper Singh and Crisafulli (2014) present a model that considers a raft of factors associated with service recovery. The paper contributes to the research on boundary spanning behaviour by bringing together literature from different perspectives in service failure as well as presenting a conceptual model that can guide studies in the future.

In an extremely interesting study, Nair and Tandon (2014) looks at hitherto sparsely researched area—boundary objects. Boundary objects are those interface objects that facilitate boundary spanning activities. A typical example can be an agreement between a customer and a service provider. A boundary object can also be operating procedures as well as organisational rituals. In their study Nair and Tandon (2014) looks at the significance of boundary objects in the context of social enterprises. Boundary objects become important since boundary objects become the loci around which knowledge sharing, collaboration, communication and cooperation between the two actors happen (Star 2010). The study contributes to extant knowledge firstly by discussing issues related to an emerging area like boundary objects and secondly by considering boundary objects in social enterprises.

In the same vein, Nair's (2014) conceptual paper looks at boundary spanning activities and inter-organisational collaboration. The study discusses this issue through a detailed literature review of collaboration, co-creation, cross-sector collaborations and, specifically, social problem-solving collaborations. As boundary

spanning theory at the organisational level evolved by adopting the knowledge based view and organisational learning as theoretical frameworks, looking at boundary spanning activities in the context of organisational collaboration assumes significance. With emergence of new ideas like co-creation of value, collaborative design and the 'design perspective' (Brown 2009), developing integrated perspectives that incorporate insights from the boundary spanning discourse in co-creation and collaborative value exploration makes immense sense. The study integrates important findings from extant literature on cross-sector collaboration, social alliances, stake-holder theory as well as problem solving alliances.

To conclude, the edited volume presents some interesting studies that point to important trends in the emerging research in this field. By looking at a host of issues including boundary element stress due to aggressive customers to learning orientation to boundary objects, the special edition attempts to provide significant research leads to future researchers in this field. Together, the studies presented in the book review a vast literature in this field, which is expected to help researchers to understand the different streams and discover the significant studies in boundary spanning.

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Customer Cyberbullying: The Experiences of India's International-Facing Call Centre Agents

Premilla D'Cruz and Ernesto Noronha

Introduction

While service work is distinguished by its focus on customer interaction, emotional labour forms the core of frontline encounters, representing a critical boundary-spanning role that links service providers with their customers. Employees performing emotional labour, being the face of the service providing organization (usually their employer or their employer's client), walk a fine balance between efficient and effective service that pleases customers and leaves the latter with a positive impression of the service provider (Bettencourt et al. 2005; Grandey et al. 2013). Employer competitive advantage in terms of financial gains and reputation as well as customer satisfaction and retention are at stake here as employees enact their boundary-spanning roles of external representation, internal influence and service delivery (Bettencourt et al. 2005; Grandey et al. 2013).

The entrenchment of customer sovereignty in the service economy as organizations pursue success (Korczynski and Evans 2013) accords customers the freedom to behave as they please with frontline employees (Harris and Reynolds 2003). Promoted by service providers' business interests, this unbalanced relationship where power tilts in favour of customers legitimizes and normalizes customer abuse (Korczynski and Evans 2013; Yagil 2008) which is defined as forms of customer behaviour that are perceived by frontline workers as aggressive, intimidating or insulting to themselves (Korczynski and Evans 2013). Attributing customer abuse to the breakdown of the enchanting myth of customer sovereignty when customer supremacy turns to disillusionment as he/she encounters the

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underlying contradiction between production and consumption (Korczynski and Evans 2013), this systemic explanation subsumes narrower psychological and contingency approaches (Korczynski and Evans 2013) that consider customer and service provider antecedents of customer abuse (Yagil 2008) as discrete factors. Seen in a wide range of service occupations (Korczynski and Evans 2013; Yagil 2008), customer abuse occasions considerable short-term and long-term emotional injury to frontline employees (Korczynski and Evans 2013; Yagil 2008), whose coping is constrained by the requirement of customer sovereignty. Korczynski and Evans (2013) hold that such a situation arises because service providers espouse the norm of customer sovereignty, de facto legitimizing customer abuse to frontline workers. Thanks to employer policies and practices, most frontline employees internalize a sense of their own culpability when confronted with customer abuse (Korczynski and Bishop 2008; Yagil 2008). Only a few workers question such behaviour. Yet, not surprisingly given the context, redressal options are conspicuous by their absence and service providers go to the extent of punishing employees who react against customer abuse, evidencing the rightfulness they accord customer misbehaviour even at the cost of harming their own staff (Korczynski and Evans 2013; Yagil 2008).

In examining customer abuse experienced by agents working in India's international-facing call centres through the lens of workplace bullying, this chapter progresses the limited insights into customer misbehaviour in virtual contexts and the recent recognition of extra-organizational sources of bullying. Following sections on workplace bullying from intra-organizational sources and the call centre industry in India, the method and findings of the empirical inquiry that informs the chapter are presented and discussed.

Workplace Bullying from Intra-Organizational Sources

Workplace bullying, alternatively labeled workplace emotional abuse or workplace harassment, is defined as subtle and/or obvious negative behaviours embodying aggression, hostility, intimidation and harm, generally characterized by repetition and persistence, displayed by an individual and/or group to another individual and/or group at work, privately and/or publicly, in real and/or virtual forms, in the context of an existing or evolving unequal power relationship (adapted from D'Cruz and Noronha 2013a; Einarsen et al. 2011; Hoel and Beale 2006; Tracy et al. 2006). Conceptualized as a workplace social stressor that results in targets' distress and often victimization and trauma (Hogh et al. 2011; Nielsen and Einarsen 2012), workplace bullying entails unwelcome and abusive psychological and emotional behaviours (see Einarsen 2000; Einarsen et al. 2011 for typologies) which contribute to the growing powerlessness of the target who over time perceives himself/herself as having little or no recourse (Einarsen et al. 2011). Person-related bullying consists of behaviours such as making insulting remarks, excessive teasing, spreading gossip or rumours, persistent criticism, intimidation and threats.

Task-related bullying includes behaviours such as giving unreasonable deadlines or unmanageable workloads, excessive monitoring of work and assigning meaningless tasks or even no tasks (Einarsen and Hoel 2001). Described as unethical behaviour, bullying goes against universal social rules of acceptability (Ramsay et al. 2011) and violates basic normative principles of utilitarianism, moral rights, distributive justice, care and virtue (LaVan and Martin 2008).

Etiologically, workplace bullying is attributed to characteristics of the individual protagonists, namely, bullies and targets (Zapf and Einarsen 2011), and to features of work organizations (Salin and Hoel 2011). Bullies engage in abusive behaviours to protect their self-esteem, due to lack of social skills and as micro-political behaviour whereas targets experience harassment on account of personality factors, social skills and group dynamics (Zapf and Einarsen 2011). Organizational antecedents include organizational culture and climate, leadership, job design and work organization and organizational change (Salin and Hoel 2011) and these operate either within the work-environment hypothesis where situational factors give rise to bullying behaviour between individuals (Salin and Hoel 2011) or within the 'organization-as-bully' conceptualization where bullying is embedded in organizational design elements (D'Cruz 2012). Indeed, bullying could be predatory (being triggered by the bully's inadequacies) and/or dispute-related (resulting from differences and conflicts between the bully and the target) (Einarsen et al. 2011).

Whereas bullying has conventionally encompassed an interpersonal rather than an organizational level of analysis (Einarsen et al. 2011), the latter view is being increasingly acknowledged currently (D'Cruz 2012). In the former instance where one party systematically singles out and targets another party, bullying is personalized and emphasizes a sociorelational conceptualization (Keashly and Harvey 2006). In the latter instance, where the constant and pervasive use of oppressive and abusive organizational practices and procedures by employers and managers leads all employees of the particular organization to feel victimized, bullying is institutionalized and depersonalized (Einarsen et al. 2011; Liefooghe and Mackenzie-Davey 2001), invoking a sociostructural conceptualization (Keashly and Harvey 2006). In terms of organizational antecedents, the work-environment hypothesis coheres with the interpersonal, sociorelational conceptualization while the 'organization-as-bully' is consistent with the depersonalized, sociostructural conceptualization (D'Cruz and Noronha 2009). The co-existence of interpersonal and depersonalized bullying, known as compounded bullying, has also been reported (D'Cruz et al. 2012).

Though workplace bullying is considered distinctive from harassment arising from membership to social categories such as gender, race, sexuality, etc., this point is contentious. One set of researchers seeks to distinguish bullying from other recognized forms of harassment while a second set of researchers argues that both phenomena are closely linked and hence cannot be differentiated to the point of emphasizing one and excluding or trivializing the other (Lutgen-Sandvik 2005). Nonetheless, in viewing the intersections between different forms of harassment and bullying at work, it is important to recognize that while both phenomena can be jointly enacted, they should not be conflated to obscure their distinctive

features and undermine their individual specificity, visibility and need for action (Lee 2001).

Most research in the field of workplace bullying has examined the interpersonal dimension, exploring target experiences, with limited attention to bullies, bystanders and organizations and to depersonalized bullying and cyberbullying. The literature here underscores the severe strain that targets experience, manifested physically, emotionally and behaviourally and indicative of poor health and decreased well-being (Nielsen and Einarsen 2012). Low self-esteem, poor self-confidence, self-hatred, sleep problems, anxiety, anger, depression, nervousness, insecurity, suspicion, bitterness, concentration difficulties, chronic fatigue and various somatic problems as well as suicidal thoughts are commonly reported (Hogh et al. 2011). By and large, targets are unable to successfully apply problem-focused coping strategies to ameliorate or resolve the situation and end up opting for emotion-focused, passive and avoidant strategies, particularly that of quitting the employer organization and looking for new positions (D'Cruz and Noronha 2010a, b).

Available literature on depersonalized bullying highlights ambivalence as targets' response. Here, well-being and strain, especially physical strain, co-exist as targets juxtapose the gains from their jobs against the demands. Yet, recognizing that workforce participation is inevitable and that most contemporary workplaces are characterized by depersonalized bullying, the adoption of emotion-focused coping strategies helps targets work through their ambivalence. Favouring the approach dimension which underscores the positive aspect of ambivalence and its congruence with their values, motives and goals helps targets reconcile with their dualistic positions and collude in their own abuse till such time as a better opportunity arises. Individualized routine resistance could provide some release from the oppressive work environment (D'Cruz and Noronha 2013b, c).

Extant literature on cyberbullying indicates that apart from co-existing with and sharing many similar etiologies, manifestations and effects with real (physical face-to-face) bullying, being conflated with category-based harassment and operating at interpersonal and depersonalized levels, bullying in virtual forms is characterized by boundarylessness, concreteness, permanence, invisibility and anonymity. Going beyond person-related and task-related behaviours to encompass cultural intrusions and spillovers from work into family across time, space and relationships, the reach of cyberbullying could move from fully confined between bullies and targets to unconfined being enacted outside organizational boundaries. With ICTDs (information and communication technologies and devices) promoting self-dissociation and separating bullies from the impact of their actions, the resultant lowered inhibitions and reduced accountability could affect not only the mode employed, with implications for proof, credibility and redressal and for the range of the audience involved, but also the nature of the bullying process, with implications for behaviours displayed, persistence, identification of the source, inclusion of bystanders and severity of outcomes (D'Cruz and Noronha 2013a).

A gap that marks the workplace bullying literature so far is the lack of attention to extra-organizational/external sources of abusive behaviour. Indeed, the thematic

area has examined only intra-organizational/internal bullies such as superiors, peers and subordinates individually and/or jointly (D'Cruz and Rayner 2012) while external perpetrators have been overlooked (Bishop and Hoel 2008), even though there is substantial literature on customer abuse particularly in real service interactions (Korczynski and Evans 2013; Yagil 2008). Addressing this caveat assumes relevance in the contemporary context where the predominance of service work privileges triadic employment relationships including not just employers and employees but also customers (Korczynski 2002), keeping in mind that in sharing the organization's goal of service, customers are neither insiders nor complete outsiders (i.e., strangers/general public) (Yagil 2008). Indeed, in studying customer abuse in India's international-facing call centres as external bullying, the framework of workplace bullying serves as a relevant approach through which our understanding of such misbehaviour can be furthered.

The Call Centre Industry in India

Indian call centres are located within the country's ITES-BPO (Information Technology Enabled Services-Business Process Outsourcing) sector which encompasses the offshoring and outsourcing of such processes that can be executed via information technology (IT). This sector has demonstrated impressive and consistent growth over time, despite the volatile economic environment. ITES-BPO export revenues grew from US$ (United States dollar) 9.9 billion in 2007–2008 to US$ 17.8 billion in 2012–2013 and domestic revenues increased from Rs. (Indian rupee) 88.7 billion in 2008–2009 to Rs. 167 billion in 2012–2013 [NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Services Companies) 2013]. Offshored services are provided by international-facing Indian and foreign multinational corporations (MNCs) who serve overseas clients and customers (see Note 1) located in developed countries especially the USA (United States of America, also referred to as the US) and the UK (United Kingdom) whereas outsourced services are provided by domestic organizations who serve local clients and customers (NASSCOM 2013). While China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brazil, Mexico and Egypt are emerging locations, India remains the pre-eminent destination for offshored business activities, providing an unparalleled cost savings advantage (NASSCOM 2013). The availability of quality talent at cost effective rates, focus on optimal cost efficiency and client-centricity, creation of a supportive ecosystem and maintenance of a scalable and secure environment form central pillars of India's offshoring value proposition (NASSCOM 2013). Though higher-end services and knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) form part of the Indian ITES-BPO industry, the main focus remains lower-end services embodying the mass-customized model (Noronha and D'Cruz 2012), operationalized through call centres and back offices, situated principally in Tier 1 but now expanding to Tier 2 and 3 cities (see Note 2). The banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) vertical and the CIS (customer interaction services) horizontal remain the core segments of the sector (NASSCOM 2013).

India's ITES-BPO workforce was calculated at 917,000 for international-facing jobs and 640,000 for domestic jobs (in the latter case, the figure includes IT and ITES-BPO jobs) in 2012–2013 (NASSCOM 2013), the industry having become a significant avenue for employment especially for the country's youth (NASSCOM 2013). Despite ITES-BPO employees being covered by various labour laws as promulgated in various Indian states as well as central legislations, the popular notion held in Indian society (and maintained and promoted by ITES-BPO employers, aided by government apathy) is that Indian labour legislation and related institutional measures do not apply here (D'Cruz and Noronha 2010c). On the contrary, the image of the workforce in this sector is that of white-collared professionals (Noronha and D'Cruz 2009). As Taylor and Bain (2005) assert, India remains attractive to companies who wish to capitalize on the possibilities for flexible labour utilization and the absence of trade unions in the Indian ITES-BPO industry facilitates this.

In focusing on customer abuse in India's international-facing call centres, the present chapter revisits the popularly held view that ethnic factors (van Jaarsveld and Poster 2013) invoking aversive racism (Grandey et al. 2004) are the essential cause of such misbehaviour (van Jaarsveld and Poster 2013). Indeed, though the ethnic overtones of customer abuse in offshored call centres (Mirchandani 2012; Nath 2011), triggered by accent identification on calls, in spite of national identity management (Poster 2007), cannot be denied, it should not be assumed that race is the sole underlying dynamic. Further inquiry into the phenomenon of customer abuse in international-facing call centres is important to provide a more complete and complex understanding.

Method

Focusing on India's international-facing call centre agents' subjective experiences of customer cyberbullying, the chapter draws on a larger study of employees working in the sector. The inquiry, located in Bangalore and Mumbai, adopted van Manen's (1998) hermeneutic phenomenology as its research strategy. van Manen's (1998) hermeneutic phenomenology was seen as complementing the study objectives as it allowed for the exploration of the essential structure and meaning of participants' experiences of work as they were lived. Following van Manen's (1998) approach, the conversational interview was used to gather experiential narrative material. Though the interview was unstructured, it was guided by the fundamental question that prompted the research. Yet this clarity did not preclude exploring issues that emerged during the interview, since the researchers were aware that such leads could generate important insights into the phenomenon under study. Informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality marked the ethical protocol of the inquiry.

Due to lack of organizational access, snowball sampling via personal contacts with managers and unionists associated with the sector was relied upon. Initial

participants then put us in touch with others. With multiple sources of potential participants reflecting divergence, we endeavoured to guard against homogeneity, in addition to ensuring that the sample mirrored known sociodemographic trends in the sector (see D'Cruz and Noronha 2010c).

All interviews, held as per the convenience of the participant, were conducted in English and were audio-recorded with the permission of the participant. No participant objected to the use of the recorder once its advantage of accuracy was spelt out to them, and its presence did not appear to hinder their responses. During the interview, observations about the participants were made and written up after the session ended. Recorded data were later transcribed verbatim by the research staff.

Fifty-nine agents, 25 from Bangalore and 34 from Mumbai, employed at the entry level in a range of international-facing call centres participated in the study. Thirty-nine worked in inbound processes, 12 in outbound processes and 8 in both inbound and outbound processes. While there were 29 women and 30 men whose ages ranged from 20 to 55 years, the largest number of participants was in the 22–25 years age group. Forty participants were unmarried and 40 were graduates. All the participants served overseas clients and customers. None of the participants were members of any unions.

Thematic analyses, including sententious and selective approaches, following van Manen (1998) were undertaken. Through the sententious thematic analysis, each transcript was read as a whole to capture the essence of participants' experiences, highlighting the core theme. Through the selective thematic analyses, categories/patterns leading to sub-themes, themes and major themes that contributed to the core theme were identified.

Negotiating limits, which embodied participants' experiences of customer cyberbullying, emerged as a major theme during the analysis process. We used Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis techniques to explore these findings further. That is, through the use of various tools such as charts, matrices, event lists, causal networks and memos (Miles and Huberman 1994), the researchers identified related patterns and categories from the data. Linkages between these patterns and categories were examined and interpretations were made such that sub-themes and themes constituting the major theme were developed (Patton 1990). Accordingly, the major theme of negotiating limits subsumed the five themes of encountering the unbounded customer, toeing the client's and employer's lines, engaging foresight, restraining resolution and preserving self.

Findings

Negotiating Limits

Negotiating limits refers to the chequered trajectory participants undergo as they simultaneously uphold and disregard personal and organizational positions in their attempt to balance the abusive behaviours of distant customers who are valued by

their employers and clients on the one hand and their sense of self tied in with their material and ontological interests on the other hand. Encountering the unbounded customer, toeing the client's and the employer's lines, engaging foresight, restraining resolution and preserving self are the themes subsumed under this major theme.

Encountering the Unbounded Customer

ICTDs connected participants to customers who were located at great distances away from them. Yet, the absence of proximity set no limits on customer behaviour. That is, physical distance and virtual interaction posed no inhibition—on the contrary, the mediated nature of communication due to ICTDs combined with the one-time and impersonal nature of the encounter appeared to lower customer restraint. Exacerbating the situation was the solitary nature of the interaction involving only the service provider and the customer such that social controls on the latter in the form of the presence of others were missing.

Negative experiences included customers' behaviour manifested through sarcastic and/or caustic comments, raised voices and use of expletives, moving on a continuum from impolite and rude to threatening and intimidating. Such behaviour was person-related, attacking the agent in terms of various aspects of his/her self. Participants observed that such claims were made even though there was no acquaintance between themselves and customers. Refusals to interact and cutting off calls abruptly also formed part of customer misbehaviour.

The issue of frequency was complicated. Whereas customer interactions were all one-off time-bound encounters in relation to a specific customer, participants reported being subjected to numerous such abusive calls during a day or a week. In their view, there was a cumulative effect of such repetitions particularly if they occurred on a daily basis.

Customer behavioural turnaround during a call was reported. That is, calls starting positively could end negatively, calls starting negatively could end positively and calls could move from positive to negative back to positive or from negative to positive to negative. Whereas some customers' behaviour clearly reflected racist biases when they were aware of participants' nationality, in other cases, customer-linked factors were seen as responsible either independent of nationality (even where it was known) or entwined with nationality.

Guessing, based on widespread public information about offshoring, and/or knowing, from participants themselves, agents' geographical details, customers' racist sentiments emerged. Obviously, the trappings of aesthetic labour such as accent neutralization, pseudonyms and locational masking (relied upon to cover up 'stigmatized' national identity—Nath 2011) failed to protect participants from such adverse behaviour. Where customers were unsure of but suspected/wished to know participant location, they would insist on being informed of the same. Participants faced a barrage of questions about their base, their name and sometimes their accent. Prior training about the appropriate response in such situations (i.e., to try

as much as possible not to divulge the location but indicate an international positioning and to insist that the name was really their own) did not always work such that customers' rising ire resulted in the latter hanging up if participants maintained their stand or in participants either telling him/her the truth or escalating the call to the team leader (TL). In some instances here, customers' prejudices were unleashed based solely on their suspicions. That is, they misbehaved with participants without confirming the latter's nationality. Where customers knew agent backgrounds, they displayed their biases in various ways. Customers referred to participants as inferior people who were either not trustworthy or competent and/or who were responsible for the ongoing unemployment in the West and/or for global security problems. Many participants shared that insults to their nationality were too much to bear.

> I worked for a US project. The American customers are very rude, they don't like speaking to Indians. The moment they come to know that they are speaking to an Indian, they will bang the phone. . .they think we are dumb, we have taken their jobs.

Customer traits, affective orientation, communication ability and gender-related attitudes as well as demands on customer time, attention and priorities were listed as relevant customer-linked triggers.

Participants described being able to discern customer dispositions and moods notwithstanding the virtual mode of communication. That is, through non-verbal cues pervading the service interaction, participants could gauge the friendliness versus hostility and the positivity and negativity of the customer and hence could attribute customer misbehaviour to these sources. Participants opined being correct in their foregoing assessments due to the messages coming through over the course of the call and their experiences of service work over time. In their view, more sociable and optimistic customers were also more tolerant and patient than more introverted and pessimistic customers whose cut-and-dry approach laid the ground work for abuse. Not only did the latter customers prefer quick service but they were also less trusting.

Customers whose encoding and decoding abilities promoted clarity of communication were described by participants as less likely to abuse in contrast to customers who did not always understand agents or effectively express themselves. Participants highlighted being able to accurately infer this from the manner in which calls proceeded. Customers who either comprehended or spoke clearly in terms of asking, responding and querying posed little threat. Customers whose confusion was apparent in either receiving and/or sending out information ended up misbehaving as their frustration got the better of them. Encountering difficulties in following agents' messages and putting forth their own views, these customers resorted to abuse to let off steam.

Taking the issue of gender-related attitudes further, it appeared that customers' sexist behaviour operated in a complex way. While flirting by women customers with male agents was sometimes reported and by women/men customers with women/men agents respectively was rarely described, men customers making advances to women agents were the most frequently spoken of. In this last set of

innuendos which took the forms of flirting or proposals for long-term relationships rather than sexual violence, contact details of the participants were solicited and plans for further interactions to the extent of physically visiting either parties' location were put forward.

The disruption of customer schedules as the underlying factor for abusive behaviour was reported by agents in outbound processes. As per participants' views, as their calls were not anticipated and planned for by customers, it was not uncommon for the interruption to trigger abusive behaviours. Being suddenly disturbed angered several customers. In instances where collections were involved, customers' negative reaction was exacerbated. According to participants here, customers felt upset that financial payments were being followed up on and displaced their distress on to agents.

> Customer will scream for *hazaaron* (a thousand) reasons. He is busy and we have called. He was in bad mood and we have called. In inbound (processes), he will scream because he feels you don't understand.

In a few instances, these customer-linked factors activated racist biases such that customer misbehaviour took an ethnic angle. In other rare cases, customers under the influence of alcohol or drugs or appearing to suffer from psychiatric disturbances were spoken of.

The virtual mode of the service interaction affected both customers and agents. For customers, the absence of face-to-face contact with agents not only emboldened them due to the accompanying invisibility (linked to physical distance but not anonymity as customer identity was known to agents before/during the call) but also heightened distrust in cases where agents' nationality mattered as the latter appeared more remote and hence more dubious to the former. In the first instance, virtual communication diluted customers' regard for politeness and inhibitions about incivility, aided further by the absence of a relational bond owing to the one-off nature of the service interaction. In the second instance, virtual communication appears better suited to service interactions within the same society so as to pre-empt culturally-linked suspicions from surfacing and marring the service interaction.

Participants described the aforementioned experiences in terms of having to interact with 'irate' or 'abusive' customers, of facing 'customer harassment' or 'customer aggression' and of being 'bullied', 'intimidated' and 'cornered'. Participants were unanimous in their stance that through their bullying, customers were overstepping the limits of appropriate behaviour. Indeed, distress was a common response to such impropriety.

Toeing the Client's and the Employer's Lines

Notwithstanding their perspectives about customer bullying, participants had to absorb such misbehaviour, acquiescing to organizational demands on this matter, often in spite of themselves.

While people in service jobs in general are constrained in their response to customer abuse (Korczynski and Evans 2013; Yagil 2008), such limitations are heightened in instances of offshored call centre jobs which are bound by SLAs (service level agreements) that give rise to depersonalized bullying work contexts (D'Cruz and Noronha 2009). The SLA entails a formalized contract, either temporal-based or project-based, between participants' employer organizations (the Indian/India-based foreign service providers) and overseas clients to deliver stipulated services with specific process and outcome requirements to clients' customers who were also located abroad. Driven by the cost savings agenda in the context of global offshoring, SLAs are designed to maximize clients' competitive advantage. Their fulfillment, being critical to the continuity and/or renewal of the contractual relationship between the two parties, ensures employer organizations' competitive advantage, with larger implications for sectoral growth and national interests. Given the stakes involved, employer organizations diligently implement client expectations.

In participants' employer organizations, SLAs were developed around the mass-customized model where mass production and customer orientation proceeded simultaneously. Thus, agents' jobs were characterized by low levels of complexity, variety and autonomy but emphasized high volumes and good quality service. Work organization and technobureaucratic controls, which subsumed task requirements and performance parameters, facilitated the success of the model. The enactment of emotional labour and the maintenance of customer sovereignty were at the core of the SLA, being the pivot around which job demands and process and outcome specifications had to be implemented. Under such circumstances where failure to adhere to organizational requirements and client conditions resulted in suspension and termination, privileging transactional psychological contracts of employment, agents wishing to retain their positions had no choice but to accept customer abuse such that task demands and performance criteria were fulfilled. In so doing, macro-level business interests of employers and clients and of the ITES-BPO sector and the country as well as micro-level employment and livelihood interests of agents were furthered.

> SLAs is the main issue. Everything has to be according to that. Company will lose when SLA is flouted because SLA is to make sure that the client is taken care of. . .so how the process should go (on), how the quality should be seen (to), what agents must do in a shift is all SLA-linked. Everyone will get benefits from it.

In pursuit of clients' agenda and organizational goals as spelt out by the SLAs, employers further managed agents' behaviour through socioideological controls. Induction training, ongoing socialization, performance evaluation mechanisms and other elements of organizational design were engaged to regulate employee identity through the notion of professionalism. Capitalizing on Indian society's preoccupation with social status and upward mobility, employers successfully inculcated this valued identity in their agents with a view to gain the latter's compliance and commitment to the realization of their imperatives. Indeed, the notion of professionalism embraced agents' identity, altering their self-concept and enhancing their self-esteem. According to participants, professionals possess superior cognitive

abilities, advanced qualifications and a sense of responsibility and commitment to work. They prioritize work over personal needs and pleasure, behaving in a dignified and restrained manner and performing optimally and rationally while on the job as well as complying with employer and client requirements, absorbing emergent strain. Under such circumstances, not only do agents perceive the gains accruing from their job (such as remuneration, designation and material artifacts) and the eschewal of collectivization endeavours as consistent with the notion of professionalism but also transactional psychological contracts of employment as means of discipline are similarly justified. With agents' acceptance of their depersonalized bullying work environment being in keeping with this sense of self, their passive acquiescence to customer bullying as part of task specifications and performance parameters designed to fulfill SLAs and satisfy employers and clients was not surprising.

Notwithstanding the distress precipitated by negative experiences, participants had to handle customer abuse professionally in keeping with client and employer requirements and were coached to do so. Following recruitment, participants underwent training which prepared them to expect and deal with such misbehaviour. Apart from hearing about the manifestations and possible causes of customer bullying as highlighted above, practical ways of managing the call and of coping with the experience were described. In terms of managing the call, patience, detachment and tact were emphasized. Agents were taught to apologize, while either maintaining focus on the actual purpose of the interaction if the customer allowed them to proceed, escalating the call to their TL if they felt that it was beyond their brief or letting go of the call if the customer wished to hang up. Requesting the TL to intervene complicated agents' predicament as being unable to complete a call independently or handle difficult customers appropriately could be seen as incompetence as well as having to get customer feedback in some cases meant receiving poor scores, in addition to failing to realize performance criteria. In terms of coping with the experience, intrapsychic means, adoption of emphathetic positions and informal and formal social support were suggested.

> See, because I am a professional, I have to handle it. Otherwise, I am like any other worker…ordinary. So, I keep calm, try to understand the customer, say 'sorry' for upsetting him/her. We are all trained in this—how a professional should behave, how to speak to irate customers. Sometimes, it is very stressful but we have to be professional about it…if at all the situation is getting out-of-hand, then put the TL on the call.

Retaliation (whether direct and/or indirect) was ruled out, even in instances where participants desired to hit back at customers, not only because of the aforementioned organizational environment but also because of the power that customers possessed to influence call outcomes and call and agent evaluations. While this power was genuinely harboured by customers when real customers were on calls, process-linked transactions were critical and/or when customer feedback was solicited as part of the interaction, employers and clients could pose as customers and experience agent responses to customer bullying. In all these instances, customers, regardless of their authenticity, had the option of giving

agents' poor feedback because of their negative stand even if the call had been handled well and/or of complaining about agent behaviour. Linked to the work context, employers and clients could listen in on live calls (either by side-jacking or call-barging) and/or access call archives and check agent behaviour with customers.

Engaging Foresight

Though job-related training prepared participants for customer bullying at a cognitive level, actual negative experiences precipitated distress in agents.

Participants reported feeling upset, sad, hurt, taken aback, shocked, disturbed, angry and irritated by customer abuse. In their view, they were being unfairly and unjustly treated despite the lack of provocation. Considering customer bullying to be wrong, agents grappled with why such behaviour should be directed towards them without their having provided any cause for the same. Contingent upon their personalities, length of their tenure and/or the nature of the misbehaviour, the degree of distress varied but was never completely obliterated. Instances of both consequent somatic ailments and prolonged emotional disturbance, particularly the latter, were reported.

> Abusive calls are terrible experiences. Now, with experience, I am a little better. Earlier, it would disturb me for a long time—sometimes, a bad call will stress you out for many days. Now also, when there are very aggressive customers, I feel very bad—my head hurts, my body tenses, I feel low. It is not correct to behave like this.

Agents who were more hardy and/or more sociable by nature reported being less upset compared to their softer and/or more introverted colleagues. Being able to absorb or bounce back as well as having interacted with a variety of people accounted for this difference.

Notwithstanding factors linked to the self as outlined above, the manifestation and degree of customers' negative behaviour played a role.

For most participants, race-linked bullying was too much to bear as citizenship constituted a critical defining dimension of the self, highlighting national identity centrality (Das et al. 2008). Participants reported feeling extremely slighted when their nationality and culture were doubted, ridiculed and insulted. A surge of patriotic sentiments resulted.

Gender-linked misbehaviour evoked a multiplicity of situation-specific reactions. Women to men interactions brought forth surprise, amusement or discomfort as participants found these experiences unusual due to their different cultural orientation. Same-sex calls brought the sharpness of cultural divergence home to their recipients since homosexuality, remaining a covert topic in India, is not commonly encountered. Amusement, shock, embarrassment, disgust and irritation marked participants' responses. Though a few women receiving sexual advances from men were amused by these experiences attributing their reaction to their 'familiarity' with the cultural orientation of the West, most participants here reported feeling angry and disrespected and considered such behaviour to be

improper and out of bounds. As anger and disrespect mixed with disgust for the majority of this latter group and with a sense of having been demeaned for the rest, these women felt they were being taken advantage of. None of the women reported fear, however, as the mediated nature of communication, physical distance and often the national identity management strategy protected them. Participants' experiences underscored not just the variation in the social fabric of different nations but also the universal entrenchment of patriarchy.

Unbridled roughness and aggression evoked extreme distress, with participants being aghast at the degree of customer bullying. According to those who had come across such customers, the behaviours displayed were beyond the usually experienced levels of abuse and hence even more odd and disturbing.

In spite of the strain engendered by the experience of customer abuse, participants never reacted or retaliated to customers but complied with client and employer specifications. Many participants spoke of their desire to hit out but held back seeing their own long-term well-being in the latter approach.

> What is the point of giving back? Not that we do not feel like it. In fact, racial comments make my team members most angry. But no point. Because we only will lose. These jobs are giving us good income, lifestyle. Future used to be dim earlier.

Participants were very conscious of the benefits accruing from India's offshoring sector. Employees' job-related gains included social status, professional identity and material returns which accord self-esteem and purchasing power and provide a feeling of empowerment linked to a higher perceived locus of control and greater sense of hope. Given the dismal opportunities and poor salaries in other sectors which preclude a decent standard of living, participants valued such benefits and rationalized their negative experiences as the price they must pay for good employment. Participants maintained that it was towards their present predicament and future progress that they fulfilled organizational demands in matters of customer bullying. The gains of their current jobs served as a launching pad to later betterment not just in terms of financial position and quality of life but also by way of educational opportunities and career prospects. Obviously, employee benefits compensate for their strains, facilitating coping. Under such circumstances, customer abuse constituted a cost that had to be endured along the way even though having to accept such misbehaviour passively without redressal options as per employer and client specifications reduces participants' agency and promotes a sense of defencelessness.

The rationalization that accompanied participants' ambivalence allayed but did not eliminate their misgivings. Participants' response to customer bullying was marked by pragmatism on the one hand and unresolved discomfort on the other hand. With survival and progress motivating participants to put up with behaviour that they considered to be wrong but felt uncertain how, and therefore helpless, to stop, a sense of disquiet could be clearly discerned.

Restraining Resolution

The opportunity to resolve customer abuse was ruled out. In keeping with the employer's and the client's espousal of the ideology of customer sovereignty (particularly heightened due to political economy considerations of offshoring), intra-organizational redressal was unavailable. In line with the macro-economic business interests of the country, industry and employer (supported by societal and micro-level status orientation), extra-organizational collectivization was non-existent. Notwithstanding their distress which triggered the desire to react to and rectify the situation, participants maintained their coping as consistent with employer and client demands, realizing their own long-term interests in adopting such a stand. Consequently, participants deal with customer bullying intrapsychically or through social support.

The absence of formal means of redressal against customer abuse within the organization was pointed out. Underscoring its importance in setting limits to customer misbehaviour and providing them with an alternative voice while recognizing their employers' deference to the client and customer highlighted participants' dilemma. On the one hand, participants not only saw customer behaviour as wrong and in need of correction but also believed that their employer organizations should indicate the appropriate boundaries. On the other hand, participants realized the significance of the customer for organizational success.

Collectivization or even co-worker mobilization as a solution to their predicament neither crossed agents' mind nor were suggestions of the idea entertained. Apart from citing their professional identity (which is perceived as anti-thetical to unionism) and their employers' commitment to employee well-being (which is perceived as obliterating the need for extra-organizational representation) as underlying reasons, agents opined that collectivization in the Indian ITES-BPO sector would not augur well for its continuity and growth. Currently, overseas clients appreciated India as an offshoring destination not just because of the superior workforce but also because of the conducive economic environment of the country. Collectivization activities would pose a serious hindrance to this enabling context, resulting in relocation of offshoring to other places in South and South-East Asia and South America. Such a development had micro-level consequences for agents as employment prospects would be severely and adversely affected.

> We have a very good HR (human resource) department—if you have any issue or problem, you can just walk in. Even at the agent level, you can talk to the HR manager. And the problem is sorted out right there. If they (agents) are not given an answer, then they will be given an assurance that by this date, we (HR department) will solve your problem. So that way, there is no chance for them to form a union. There is no requirement. We have all the rights we want.

Agents' position not only suits but is also nurtured by their employers. From participants' narratives, it appeared that employers take pains to perpetuate this stance. Cultivating agents' professional identity is an important step in this direction. Employer organizations then build on agents' self-concept, highlighting the

disconnect between professionalism and collectivization which is strongly associated with blue-collared work in the Indian context. Providing avenues for grievances supports organizations' claims, promoting the view that trade unions are redundant under the circumstances. That employer organizations do not recognize unions further complicates the perspective meted out to agents. Agents were told by their employers that their association with unions could result in them being dismissed from their jobs. Finally, organizations' emphasis that unions would hamper the growth of the Indian ITES-BPO sector, with implications for employment opportunities, seals agents' opinions on the matter.

A variety of intrapsychic forms of coping, linked to the self, were reported. Some participants described themselves as tough or framed customer bullying to be part of their job. Others compartmentalized their experiences in numerous ways, i.e., by seeing it as a role to be performed or by distancing their self from the task. The adoption of pseudonyms and neutral accents and locational masking, part of aesthetic labour (Nath 2011) and national identity management (Poster 2007), facilitated such compartmentalization. Resigned approaches, in that there was no choice in the matter if employer and client requirements had to be fulfilled in order to ensure competitive advantage and continuity of offshoring, were apparent. Laughing off their experiences by making fun of themselves and/or of customers was reported. Adopting an air of condescension towards customers and their societies for being prejudiced, ill-mannered and ignorant or a stand of empathy towards customers' pre-occupations neutralized participants' distress.

The adoption of the foregoing approaches arose from participants themselves and/or from employer exhortations.

Support from colleagues and superiors during and/or after the call facilitated participant coping.

Informal support from colleagues took various forms. Whereas non-verbal support during calls and verbal support after calls were described, some participants also spoke of 'reverse customer abuse' (D'Cruz and Noronha 2013c) on live calls which proceeded in two ways. In one instance, when agents placed the phone in mute mode and loudly cursed the abusive customer, team members would respond to this either (a) non-verbally from their work stations if they were busy on calls, (b) verbally and non-verbally from their work stations if they were between calls, and (c) verbally and non-verbally by coming to the agents' work station if they were between calls. In the other instance, when agents pressed the mute button and enabled the loudspeaker such that the customer was publicly audible on the call floor, their team members jointly listened to, jeered at and enjoyed the tirade in real time. Team members who were between calls would come to the agents' work station to participate while those who were busy with calls would participate non-verbally from their work stations.

> First time when I listened to bad words, I was very tense. I didn't take calls properly. Then we (agents) get used to that and we will say, fine, no problem. We will be cool. If we are so irritated, we will transfer the call to TL or put it on mute. We will be abusing the customer, but he won't hear. At the same time, the customer will continue scolding, thinking that we are listening to him. So it is a good outlet for our stress.

Though such 'reverse customer abuse' was not formally sanctioned and could be punished as going as against organizational demands, superiors usually turned a blind eye to it if they observed it taking place, occasionally gently reprimanding agents for their actions. Rarely, TLs who shared good relations with team members briefly joined in, before getting agents to stop and resume work. TLs and other superiors would then proceed to help the affected agent to feel less upset about the call.

Superiors provided informal and formal support. Informal support was non-verbal during calls and verbal following calls. Formal support comprised call escalations to the TL in cases of calls that agents felt unable to handle at their level. The latter instance was resorted to more frequently early in agents' tenure but used sparingly later to address issues beyond their brief. That is, as agents progressed with their role, they were better equipped to independently handle customer bullying and hence turned to TLs only when customer requirements could not be dealt with at their organizational position. Such an approach cohered with performance parameters.

Additionally, after being on an abusive call, agents could informally ask their TLs for 'time-out' to recover. Such requests were more frequently made and more willingly acceded to early on in agents' tenure. Later, as agents 'got accustomed' to customer bullying, they did not require such breaks except in instances where the misbehaviour was extreme. Being able to cope without interrupting work was seen as professional behaviour complying with organizational expectations.

Neither formal nor informal support from superiors amounted to any redressal of participants' grievances in terms of actions against customer misbehaviour.

Viewing agents' 'reverse customer abuse' dispassionately, it resembled Korczynski's (2003) communities of coping, reflecting routine resistance (Prasad and Prasad 1998). That is, it constituted informal, spontaneous, reactive, sporadic and largely individualized and covert means by which employees assert their agency. However, these oppositional and unauthorized actions (Ashforth and Mael 1998), notwithstanding their collegial character, fell short of triggering co-worker mobilization and catalyzing conventional collective resistance. Indeed, participants qualified 'reverse customer abuse' as part of various breathers, releases, outlets and pauses resorted to only occasionally by some agents. They held that these activities provide them with ways of gaining some respite from their depersonalized bullying work context and do not symbolize any anti-work or anti-employer sentiment. Agents insisted that they were professionals who, being committed to their work and employer, would not indulge in counterproductive work behaviour that would harm organizational or client interests. Stating that breathers, releases, outlets and pauses neither detract from nor juxtapose uneasily against professional identity, agents maintain that they engage in these activities in spite of their sense of professionalism while also knowing fully well that if their employers discover their behaviour, they would face punishment up to the level of dismissal.

Preserving Self

Participant narratives clearly underscore their view that regardless of their own circumstances and of their employers' position, negative calls reflect customer bullying which is wrong behaviour. Participants use a variety of words to describe customer negative acts including abuse, harassment, aggression, intimidation and bullying. Considering such behaviour to go against universally accepted norms of social interaction which clients and employers cannot excuse in favour of economic interests, employees expressed their helplessness in taking on and rectifying the issue since their own livelihoods were at stake. They maintained that while they participated in these unethical circumstances, thereby turning into accomplices, they did not subscribe to or condone the unrestricted sweep of the ideology of customer sovereignty. In spite of their misgivings about having colluded in the customer abuse situation due to the priority accorded to their financial interests and long-term well-being, participants held on to their values and grappled with the maintenance of their dignity. Even though their material gains were tied to the uncomfortable situation, participants neither shied away from labeling it wrong nor denied their inability to resolve it. At the same time, participants also acquired a sense of empowerment from their job-related benefits. Their professional identity, remuneration and other artifacts not only provided them with status and independence but also a better quality of life, all of which contributed to their perceptions of a more dignified self. Participants recognized the paradox presented by their job in that they simultaneously received yet lost respect. That they could objectively see the predicament they were in in terms of right and wrong and of their own abetment, gains and losses promoted in participants a sense of authenticity and of being true to oneself, concomitant with an air of sheepishness and self-depreciation.

Highlighting the constraints imposed by their vulnerability on them taking any initiatives to tackle customer bullying, participants urged employers, trade bodies, policy organizations and governments to address this issue. Employees believed that by laying down guidelines for customers, organizations would not only set the stage for propriety but also create an avenue for grievances. Such a move would go beyond evidencing their commitment to employee well-being to demonstrating their adherence to universal ethics thereby raising the standards of service work for all stakeholders. Elaborating further, participants stated that if all service organizations follow this approach, customers have no choice but to fall in line and organizational competitive advantage is not hampered. A few participants pointed out that adopting this stand is consistent with global calls for decent work and human rights. Some others considered these moves to be in line with quality certification standards and CSR (corporate social responsibility) programmes that would enhance organizational image and reputation.

In addition to being targets of customer bullying, some participants spoke of being simultaneously abused by their superiors. These participants who had resorted to organizational grievance mechanisms to solve the problem emphasized the ineffectiveness of such measures which only further victimized them (see

D'Cruz and Noronha 2010a, b). They opined that while customer abuse entailed no employer interventions for resolution due to the focus on survival and success, the presence of redressal options for intra-organizational misbehaviour was rendered redundant by their poor implementation. Participants here suggested that employer organizations should consider and execute anti-bullying strategies tackling both internal and external sources of negative acts so that employee rights are ensured.

Discussion

As boundary-spanners performing emotional labour, India's international-facing call centre agents face customer cyberbullying. Through a hermeneutic phenomenological study of agent experiences, this chapter progresses our understanding of extra-organizational/external abuse within offshored virtual contexts.

Numerous insights from the study findings accrue to the concept of external bullying. Customer bullying remains within the purview of interpersonal bullying as the interaction is micro-level though uncertainty about whether bullies single out targets (and why) remains while the influence of organizational interests manifests as depersonalized bullying. External bullying is fuelled by the ideology of customer sovereignty, problems within the service interaction, the bully's personality or mood and/or the bully's response to the service worker's features (bringing category-based harassment into play). That customer sovereignty is the primary trigger for the other factors in the latter instance cannot be ruled out. It is possible that such behaviour is either predatory or dispute-related with conflict emerging during the service interaction or as part of a long-standing service relationship. Hence establishing target orientation and intent is difficult. With customer satisfaction and retention being privileged as the means to competitive advantage, employers could resort to institutionalized bullying to ensure that employees maintain customer sovereignty at all costs. Under such circumstances, customer bullying unfolds as an interpersonal level phenomenon external to the organization, entailing physical and emotional strain for the targeted employee, undergirded by depersonalized bullying within the organization. Interestingly, the study findings show that external bullying appears to be more person-related than task-related in terms of the behaviours manifested. Whereas call centres are characterized by disembedded interactions such that either a single very severe experience of abuse or numerous abusive encounters during the day or week can result in a feeling of being bullied, it is possible for service interactions to be socially embedded such that employees may experience persistent abuse in keeping with the conventional definition of workplace bullying.

Power operates in a complex manner. Customers assume legitimate power due to the sovereignty accorded to them by organizations (notwithstanding the actual etiology behind their behaviour), though employees question this. Nonetheless, the reward and coercive power possessed by customers reins employees in. In promoting customer sovereignty, sometimes in conjunction with a depersonalized bullying

intra-organizational context, employers, due to their position of authority over employees, can be seen as having legitimate power (which also subsumes reward and coercive power). While, on the one hand, the degree of intensity and influence of this legitimate power can be questioned, on the other hand, it is clearly exacerbated due to the use of transactional psychological contracts of employment and the absence of collectivization endeavours which render employees vulnerable. Though employees' weak footing, which stems from employer exhortations about the position of customers' demands, is at once augmented by the absence of co-worker mobilization and union action and reduced by the adoption of resistance and retaliation tactics, it is directly linked to the need for a livelihood such that as long as a service level job remains the source of income such abuse must be endured.

Affective strain and emotion-focused coping characterized target responses to external bullying as employees were constrained with regard to the choice of an exit response and the issue of redressal options. While intra-organizational grievance mechanisms were conspicuously absent, attesting to the primacy accorded to the customer as organizational success is pursued, quitting provided an escape only through fresh employment in non-service occupations.

The cyber nature of customer bullying in call centres not only allows for the experience to be geographically dispersed connecting customers and employees who otherwise would have no link with each other but it also has a variety of implications for both groups. Customer bullying includes a racial element, highlighting that though bullying and category-based harassment are conceptual distinct, they can be jointly enacted. Customers' inhibitions could be lowered due to the invisibility and anonymity afforded by ICTDs, such that the fact that the call is being recorded (which many of them know about) does not deter their misbehaviour. The absence of visual cues precludes customers from observing the effects of their abusive behaviour on employees. Employees, particularly in instances of sexual harassment, feel safe due to the physical distance between them and the customer, with the spatial gap also allowing for a greater sense of detachment from the negative experience. Though employees can engage in 'reverse customer abuse' thanks to the particularities of call centre technology, that records are being made and archived limits their resistance and retaliation, particularly because of the specific conditions of offshored employment. The distinctive features of workplace cyberbullying such as boundarylessness, concreteness, permanence, invisibility and anonymity were evidenced in extra-organizational bullying.

The study findings progress the understanding of customer bullying in call centres not just through the cyber aspect elaborated upon earlier but also via the inclusion of the offshoring dimension which has largely been unexplored so far. With race being one among a host of triggers, multiple causative factors emerged to extend earlier insights (van Jaarsveld and Poster 2013). In contrast to Wang et al. (2013) who showed that ethnicity is an issue that surfaces contingent on the nature of the service outcome, the findings highlight the influence of race as a stereotypical categorization-linked response triggered in an automatic unconscious manner usually at the very beginning of the call. As compared to other service

contexts where employees are subordinated to the customers by their employers, in the offshored call centre, clients direct employers and employees are answerable to this dual hierarchy. The employment relationship is quadratic in these circumstances. The macro-level power dynamics of offshoring, linked to North-South political economy issues, manifested via SLAs, technobureaucratic controls and transactional psychological contracts of employment affected the experience of customer abuse in two ways. One, by and large, they ensured that employees maintained task performance regardless of the adverse impact experienced. Two, along with the discouragement/absence of and disinterest towards collectivization, they constrained the degree of agency employees exercised individually or jointly both within and outside the organization so that their own employment and employability and the business interests of the sector and country were not jeopardized. To this extent, employee resistance is less risky and less frequent than the instances reported by their Western counterparts in captive or outsourced call centres in their homelands (van Jaarsveld and Poster 2013). Employees' mobility-related ongoing actual and future anticipated gains played a decisive overarching role in guiding both these aforementioned actions.

Customer bullying symbolizes a prototypical ethical dilemma. Bullying is universally recognized as wrong behaviour and employees themselves maintain such a stance when describing abusive customers. Yet, customer sovereignty legitimizes and normalizes customer bullying and is promoted by employers (and, in this case, clients) in the pursuit of organizational success. Under these circumstances, employers recast employee well-being in terms of competitive advantage overlooking the strains caused and rights violated by customer bullying, while employees, notwithstanding their perspective about the unethicality of customer bullying, remain a party to the experience as long as it encompasses their involuntary source of livelihood. Such justification of wrong behaviour, rendering it right and reifying it into the social fabric, is clearly inconsistent with the contemporary focus on developing and maintaining ethical, dignified, compassionate and positive workplaces which employers claim to endorse and nurture. While employer-linked solutions to customer bullying, as suggested by participants themselves in the present study, are clearly the best way forward in this direction, their effectiveness lies in genuine managerial commitment to sustain such employee-oriented workplaces through all organizational design elements. Spurred by virtuous leadership (Havard 2007), the adoption of ethical climates rooted in benevolence and deontology (Simha and Cullen 2012) serves as employers' path to employee-centric organizations. With dignity (Bolton 2007) and compassion (Rynes et al. 2012) underlying ethical frameworks, this approach sets the stage for the launch of a moral economy (Bolton 2007) where positive workplaces (Nelson and Cooper 2007) are privileged. This strategy should translate into ensuring that the ideology of customer sovereignty stops short of bullying frontline employees as they strive to provide optimal service quality in the course of performing their boundary-spanning, emotional labour role. Since putting the brakes on customer bullying only purports to enhance service quality due to the resultant inadvertent promotion

of better service interactions, employers (and, in this case, clients), employees and customers all stand to gain.

Notes

1. The reader must note the distinction between clients and customers. Clients are entities seeking services from Indian/India-based service providers while customers are the clients' service recipients who by virtue of being served by the agents/employees of the service provider are also referred to by the latter as customers.
2. Tier 1, 2 and 3 cities refer to the overall attractiveness of Indian cities for the establishment of ITES-BPO business activities particularly in terms of infrastructure and skill availability, with Tier 1 being more attractive and Tier 3 being less attractive (NASSCOM 2013).

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A Study of Service Worker Burnout in Russia

Michel Rod, Nicholas J. Ashill, and Tanya Gibbs

Introduction

Frontline employees (FLEs) as boundary spanners play a critical role in the service encounter for organizations striving to enhance customer relationships (Babakus et al. 2009). They face many challenges including burnout which is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, a tendency to depersonalize others and diminished perceptions of ability on the job (see Worley et al. 2008 for a review and meta-analysis). In the workplace context, stressors which are also known as job demands, are widely acknowledged to lead to work strain (burnout), which in turn, leads to higher turnover, lower job dissatisfaction, decreased organizational commitment and compromised job performance (Crosno et al. 2009). Although the burnout literature generally acknowledges that burnout plays a mediating role in the job demands stressors—job performance relationship (Koeske and Koeske 1993), the domain of inquiry has largely focused on FLEs in North America and Western Europe (Glazer and Beehr 2005; Jamal 2010), with an emphasis on individualistic rather than collectivist work attitudes and behaviors (Hofstede 2001; Jamal 2005).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) introduced the terms *independent* and *interdependent* self-construal to describe individualism and collectivism at the personality or individual level. Individualistic cultures emphasize a self-construal that values independence, autonomy and a desire for self-expression and

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congruence between their behaviours and internal processes (Lam and Zane 2004; Surachartkumtonkun et al. 2013). In contrast, individuals with an interdependent self-construal have a desire for maintaining harmony and conforming to group norms (Lam and Zane 2004; Nauta et al. 2010). They are also given security and protection by belonging to groups when issues like high job stress arise (Chen et al. 1998; Triandis 1995). With research undertaken in North America and other 'Western' countries, stress and burnout have been shown to have a detrimental effect on job performance which prompts in decision regarding one's fit with the job and the organization (Maslach et al. 2001; Tourigny et al. 2013). A collectivist work culture, on the other hand, acknowledges and incorporates one's feelings toward the group (Lam and Zane 2004). While there is sound empirical understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of burnout in individualistic contexts, a case for whether extant theory regarding these relationships is applicable in collectivist societies warrants investigation (Tsui et al. 2007).

Given this background, by drawing from role theory, cognitive theory of psychological stress, and the stress and burnout literatures, we extend previous, largely 'Western' research on job demand stressors and burnout by developing a model and testing specific hypotheses regarding the mediating role of burnout between job demand stressors and job performance of frontline employees in a commercial retail bank in Russia. Following Gibbs and Ashill (2013) and Soyez (2012), we acknowledge Russia to be a collectivist country where individuals have a strong interdependent self-construal. The problem of stress should be particularly relevant for Russian service workers given the enormous economic and social change associated with post-Soviet transition over the past two decades (Aleskerov et al. 2008; Soyez 2012).

We begin by discussing the research model used to guide the study and related literature (see Fig. 1). In so doing, we present one central hypothesis that relate stress, burnout and job performance. Second, we present an empirical study that was conducted in a commercial retail bank in Russia. Finally, we present our results and discuss implications for researchers and practitioners.
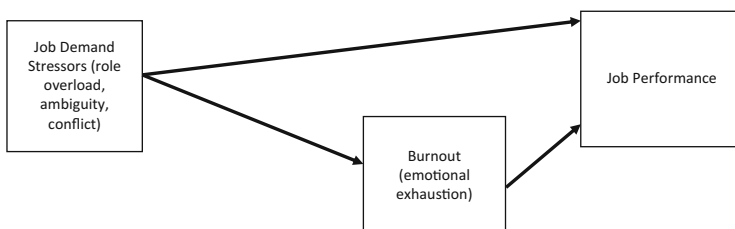

Fig. 1 Research model

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

In conceptualizing burnout via the stress-strain-outcomes (SSO) framework, Koeske and Koeske (1993) argue that emotional exhaustion represents its essence. Indeed, burnout, in Russian as "синдром эмоционального выгорания" translates as 'syndrome of emotional burnout'. Similarly, Ito and Brotheridge (2012) have examined the impact of specific work stressors (role ambiguity and role conflict) on emotional exhaustion. Although burnout has been conceptualized as being comprised of two (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) or three (plus personal accomplishment) dimensions, of the three, emotional exhaustion occupies central stage as it captures the core meaning of what burnout is all about (Shirom 1989). The entire burnout process commences with emotional exhaustion which is defined as being emotionally over-extended, fatigued and psychologically drained of emotional energy (Wright and Cropanzano 1998). Although we are interested in burnout, we follow the recent practice of using emotional exhaustion as the driver for the burnout episode because it provides the most consistent relationship within its nomological network (Halbesleben and Bowler 2007; Tourigny et al. 2013), and is most readily portable to other contexts (Sun and Pan 2008).

The conservation of resources (COR) model suggests that when employees are emotionally exhausted, they lack energy and therefore become disinclined to expend scarce resources on behalf of the organization which they view as being responsible for their exhaustion. Thus, they are more likely to withhold their efforts toward job performance (Tourigny et al. 2013). Drawing on the stress-strain-outcomes (SSO) framework, numerous studies have demonstrated that burnout mediates the negative relationship between job demand stressors and job performance. Podsakoff et al. (2007) denote job demand stressors such as role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity to be 'hindrance' stressors whose negative influence manifests both directly on job performance as well as indirectly through burnout. Similarly, Singh (2000) showed a direct negative relationship between job demands and job performance in addition to an indirect negative effect mediated by burnout. More recently, Babakus et al. (2009) showed job demand stressors to have both a direct negative effect on the job performance of frontline employees in a retail bank as well as a negative indirect effect through burnout.

In accordance with existing evidence from Western/individualistic samples, we advance the following hypothesis for empirical investigation:

H1. Burnout partially mediates the effects of job demands stressors on job performance.

Research Method

Sample and Study Setting

Up until the mid-1980s the banking system was largely viewed as a state monopoly and highly centralized (Граченко (*Grashenko*) 2009). However, the economic reforms of the 1980s brought about a major transformation of the banking system (Steinherr 2006). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country's total number of commercial banks swelled from just one, in 1987 to 1092 as of December 2007 with the top 50 banks accounting for 80 % of total assets (Aleskerov et al. 2008).

The commercial bank serving as the focus of the study is the largest private bank registered in Saratov Region, and is among the Top Ten Banks of Povolzye with respect to total assets. As of July 1, 2012, it had a total of 131 branches, in excess of 3,000 employees, and a total equity of 39.9 billion rubles, equivalent to US$1.3 billion. The bank was rated first among regional banks in Russia for quality of client service in 2008.

Two-hundred and thirty questionnaires were distributed to a purposive sample of fulltime frontline employees in six branches of the bank. These employees had boundary-spanning roles encompassing a number of service delivery functions including Экономисты–операционисты (*economist–operationist*), and Кассиры (*cashier*), as employees who had direct contact with customers. There were no statistically significant differences in responses between the two service functions (economist–operationist and cashier) (low non-independence), and we concluded that individual level analysis would be acceptable (Wieseke et al. 2008).

The six branch managers discussed the survey with FLEs and encouraged them to participate. Participants were assured of confidentiality and were allowed to complete the survey anonymously either during working hours or at home. In each surveyed branch, a project facilitator was responsible for survey distribution, collection, and employee orientation prior to distribution.

By the cut-off date for data collection, 186 questionnaires had been returned for data analysis. Over 80 % (82.3 %) were female. Just under one third of respondents had secondary education and 65.6 % had college/university education. Respondents represented all age groups with 40.9 % of FLEs between the ages of 18 and 24, 45.7 % between the ages of 25 and 34, 9.1 % between the ages of 35 and 44, 3.8 % between the ages of 45 and 54 and 0.5 % 55 years and older. Over half of respondents (58 %) had tenures of 2 years or less, 34.9 % had tenures between 2 and 5 years, and 7.1 % had been with their bank for more than 5 years. These profiles were comparable to the total population of FLEs in the organization.

Early and late respondents were compared on all variables of interest, using traditional t-tests following Armstrong and Overton's (1977) recommendations. Differences between the means were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that there were no differences between the group means of early and late respondents. A sample of non-respondents were contacted and interviewed by telephone where it was determined that time constraints prevented them from completing the survey.

Questionnaire Development

In the present study, the questionnaire was initially designed in English and then translated into Russian. The translation-back translation procedures recommended by Brislin (1980) and Douglas and Craig (2007) were followed. The questionnaire was first translated into Russian to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding by a bilingual native of Russia. The original and back-translated versions were then compared for differences and comparability.

Measurement

Consistent with Podsakoff et al. (2007) and Babakus et al. (2009), we defined job demands as hindrance-stressors as a second-order factor construct with three specific dimensions: role ambiguity (RO), role conflict (RC) and role overload (RO), which have all been identified as critical antecedents of burnout (Cordes and Dougherty 1993). Each dimension was measured with three items each from Singh et al. (1996), Singh (2000) and Beehr et al. (1976). Emotional exhaustion representing the essence of burnout was measured with five items from Maslach and Jackson (1981). Job performance was measured with five items adapted from Babin and Boles (1998).

Responses to the items were elicited on five-point scales. Various control variables were also examined in order to provide a rigorous test of the hypothesized theoretical associations. Demographic variables have previously been examined as antecedents of emotional exhaustion (burnout) and job performance in American–European studies (Babakus et al. 2009; Johnson et al. 2013; Rod and Ashill 2013). In this study, age was measured using a five-point scale, education was measured as a discrete variable using four categories, and gender was measured as a binary variable (0 = female and 1 = male).

Due to the self-report nature of the survey, method variance is identified as a potential issue. Spector (1987) reported that the most frequently found sources of method variance in self reports are acquiescence and social desirability bias. The questionnaire was also organized into discrete sections by separating the independent and dependent variables in an effort to reduce single-source method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Reynolds' (1982) short form of the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe 1960) was also included in the survey. Examining the correlations of the social desirability measure with all of the items used in the study revealed that social desirability bias was not an issue in these data.

Following Podsakoff et al. (2003), we also added a single common method factor to test the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, items were allowed to load on their respective theoretical constructs, as well as on a common method

factor, and the significance of the structural parameters was examined both with and without the common methods factor in the model.

Prior to measurement model estimation, all measures were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis to ensure that items loaded onto their respective constructs. Items representing role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and job performance converged on their respective factors. Two items measuring emotional exhaustion were discarded due to low loadings.

The next step in data analysis involved model estimation using Partial Least Squares (PLS Graph, version 3.00) approach to path modeling. The data did not meet the strict distributional assumptions of covariance based SEM approaches such as LISREL.

Results

Measurement Model Results

All reliability scores were above the recommended level of 0.70 (see Table 1), thus indicating adequate internal consistency (Fornell and Bookstein 1982; Nunnally 1978). The average variance extracted scores (AVE) were also above the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Chin 1998; Fornell and Larcker 1981). When AVE is greater than 0.5, the variance shared with a construct and its measures is greater than error. This level was achieved for all of the model constructs.

Convergent validity is demonstrated when items load highly (loading >0.70) on their associated factors (Chin 1998). PLS permits the conceptualization of higher-order factors through its repeated use of manifest variables (Tenenhaus et al. 2005). Table 1 shows the loadings of the first-order constructs (role ambiguity, overload and conflict) on the second-order job demand stressors construct. The first-order construct of role conflict exhibited a loading of 0.6 but was retained because it was conceptually meaningful to measure job demand stressors with this construct (Podsakoff et al. 2007). The factor loadings for the remaining model constructs in Table 1 exhibited acceptable convergent validity.

To assess discriminant validity the study used the heuristic of Fornell and Larcker (1981), where the square root of the AVE should exceed the intercorrelations of the construct with other constructs in the model. Table 2 shows that none of the intercorrelations of the constructs exceed the square root of the AVE of the constructs. This table also presents descriptive data for the model constructs.

Table 1 Measurement model items

Construct name and items	Loading	Internal consistency	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Role ambiguity		0.84	0.68
My job has clearly defined objectives, targets and goals[R]	0.88		
I know what is expected of me at work[R]	0.86		
I know what my responsibilities are[R]	0.92		
Role overload		0.76	0.63
I am given enough time to do what is expected of me on the job[R]	0.85		
The amount of work that I have to do stops me from doing my job to the best of my ability	0.81		
It often seems like I have too much work for one person to do	0.77		
Role conflict		0.68	0.57
I have to deal with or satisfy too many different people	0.70		
I sometimes have to bend a rule in order to carry out my job	0.64		
I find myself trying to meet conflicting demands of various departments	0.61		
Job demand stressors		0.81	0.59
Role ambiguity	0.87		
Role overload	0.82		
Role conflict	0.60		
Emotional exhaustion		0.86	0.68
I feel exhausted at the end of the workday	0.86		
I feel emotionally drained from my work	0.88		
I feel burned out from my work	0.72		
Job performance		0.90	0.65
Relative to my co-workers I go out of my way to help customers	0.78		
Relative to my co-workers my performance is in the top 10 %	0.74		
Relative to my co-workers I consistently deliver better quality service than others	0.86		
I am a top performer	0.80		
Relative to my co-workers I have been rated consistently as an excellent performer	0.87		
	0.92		

[R]Item reverse scored

Table 2 Assessing
discriminant validity

	1	2	3
1. Job demand stressors	**0.77**		
2. Burnout	0.68	**0.82**	
3. Job performance	−0.29	−0.22	**0.81**
Mean	2.54	2.67	3.66
Standard deviation	0.58	1.10	0.89

Notes: On the diagonal, the square root of the AVE is displayed

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated on the basis of the R^2 values for the dependent constructs, the Stone–Geisser Q-square test (Geisser 1975; Stone 1974) for predictive relevance, and the size, t-statistics and significance level of the structural path coefficients. The t-statistics were estimated using the bootstrap resampling procedure (1,000 resamples).

The structural model coefficient results are shown in Table 3 and show that job demands stressors have a positive association with burnout ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) and a negative relationship with job performance ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.05$). Surprisingly, burnout has no significant relationship with job performance ($\beta = 0.04$). The study hypothesis is therefore not supported because burnout plays no mediating role in the stress-job performance relationship.

The model explains 50.2 % of the variance in burnout (emotional exhaustion), and 8.7 % in job performance. Although PLS estimation does not utilize formal indices to assess overall goodness-of-fit (GoF) such as GFI or CFI, Tenenhaus et al. (2005) have developed a GoF measure for PLS based on taking the square root of the product of the variance extracted with all constructs with multiple indicators and the average R^2 value of the endogenous constructs. In our model, the GoF measure is 0.46 for the main effects model which indicates a good fit (see Table 3).

The Stone–Geisser test of predictive relevance was performed to further assess model fit in PLS analysis (Geisser 1975; Stone 1974). Both burnout and job performance have positive redundancy Q-square values suggesting that the proposed research model has good predictive ability.

The main findings of our study are consistent with and without the control variables in the model. However, age, gender and education have a statistically significant impact on some of the model constructs (p < 0.05). Specifically, older respondents report higher levels of job performance. Female respondents report higher perceptions of job demand stressors and burnout and those respondents with more education report lower levels of stress and burnout.

Table 3 Hypothesis testing in the structural model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Hypothesized Direction	Standardized coefficient	Results
H1	Job demand stressors → Burnout	Positive	.67***	Supported
	Burnout → Job performance	Negative	.04 *ns*	Not supported
	Job demand stressors → Job performance	Negative	−.27*	Supported
Fit measures	Endogenous construct			
R^2	Burnout	.50		
	Job performance	.09		
GoF		.46		
Q^2	Burnout	.34		
	Job performance	.06		

*$p < 0.05$
***$p < 0.001$

Discussion and Implications

A limitation of the burnout literature is the emphasis on North American/Western European research examining relationships between stress, strain (burnout) and job performance. Acknowledging that cultural differences across different societies are important in understanding variations in the burnout process, the current study makes a theoretical contribution to the services literature by providing valuable insights regarding relationships between job demand stressors, strain (burnout) and job performance in a collectivist society.

As predicted, the findings of the present study corroborate the widely held view that job demand stressors have a significant positive impact on burnout (Babakus et al. 2009; Podsakoff et al. 2007). However, burnout plays no mediating role on the job demand stressors-job performance relationship. Although job demand stressors have a direct negative impact on job performance, burnout does not. The non-significant relationship between burnout and job performance suggests that when frontline employees become devoid of energy, they do not withhold their efforts toward high performance. This finding runs counter to studies using Western/individualistic samples where burnout is shown to have either a partial or full mediator role in the stress-job performance relationship (Babakus et al. 2009; Bakker et al. 2004; Podsakoff et al. 2007).

We interpret this finding in light of indigenous literature and our own cultural competencies. With respect to the commercial banking sector in Russia, and especially in the context of the focal bank under study where service excellence and high performance work practices have been a priority, there are institutional and professional standards that must be upheld regardless of the level of frontline employee emotional exhaustion. In other words, job performance is standardized and controlled and can be seen by others. In addition, in a collectivist society like

Russia, FLEs are cognizant of and sensitive to what their colleagues think of and see in their performance. Tourigny et al. (2013) notes that in collectivist societies, individuals care about what one's co-worker thinks of one's performance, especially performance that is mandated or controlled. Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) also posit that despite being emotionally exhausted, employees who are more central to a social network will feel an obligation to expend extra resources in the form of behaviors conducive to increasing job performance. Moreover each employee is rewarded based on the overall performance of his or her team, and there is an embedded incentive to cooperate and help each other to improve their unit's performance. In addition to job demand stressors, frontline employees also face demands arising from their work environment such that a more collectivist, team-based assessment of organizational performance results in 'the team' possibly compensating for individuals who may personally be suffering from burnout. Although only tangentially related to the present study, recent evidence suggests that there is a role for group identification as a coping strategy in burnout (Barbier et al. 2013). "People still share 'collective thinking'," observes one vice president of a compatibly-sized bank operating in the same region (Parshina, 2013, personal communication). In summary, it is conceivable that a theoretically viable negative relationship between burnout and job performance could be masked by institutional expectations and a collectivist sense of responsibility. Worth ethics and social norms associated with a collectivist culture may not motivate a burned out frontline employee to individually perform.

Although burnout plays no role in adversely affecting job performance, this finding still has important managerial implications. Given that service excellence and high performance work practices are a priority in this focal bank under study (Gibbs and Ashill 2013); there are institutional and professional standards that need to be upheld regardless of the intensity of an FLE's state of emotional exhaustion. In the bank, management recognizes the presence of burnout among its frontline employees as a result of high performance standards specific to customer acquisition and retention in response to an increasingly competitive banking landscape (Shepeleva, 2013, personal communication). These performance goals, "often overestimated and unrealistic," and communicated from "top to bottom," trigger employee collaboration on meeting these goals (Goncharova, 2013, personal communication). Therefore it behooves managers to ensure that groups/teams are appropriately resourced to compensate for individuals within the group who might be experiencing burnout.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study makes the assumption that frontline employee self-assessment of job performance provides a reasonable proxy of actual job performance. In future research, it would be beneficial to include other perceptual and/or objective measures of performance such as actual customer feedback (Bhandari et al. 2007; Liao

2007) and/or supervisory ratings (Conway and Huffcutt 1997). A number of variables potentially important in the burnout process as well as the underlying conceptual domain of the burnout construct also warrant investigation. First, other stressors associated with the frontline work environment may have positive Eustress effects, thus a more complete examination of the effects of all job demand stressors could be part of a future research agenda in a collectivist setting. Second, the present study examined burnout in terms of its first and primary symptom (emotional exhaustion) only. Future research could examine other burnout symptoms e.g. depersonalization. Third, the present study focused on only one behavioral outcome (job performance). Additional behavioral or affective job outcomes warrant investigation such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Fourth, an examination of potential moderators of relationships within the SSO model is warranted. It is widely acknowledged in the extant literature that stress does not result from the sources of the pressure itself (Lazarus and Folkman 1984) and that differences that relate to perceptions, such as coping, should also be considered. Coping characterizes a person's efforts to manage demands i.e., the ways in which individuals choose to respond to stressful situations (Welbourne et al. 2007). Service workers as boundary spanners from collectivistic cultures may respond differently when experiencing work stressors relative to service workers from individualistic cultures given that in an individualist setting the self-concept prevails with a focus on autonomy and personal achievement. In contrast collectivist settings value strong, cohesive groups and social harmony (Lam and Zane 2004; Patterson and Smith 2003; Surachartkumtonkun et al. 2013). An interesting avenue for future research would be an examination of coping that is self-directed and coping that is other-directed i.e., taking responsibility for one's self for solving the problem versus seeking support from others to problem-solve (Folkman et al. 1986; Kuo 2012). In individualist cultures, the main components of one's self-construal are such enduring features as one's important traits, abilities, preferences or attitudes leading to a more independent outlook separate from relationships and groups, whereas members of collectivist societies' self-construals tend to refer to aspects of social roles, memberships and their relatedness to others (Cross 1995). Coping strategies may vary with the nature of these self-construals and therefore between collectivist and individualist cultures.

Fifth, personality variables such as the hardiness factor (Goodwin et al. 2002) that is thought to reduce the risk of burnout (Prosser et al. 1997; Turnipseed 1999) and a personal need for structure (Elovainio et al. 2001), both of which intuitively might be more relevant in a collectivist context, could also extend an understanding of burnout and its effect on affective and behavioral job outcomes. Finally, additional research is necessary to assess the generalizability of the findings of this study to other commercial retail banks in Russia, as well as other frontline service contexts in collectivist cultures. This last point is especially important given the earlier assertion that extant theory regarding frontline service worker burnout is largely an artifact of Western/European research and might not necessarily capture the context specific nuances of collectivist, non-Western frontline service work.

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Drivers of Salesperson's Customer Orientation: A Work Value Perspective

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Due to their boundary-spanning role, salespeople are key resource not only for sales revenue but also for real time market intelligence, trend spotting and business forecasting. Moreover, with the heightening customer expectations (Rapp et al. 2008) and maturing markets in developed economies (Anderson 1996), firms require a broader understanding of markets, customers and salespeople. Today, companies are increasingly aware of the importance of having a good customer strategy that goes beyond mere acquisition of customers, but rather builds long-term profitable relationships. Therefore, it's even more important for firms to clearly understand the building block of its performance; its sales force and its disposition towards firm's customers (Agnihotri et al. 2012). It is therefore reasonable to expect that organizations have for several decades now, adopted and honed at the practice of marketing concept at an individual salesperson level which we know as salesperson's customer orientation or SOCO (Saxe and Weitz 1982). The SOCO perspective compares salespersons' trade offs between selling and showing empathy towards customer needs identification and fulfilment. This means that a customer-oriented salesperson helps to make customers derive satisfaction from making correct purchase decisions, rather than merely acting as selfish order-takers.

Since Saxe and Weitz's (1982) conceptualization of customer orientation (CO) and presentation of the selling orientation-customer orientation (SOCO) scale, the sales literature has been enriched by several follow-up studies investigating the customer orientation construct. While majority of the studies conceptualized salesperson's CO from the behavioural perspective as a set of behaviours aimed

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at delivering customer satisfaction, a growing body of sales literature considered CO as a psychological phenomenon such as mind-set, attitudes, or surface trait that motivates frontline employee to satisfy customer needs (e.g. Brown et al. 2002).

Zablah et al. (2012) while treating CO as a psychological phenomenon argues that it is a work value that guides sales employees' attitudes and behaviours towards achieving customer satisfaction. The suggestion that salesperson's CO should be considered as work value is grounded in rich body of literature on firm-level CO or market orientation (Deshpandé et al. 1993). Some authors conceptualise market orientation in behavioural terms (Kohli and Jaworski 1990) whereas several others define market orientation as value or deep-rooted belief that customers interests' come first and all the firm's behaviour and decision making is guided by this value (e.g. Kennedy et al. 2002). Therefore, for firms to implement marketing concept effectively, it's important that the value underlying the marketing concept is shared by the firm's frontline employees (Hartline et al. 2000). From this perspective, CO can be understood as a critical work value that directs frontline salesperson's behaviours in on-the-job context (Bardi and Schwartz 2003). However, few studies examined individual level determinants of customer orientation (Dursun and Kilic 2011). Recently, Brown et al. (2002) noted, "despite the apparent importance of employees' customer orientation to the implementation of the marketing concept in the market-driven company, research on the construct has been limited" (p. 111).

However, treating CO as work value cannot be completely understood in the absence of the cultural underpinnings of the construct. Work values are a subset of values that are culturally anchored. For example, collectivist cultures socialize its members to consider themselves to be born with duties rather than with rights (Sinha 1997), and "inculcate in their members the importance of work relative to other life roles" (Sinha 2000, p. 19). Therefore, salespersons as individuals are likely to treat their work values differently from their counterparts in the developed worlds, where the culture is more individualistic. This research aims to extend this stream of literature on salesperson CO that treats it as a work-value and tries to integrate it with other belief that is widely prevalent in collectivists societies such as India, that of belief in one's karma (or actions). Singh and Singh (2012) have conceptualised salesperson's Karma Orientation, KO, as consisting of, "their (salespersons') behaviors resulting from a sense of selfless action, performed while doing their work as a duty towards customers in particular, and society in general."(p. 144). We therefore treat CO as well as KO of salespersons as work values.

Sales as a profession too, is undergoing a change and salespeople are more inclined to explore beyond the competitiveness and drive to achieve sales goals. This shift is towards a search for meaning in life through self and inner peace (Cohen 1997). In a selling job, a salesperson is likely to consider servicing customers or meeting customer needs as a favourable context for his/her job. Neck and Manz (2007) suggest the aim of the employees to focus on the pleasant and rewarding aspects of one's work leads them to helping or expressing goodwill towards others that provides a sense of purpose, and therefore focus on naturally rewarding activities of one's task or work in hand. Neck and Manz (2007) argues

that natural rewards strategies are adopted by employees to convert a task into a more positive experience by (a) selecting a pleasant or favourable context of the task in hand, (b) changing the task completion process to make it more enjoyable, and (c) focus attention on the pleasant aspects of the task in hand.

Objectives of this paper is twofold: (1) we propose an alternative perspective to understand individual level CO of a salesperson as a psychological phenomenon and (2) we identify two work value drivers of CO that are theoretically grounded as well as culturally rooted, namely-karma orientation (KO), and natural rewards strategies (NR). We empirically test this model with KO and NR as antecedents of CO, and job satisfaction, and sales performance as two outcomes of CO. We also test the moderating impact of sales experience on CO-performance.

Theoretical Framework

According to JD-R theory while every job has specific set of factors relating to employee stress and employee engagement, these factors can be broadly classified into two categories: job demands and job resources (Crawford et al. 2010). Job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that requires sustained physical and/or psychological efforts resulting in physiological and/or psychological costs. Examples of common job demands include high workload and emotionally demanding client interactions. In the context of a selling job, job demands could be high quota pressure, unfavourable physical environment at work and stressful engagements with customers.

Job resources are the aspects of the job and the person that enables frontline employees to achieve work goals, help in reducing job demands and provide for personal growth (Bakker and Demerouti 2007). Brown et al. (2002) conceptualized CO as an employee's predisposition or tendency to meet customer needs and from this point of view salesperson's CO can be understood as a work value that directs his/her on-the-job behaviour (Bardi and Schwartz 2003). Therefore, within the JD-R framework, CO as a work value can be considered as a personal resource or aspect of the self that directs his/her behaviour in on-the-job context.

Self-interest is defined as going beyond one's narrow and economic self-interests (Chawla and Guda 2013). One of the most popular conceptualisation of customer orientation by Saxe and Weitz (1982) suggests that customer oriented salespeople are high on concern for others dimension as opposed to concern for self dimension of the interpersonal behaviour model. Therefore, in sales negotiations, customer oriented salespeople are more likely to engage in coordinative style of negotiation behaviours (Williams 1998). Moreover, customer oriented salespeople use informative closing techniques to ensure that customers take an informed purchase decision (Schwepker 2003). Therefore, self-interest transcendence as an enduring belief is at the core of customer orientation as a work value that drives a salesperson's behaviours during sales encounters.

To further explain the CO construct as a work value, it is important to understand its potential drivers that influence self-interest transcendence aspect at individual salesperson level. We examine two constructs; natural rewards strategies and karma orientation, as determinants of customer orientation as a work value.

Development of Model and Hypotheses

### *Natural Rewards Strategies and Customer Orientation*

Several studies (e.g., Bettencourt and Brown 2003) suggested positive impact of employee job satisfaction on frontline employee's customer orientation. Employee satisfaction is defined as a person's positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of his/her job experiences (Locke 1976). Natural rewards strategies, a branch of self-leadership construct, is one such area of psychology literature that offers skills and strategies for salespeople to focus on positive aspects of a sales job (Neck and Manz 2007), and intended to convert a task into a more positive experience in one of the three ways:

- Selecting a favourable context.
- Modifying or changing the task completion process that is enjoyable to perform.
- Focusing attention on the pleasant aspects of the task.

Although research involving natural rewards strategies is very limited, Neck and Manz (2007) suggest that one aspect of naturally rewarding activities, which many would argue provides a sense of purpose, involves helping or expressing goodwill towards others. This view is consistent with the findings from a study involving cleaning staff of a hospital. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) reported that members of the cleaning staff who crafted their job by focusing on the pleasant aspects of their task saw their role as more important and relevant to the care-giving mission of the hospital. Therefore, natural rewards strategies enable employees to look beyond one's narrow or economic self-interests.

In a selling job, a salesperson is likely to consider servicing customers or meeting customer needs as a favourable context for his/her job. Therefore, for a salesperson that uses natural rewards strategies, a higher sense of purpose may develop through his/her belief in delivering customer satisfaction (Willingham 2006). This sense of meaningfulness in work and belief in higher purpose, to some extent reflect the experiences of self-interest transcendence.

Natural rewards strategies enable individuals to convert a task into a pleasant experience. In the context of selling, natural rewards strategies in salespeople involves choosing a favourable context for their sales job, modifying selling activities into a more enjoyable task. Natural rewards strategies essentially involve an ability to focus on the pleasant aspects of a task and defocusing away from the unpleasant aspect of a job (Neck and Manz 2007). Salesperson's customer

Fig. 1 Research model
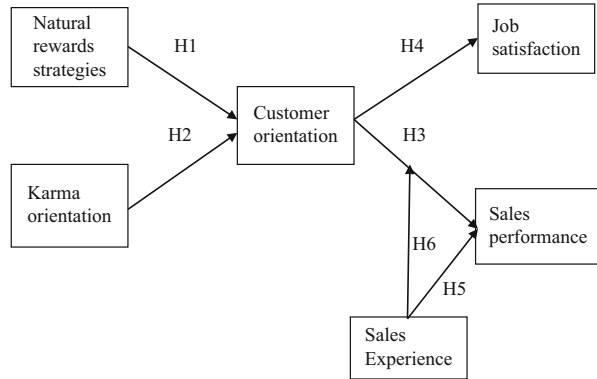
orientation focuses on customer needs, consideration of customer interests by providing useful customer solutions and closing sales through a collaborative handling of objections placed by a customer (Homburg et al. 2011). Therefore, relative to selling-oriented approach which focuses on closing the sales only, customer-oriented approach requires salespeople to be more structured in their thinking, knowledge processing and stay motivated to engage in this form of relational selling (Thakor and Joshi 2005). In addition, in adaptive selling context which is a customer centric sales behaviour, intrinsic motivation of a salesperson plays an important role and is positively associated with customer orientation (Roman and Iacobucci 2010).

Theory of motivational traits and skills (Kanfer and Heggestad 1999) states that in achievement context, use of constructive self-regulation plays a critical role. Motivation skills such as natural rewards strategies, therefore positively influence task related processes. Further, natural rewards strategies have positive influence on effort and attention that are of extreme importance for consistent customer orientation in salespeople (Lee and Turban 2010).

Consistent with extant literature, it can be argued that salespeople who regularly use natural rewards strategies have better understanding of self and their customers and such salespeople will be more inclined to empathize with their customers. Therefore, salesperson's application of natural rewards strategies in sales interactions is likely to enhance his/her customer orientation (Fig. 1).

H1. Use of natural rewards strategies increases salesperson's customer orientation.

Karma Orientation and Customer Orientation

Singh and Singh (2012) conceptualised salesperson's karma orientation as his/her behaviours resulting from a sense of selfless action performed while doing his/her work as a duty towards customers. Karma orientation consists of four dimensions:

– work as selfless action
– work as duty towards others
– detachment from work-related rewards, and
– equanimity under environment influences.

Each dimension of karma orientation construct reflects the values of self-interest transcendence and encourages salespeople to focus more on serving customer needs and less on their own needs. Therefore, karma orientation in salespeople is likely to be associated with customer-oriented values in salespeople. As suggested by others too (e.g. Mulla and Krishnan 2006, 2007; Komala and Ganesh 2007), spiritual inclination of salespersons and those with high karma orientation would be more duty-driven, more selfless in task actions, and more equanimous, and more detached from results of their actions, they are more likely to regulate their behaviours, and which are more inclined towards achieving customer goals and objectives rather than their won. Therefore, we posit:

H2. Use of karma orientation by salespersons increases salesperson's customer orientation.

Consequences of Customer Orientation

As well established in sales literature, we also proposed that job satisfaction is a well-known outcome of salesperson's customer orientation (Bateman and Organ 1983; Hoffman and Ingram 1991), and that salesperson's customer orientation increases his/her sales performance (e.g., Brown et al. 2002). So we posit:

H3: Salesperson's customer orientation increases sales performance.
H4: Salesperson's customer orientation increases job satisfaction.

As also well established in sales literature, we tested for the moderating impact of sales experience of salesperson on the CO-sales performance relationship, as well as the modelling sales experience as antecedent of sales performance (e.g. Scheibelhut and Albaum 1973; Siguaw and Honeycutt 1995; O'Hara et al. 1991). So we posit:

H5: Salesperson's sales experience increase sales performance.
H6: Salesperson's sales experience moderates the CO-sales performance relationship, such that salespersons with higher experience are likely to be better sales performers.

Methodology

Sample

Our selection of industry setting was based on conditions suggested by Saxe and Weitz (1982) regarding when the customer-oriented approach should be expected. These conditions are:

1. The salesperson can offer range of alternatives and has the expertise to assist customers in making the right choice;
2. Customers are engaged in complex buying tasks;
3. A cooperative relationship exists between the salesperson and the customer;
4. Repeat sales and referrals are an important source of business.

The sample for this study was drawn from organizations engaged in production and marketing of industrial products. These organizations are based in western part of India and their sales force operates in a business-to-business settings. Selling dynamics fulfils all four conditions regarding customer oriented sales approach (Saxe and Weitz 1982). We used a survey to collect data from salespeople of these organizations who were nominated to attend a B2B sales conclave. We distributed survey forms to 178 participants and we received back 125 filled in forms (response rate of 70 %). Out of a total 125 respondents, only 11 (9 %) were female. All respondents were graduates or postgraduates and had an average of 10 years experience in sales function. Fifty-six percent of the respondents were below 40 years of age, and rest older.

Measures

For our study, we used previously-validated self-report measures. These measures have been used in marketing and organizational behavior literature (Lee and Turban 2010). For assessing sales performance, self-report measures were used (Sujan et al. 1994) that are considered to be appropriate for assessing performance of boundary-spanning employees (Harris and Schaubroeck 1988). An area of concern is timing of measurement, specifically whether a short-term or a long-term measure is appropriate for assessing sales performance. Our study used a short-term performance measure based on the nature of the job being investigated and, as recommended by Chonko et al. (2000), we provide complete details on the job role of respondents for a better understanding of the sales situation being examined.

For job satisfaction, we used the adapted measure from Wright and Cropanzano (1998). For salesperson's customer orientation, we used 7 items of the 12-item SOCO scale (Saxe and Weitz 1982). We measured experience using two-item adapted ADAPTS scale suggested by Spiro and Weitz (1990) and used in recent studies (e.g., Rapp et al. 2008). Sales performance was measured on two aspects:

comparative sales performance, and salesperson's quota achievement. Natural-rewards strategies was measured using the revised 35-item Self-Leadership Questionnaire (Houghton and Neck 2002). Four items from this scale measured respondents' ability to focus on pleasant aspects of their sales job, as well as their ability to do things in his/her own way and thus enjoy the entire selling process. Questions were anchored on a five-point scale ranging from one (*very inaccurate*) to five (*very accurate*). For measuring Karma Orientation, we developed items using interviews with salespersons and salespeople, following the conceptualization proposed in Singh and Singh (2012). Following purification of initial 15 items of KO, we got 6 items. All measures were purified using exploratory factor analysis and consisted of a single factor.

We subjected the collected data to several tests to ascertain presence of common method bias. We first used Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). Using a solitary latent factor, we tested for common method variance. Analysis revealed loading on multiple manifest factors, suggesting no threat of common method variance. We also employed additional test for checking common method bias by using a partial correlation procedure including a marker variable that is not theoretically related to at least one variable in the study (Lindell and Whitney 2001). By using experience as marker variable, we found no significant relationships with other variables in the model. This further indicates that our study is not subject to an inherent common method bias.

Dimensionality of Measures and Discriminant Validity

We first report the evidence for reliability of measures used in the study. Cronbach's alpha for all measures exceeds recommended level of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978) as reported in Table 1. To assess unidimensionality of measures, we completed a confirmatory factor analysis model. We consider models with comparative fit index (CFI) values <0.90 and standardized root mean residual (SRMR) values >0.10 to be deficient, those with CFI values between 0.90 and 0.95, and SRMR values between 0.08 and 0.10 to be acceptable, and those with CFI >0.95 and SRMR < 0.08 ranges to be excellent (Fan and Sivo 2005; Marsh et al. 2004). Fit indices for the model meet the acceptable levels: CFI was 0.90, and the SRMR was 0.09. All

Table 1 Construct correlations, AVE and reliabilities

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	AVE	CA
1. Natural rewards strategies	1					0.57	0.83
2. Karma orientation	0.88	1				0.75	0.94
3. Customer orientation	0.82	0.81	1			0.81	0.95
4. Sales performance	0.67	0.53	0.64	1		0.80	0.91
5. Job satisfaction	0.45	0.46	0.52	0.47	1	0.60	0.81

AVE average variance extracted, CA Cronbach's alpha; $p < 0.01$

items reflected significant factor loadings (p<0.05). AVE of each construct exceeded recommended guidelines of 0.50 suggesting convergent validity of the constructs. AVE estimates for any two constructs exceeded the squared correlations between the constructs thereby providing evidence of discriminant validity. We also checked for multicollinearity by examining each of the independent variables for variance inflation factor (VIF). For all the variables, VIF was below the suggested level of 10. This suggests that the study results are not influenced by the multicollinearity.

Results and Discussion

To test our proposed hypotheses H1–H4, we tested the structural model using structural equation modeling (SEM) with paths from NR and KO leading to customer orientation and from customer orientation to sales performance and job satisfaction. This model demonstrates acceptable-fit indices ($\chi^2 = 541(125)$, $p < 0.01$; CFI$=0.90$; SRMR$=0.09$), although the chi-square was significant, although it may be because of sample size issues (Table 2).

All the four hypotheses (H1–H4) were supported in our study. For H1, we show empirically that adopting natural reward strategies such as choosing favorable contexts for sales tasks, and focusing on pleasant aspects of the sales tasks lead to higher levels of predisposition towards customer needs and servicing those needs, which possibly leads to higher levels of salesperson's customer orientation. Our results also finds support from recent studies (e.g., Homburg et al. 2011) which suggests that salesperson's customer orientation involves providing useful customer solutions, and the closure of sales through a collaborative handling of any objections that might be placed by a customer.

For H2, we empirically show that higher levels of karma orientation of sales employees leads to higher levels of customer orientation. Our results also gets support from recent literature on spirituality (e.g., Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram 2008) that suggests that spiritually inclined sales employee are more likely to show job commitment and sacralization of work which possibly

Table 2 Results of the hypotheses testing using structural equation modelling

Hypotheses	Std. coefficients
H1: Natural rewards→CO	0.54**
H2: Karma orientation→CO	0.44**
H3: CO→Job satisfaction	0.52**
H4: CO→Sales performance	0.64**
Model fit	
Chi square	541(d.f. 225)-sig.
CFI	0.90
SRMR	0.09

**p<0.01

leads sales employees to consider meeting customer needs and providing them solutions as their duty (Singh and Singh 2012).

For H3, we show that customer-oriented salesperson is more likely to be satisfied with his/her job. There is overwhelming support for this result in extant sales literature (e.g., Bateman and Organ 1983; Hoffman and Ingram 1991), and it shows that our proposed model is also supported through existing findings in the sales literature.

For H4, we show that salesperson's customer orientation leads to higher levels of sales performance. This is also highly supported from sales literature (e.g., Brown et al. 2002; Churchill et al. 1985), although there is a debate whether CO leads to short-term performance or sales performance in the long run (e.g., Wachner et al. 2009; Jaramillo and Grisaffe 2009).

Customer Orientation and Sales Experience: Interaction Effects

For testing the impact of sales experience on sales performance and the moderating impact of experience on CO-performance relationship, we used moderated regression method. To test interaction effects hypothesis, we used moderated regression with sales performance as dependent variable. All the interaction variables were mean-centred and interaction term was calculated by multiplying the centred variables (Cohen et al. 2003).

Results indicate that H5 was supported but H6 was not supported. Therefore, we also get support from the sales literature that salespersons with higher sales experience show higher sales performance (e.g., Park and Holloway 2003). This implies that more experienced salespersons spend less time on inter-personal relationships, and tend to work smarter than word harder compared to their younger colleagues.

In H6, we did not find any support that sales experience moderates the CO-performance relationship. Our plausible explanation for this result is that an experienced salesperson is probably more skilled in selling, and these selling skills and experience do not interact with his/her customer-oriented work value to increase his/her sales performance. On the contrary, this interaction may be counter-productive, since CO as work value emphasizes having a detached view from rewards of the work and focus on meaningfulness of the work rather than leveraging skills and experience to increase performance (Table 3).

Table 3 The effect of customer orientation and sales experience on sales performance

Main effects	Model 1: Main effects		Model 2: Interaction effects	
	Beta	T-Value	Beta	T-value
Customer orientation (CO)	0.39	6.10**		
H5: Sales experience (SE)	0.51	7.96**		
H6: Interaction effects				
CO × Sales experience			−0.02	−0.28

Adj. R square 55 %
**$p < 0.01$

Managerial and Research Implications

This study has significant implications for theory building and managerial practice. Studying salesperson CO from a work value perspective can be potentially useful in explaining CO's relationships with important job outcomes valued by managers in the current economic environment. Considering CO as a work value also extends an alternative perspective on practices relating to hiring and training interventions that seeks to recruit salespeople with sound human values who can be socialised into firm level implementation of marketing concept with much success. Since human values are fundamental guides to their actions, and motivations (Rokeach 1973), use of the value-centric constructs in sales literature can help researchers and managers alike in merging work values with individual life values, and achieve work-life balance. It is a long held notion that personal values drive beliefs and mode of conduct in achieving the individual goals (Schwartz 1994). Personal values also increase individual well being (Sagie and Elizur 1996), and help individual salespersons to achieve more meaning from work.

More specifically, we suggest that our study be usefully applied by managers to treat salesperson's customer orientation from a work value perspective, rather than a behavioural or attitudinal perspective as earlier suggested in the sales literature. The benefits of such perspective includes less reliance on sales force control systems, and monetary rewards to motivate the sales force. A work value perspective of salesperson's customer orientation helps the sales managers to motivate their sales force internally and anchor their work in their value system. The implications of internalizing natural rewards strategies and the concept of karma orientation in salespersons would make them view their work as a duty, and invest time and resources in helping their customers, meet their goals more meaningfully, and find long-term solutions, rather than looking for short-term sales. Our proposition is that meshing work values with sales tasks helps sales people to find internal motivation as well as internal rewards which is more sustainable in the long run, compared to competitive sales contests and monetary rewards to control their performance and behaviours. Natural rewards strategies can be also used as a measure to search for a suitable candidate for the sales vacancies, and therefore help in finding a better fit between a salesperson and his/her job description.

For managers to develop a customer-oriented sales force, the imperatives are in terms of designing training interventions that focus on promoting work values such as natural reward strategies and karma orientation which would lead to long-term customer satisfaction and low job stress (lower burnout among salespersons), higher role clarity (lower role ambiguity), and lower turnover.

Finally, a sales force developed on string work values is likely to be more ethical while dealing with customers thus creating better goodwill for the organization in the market.

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Exploring the Role of Salesperson Attributes and Service Behaviors in Adaptive Selling

See Mei (Mandy) Lo and Piyush Sharma

Introduction

Under current turbulent economic times, customers search for greater value and shop more carefully and deliberately; resulting in increased competition, especially in the retail and service industries, as the customers become more sophisticated and demanding (Grewal et al. 2009). Therefore, in order to maintain their competitiveness, retailers have to meet customers' needs and to differentiate themselves by offering good customer service and unique shopping experience to every customers in order to maintain long term relationship (Karmarkar 2004).

Service organizations are unique as the services they deliver are intangible (Zeithaml et al. 1985). Service employees need knowledge and access to information to help solving customer problems, and they need to be able to deal with angry customers, even in situation where the customer is rude, the employee is exhausted, or both (Berry et al. 1994). Frontline salespersons play in important role not just in selling but also providing service, answering queries and handling complaints; in fact, they represent the organization's face to the customers during interactions known as 'moment of truth'.

In other words, the quality of service provided by the salesperson is as important as the quality of the products sold by them. Prior research and service managers have tried to identify and validate those salesperson characteristics that positively affect performance outcomes (Park and Holloway 2003). The study of factors that drive performance of salespeople, and how these factors vary across different contexts, are essential for both researchers and managers in both sales and

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marketing functions (Verbeke et al. 2011). However, there is hardly any research that studies salesperson characteristics, their performance behavior and important customer outcomes using a common conceptual framework in a single study.

We address this important research gap by introducing a comprehensive model with four salesperson characteristics (attractiveness, communication ability, expertise and trustworthiness), three service performance behaviors (service manner, extra role and need identification) and three important outcome behaviors (willingness to disclose, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions). We test this model using a field-survey with actual retail customers in Hong Kong.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Salesperson Characteristics

Prior research on the physical attractiveness stereotype identified general categories of variables associated with it, including social competence, intellectual competence, concern for others, integrity, and psychological stability (Eagly et al. 1991), as well as sales performance (Anderson 1995). More recently, others argue that besides physical attractiveness, other variables may also affect sales performance, including communication ability and likeability—based on social competence, perceived salesperson expertise—based on intellectual competence, and trustworthiness—based on integrity and psychological stability (Ahearne et al. 1999).

Perceived Physical Attractiveness (PPA): Physical attractiveness is defined as the extent which the salesperson is perceived by the customer as possessing an appealing and pleasing physical appearance (Ahearne et al. 1999). Gulas and McKeage (2000) argue that there is a nearly automatic tendency to categorize a person as attractive or unattractive. In fact, recent research with neuroimaging devices also shows that a high level of physical attractiveness of a stimulus face elicits different brain activity than a low level of physical attractiveness of a stimulus face (O'Doherty et al. 2003).

Dion et al. (1972) summarize one of the most widely cited conclusions from research on physical attractiveness as, "what is beautiful is good" (p. 285). This statement links beauty and goodness to suggest the existence of a stereotype whereby physically attractive individuals are believed to possess a wide variety of positive personal qualities and successful life. Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) even wrote that "people believe good-looking people possess almost all the virtues known to humankind". Prior research uses three major theories to explain this stereotype, namely attribution, implicit personality and social categorization theories.

Perceived Communication Ability (PCA): According to Webster (1968), selling is a communication process during which the source (firm), the communicator (salesperson), the message (presentation), and receiver (prospect) all can influence the sales outcome. Communication skills include listening to the prospect's

description of problem and salesperson's ability to sense prospect's predispositions; which are important social competences that may affect sales performance (Eagly et al. 1991; Anderson 1995). Hence, communication ability is defined as the effective presentation of one's case to customer, which involves tailoring the sales call to meet customers' needs, listening and making effective use of time, and transferring clearly the intended information to customer (Ahearne et al. 1999).

Communication ability is particularly important for adaptive selling as salesperson should alter their sales behavior during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of selling situation (Weitz et al. 1986). Salespersons who gather more customer information about the prospect can customize the content and format of their messages for more effective communication (Franke and Park 2006). Coulter and Coulter (2003) argue that both performance-related competence (e.g. competence and customization) and personality-related competence (e.g. similarity) are antecedents of trust.

Perceived Expertise (PEX): Perceived expertise of the salesperson is defined as the extent to which a salesperson is viewed as having knowledge regarding the application and attributes of her or his product, competing products, and of the customer's business (Ahearne et al. 1999). Prior research shows a positive influence of perceived expertise on a wide range of sales outcomes, including customer satisfaction, trust and productivity.

Perceived Trustworthiness (PTW): Trust is defined as the belief that the exchange party is able to fulfill its obligations reliably and confidently, is motivated to seek mutually beneficial gains, and will refrain from abusing the relationship (Cho 2006, p. 26). Dwyer et al. (1987) found that trust could reduce tensions and conflicts between firms, facilitate information disclosure, enhance coordination and encourage future transactions. In consumer settings, Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) show that trust plays a critical role in building and maintaining customer-firm relationship, enhancing and maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Consumers associate trustworthiness with attributes such as competence and benevolence. Competence refers to the degree to which partners perceive each other as having the skills, abilities and knowledge for effective task performance (Smith and Barclay 1997). Benevolence refers to the behaviors that reflect the underlying motivation to place customer's interest ahead of self-interest (Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002). Trust in an exchange partner reduces perceived risk, which in turn may lead to greater willingness of self disclosure (Cho 2006).

Service Performance Behaviors

Personal selling is widely adopted at retail channels despite being considered a highly expensive (Roman and Martin 2008) yet effective (Spiro and Weitz 1990) marketing vehicle. In the sales interaction process, customers notice employee's service manner in the form of facial expressions, bodily gestures, tone of voice, and language (Mattila and Enz 2002), which affect how customers evaluate their

experience (Pugh 2001). Customers who evaluate the salesperson more positively would perceive better observable employee service behavior, including service manner, need identification (Lloyd and Luk 2011) and discretionary behaviors to take extra-role beyond formal role requirement to serve customer (Bettencourt and Brown 1997).

Perceived service manner (PSM): These are behaviors that salespersons demonstrate to foster interpersonal relationships with the customers, which facilitates interaction with the customer in a friendly and enthusiastic manner (Lloyd and Luk 2011). It relates to the congeniality dimension on the service employee's positive attitude and warm temperament, which makes them experience empathy for the customer (Winsted 2000).

Extra role behavior (ERB): These behaviors refer to service performance going beyond the call of duty to serve customers, and to contribute to service excellence to the company (Bitner 1995). Bettencourt and Brown (1997) propose that extra-role service behavior encompasses the 'little extras' and the 'spontaneous attention' that service employees direct at customers during the service encounters. Extra-role performance not only influences evaluations of salespeople (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994) but also overall organizational effectiveness and/or success (Podsakoff et al. 1997).

Need identification behaviors (NIB): In the adaptive selling context, salespeople need to ask relevant questions and anticipate the preferences of the customer in order to identify the most suitable product or service offering for them (Lloyd and Luk 2011). Sharing of information between the salesperson and the customer is an integral part of this process.

Based on the above, we posit that the four attributes of salespersons, namely perceived physical attractiveness, communication ability, expertise and trustworthiness of salespersons have a positive impact on service manner, extra role behaviors and need identification by the salesperson, and put forth the following hypotheses:

H1 Perceived physical attractiveness is associated positively with (a) perceived service manner behavior, (b) extra role behavior, and (c) need identification behavior.

H2 Perceived communication ability is associated positively with (a) perceived service manner behavior, (b) extra role behavior, and (c) need identification behavior.

H3 Perceived expertise is associated positively with (a) perceived service manner behavior, (b) extra role behavior, and (c) need identification behavior

H4 Perceived trustworthiness is associated positively with (a) perceived service manner behavior, (b) extra role behavior, and (c) need identification behavior.

Adaptive Selling: Customer Outcomes

Willingness to disclosure personal information (WTD): Marketers have a growing interest to acquire more knowledge about customers' preferences to better meet their needs, to enhance customer service, and to explore more opportunities to introduce new products and services (White 2004). Deighton (1996) argues that getting more customer information would enable firms to pursue information-based relationship, and likely to achieve more efficient targeting, more tailored offerings and greater customer retention. Collins and Miller (1994) argue that self disclosure plays a central role in development and maintenance of relations.

Adaptive selling is defined as "engaging in planning to determine the suitability of sales behaviors and activities that will be undertaken, the capacity to engage in a wide range of selling behaviors and activities, and the alteration of sales behaviors and activities in keeping with situational considerations" (Sujan et al. 1994). In the adaptive selling context, salesperson can adapt their sales message based on information provided by the customer and nature of the selling situation. Hunter and Perreault (2006) propose that salespeople will be more capable of practicing adaptive selling if they have more precise customer information during the interaction as it can help them customize their sales message, and recommend products and service that meet customers' specific needs. Price et al. (1995) argued that self-disclosure is needed to facilitate sharing of information between the salesperson and the customer. Adaptive selling leads to strong sales performance (Boorom et al. 1998; Franke and Park 2006).

Based on above discussion, we posit that customers who evaluate the salesperson's service behavior more positively are more willing to disclose personal information during the interaction process. By knowing customers' needs, more customized services can be offered and customers would evaluate the counter experience more positively and they are more willing to engage in long term relationship with the salesperson. These evaluation and judgment processes are not tested in previous literature. Hence, the following hypotheses:

H5 Customer's willingness to disclose personal information is positively influenced by salesperson's (a) perceived service manner, (b) extra role, and (c) need identification behavior.

Customer satisfaction (SAT): Customer satisfaction is a key outcome of buyer–seller relationships and it is influenced by perception of service quality, product quality, price, situational factors and other personal factors (Anderson and Sullivan 1993). Rust and Oliver (1994) define satisfaction as the "customer's fulfillment response," which is an evaluation as well as an emotion-based response to a service, and also a customer's belief on the probability of a service leading to a positive feeling. We posit that salesperson's service manner, extra-role and need identification behaviors would be positively related with customer satisfaction, as follows:

H6 Customer satisfaction is positively influenced by salesperson's (a) perceived service manner, (b) extra role, and (c) need identification behavior.
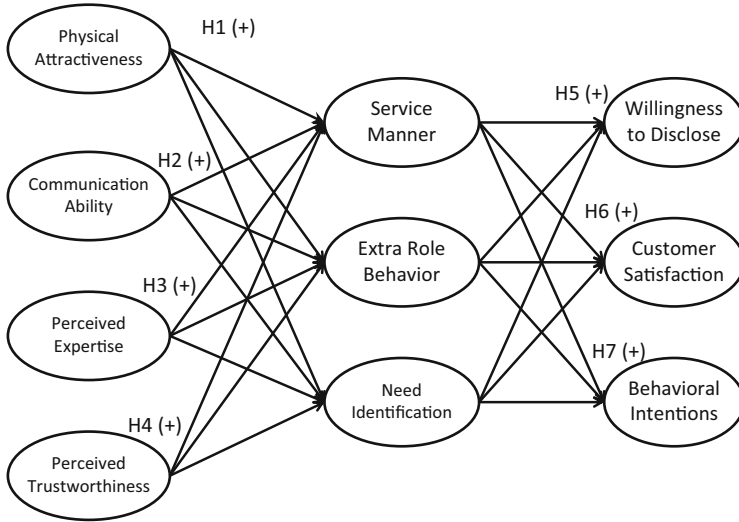
Fig. 1 Conceptual model

Behavioral Intentions (BEH): Behavioral intentions such as repurchase intentions, word of mouth, loyalty and complaining behavior are important for service providers, as satisfied customer would likely stay with a company for a long period, and contribute to the profitability of the company by repeated purchase and spreading good experience to others (Zeithaml et al. 1996). We hypothesize that customers are more likely to disclose personal information to salespersons with more favorable service behaviors and this facilitates adaptive selling. Specifically, with more information about customer's needs, the salesperson can develop and deploy sales presentation tailored to characteristics of each potential customer and propose products and services that meet customers' needs and wants (Roman and Iacobucci 2010).

H7 Customers' behavioral intentions are positively influenced by salesperson's (a) perceived service manner, (b) extra role, and (c) need identification behavior.

All these hypotheses are shown graphically in Fig. 1. Next we describe a field-survey based study conducted with retail shoppers in Hong Kong, to test these hypotheses.

Methodology

Empirical Setting

We conducted this study at the retail outlets of a major telecom company in Hong Kong, as the frontline salespeople in these outlets not only sell products (e.g. mobile phones) and services (e.g. phone and broadband plans) but also handle customer enquiries and complaints, thus providing a broad range of customer interactions (Bettencourt and Brown 1997). Moreover, in this industry, salespeople need to use adaptive selling approach in their interactions with potential customers, which means that the sales message and service offers change dynamically based on the needs and wants communicated by customers. Finally, service encounters in retail telecom outlets involve face-to-face interactions between customer and frontline salesperson, giving the customers a chance to assess the various salesperson characteristics directly.

Sample and Procedure

We randomly selected 12 retail outlets (50 % small to medium and 50 % large size) from the company's network of 60 retail outlets spread across all the districts in Hong Kong, to ensure that the responses of customers from different segments across Hong Kong could be collected. The unit of analysis in this study is a 'unique customer visit'. We collected a total of 186 completed questionnaires. Table 1 shows the sample profile.

   We used a structured questionnaire with three parts—part 1, with general questions about the customer's current visit, such as purpose of visit, nature of products and services of interest, whether purchase was made, time spent etc.; part 2, with questions about customer's perception about the visit experience based on the measurement scales indicated in the later section of this paper, and part 3, with demographic information such as age, gender, education, and occupation. We first prepared an English version of the questionnaire and then translated into Chinese by one graduate student and then back-translated into English by another graduate student, both unaware about the purpose of this study and unrelated to this project. We found no major discrepancies between the original and back-translated versions.

   The final questionnaires were dispatched to the managers of the retail shops selected for this study. To increase the reliability and generalizability of this research, we selected only those participants (customers) who interacted with the salesperson for at least 5 min, regardless of their visit purpose and whether real purchases were made. Upon completion of the questionnaire, each participant was given a Fast Food Coupon worth HK$30.

Table 1 Sample profile

Demographic/control variables	Category	Frequency (N = 186)	Percent
Nationality	(1) Hong Kong SAR	174	93.5
	(2) Mainland China	12	6.5
Gender	(1) Male	96	51.6
	(2) Female	90	48.4
Age	(1) <20 以下	7	3.8
	(2) 20–29	58	31.2
	(3) 30–39	57	30.6
	(4) 40–49	40	21.5
	(5) 50 ≥ 以上	24	12.9
Education	(1) ≤Secondary school	85	45.7
	(2) College	60	32.3
	(3) >College	25	13.4
	(4) Others	16	8.6
Occupation	(1) Technician/blue-collar	11	5.9
	(2) Professional	30	16.1
	(3) Manager/executive	20	10.8
	(4) Salespersons	36	19.4
	(5) Self-employed	17	9.1
	(6) Civil servant	22	11.8
	(7) Housewife	27	14.5
	(8) Student	6	3.2
	(9) Retiree/unemployed	8	4.3
	(10) Others	9	4.8
Monthly household income	(1) ≤HK$10,000 以下	39	21
	(2) HK$10,001–$30,000	121	65.1
	(3) ≥HK$30,001 以上	26	14
Visit purpose	Make an enquiry	105	56
	Make a purchase	81	44
Overall impression of the shop	High impression	104	56
	Low impression	82	44

Scales and Measures

We included the scales used by Ahearne et al. (1999) to operationalize the four salesperson characteristics (perceived physical attractiveness, communication ability, expertise and trustworthiness), using 7-point Likert-scales (1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree). Perceived employee service behavior was measured using the service manner behavior and need identification behavior scales adapted from Lloyd and Luk (2011) and extra role service behavior was adapted from Bettencourt and Brown (1997). Customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions were measured using scales developed by Ramsey and Sohi (1997), and willingness to disclose with a scale used by Cho (2006). We also included gender, age,

education, visit purpose and overall impression of the shop as control variables for the customers.

Data Analysis and Findings

We used the well-established two-step process to analyze our data, testing our measurement model first and then the structural model, using structure equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS 18.0. We first tested the reliability of all the measures used in this study using Cronbach's alpha and found all of them higher than the minimum recommended value of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978), indicating good internal consistency among the items of each construct. We then assessed the relative fit through examination of item loadings of all factors. The results demonstrate that all items loaded significantly on their respective variable with standardized loadings >0.70 (Hair et al. 2005). Table 2 shows the scale summary with the mean, standard deviation, reliability and factor loading of all the scale items.

All the parameter estimates are large with significantly large t-values (9.8–30.6) (Anderson and Gerbing 1988) with all the item-to-total correlations (0.71–0.95) and average variance extracted (0.65–0.91) higher than 0.5, showing high convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Finally, discriminant validity is confirmed as the average variance extracted in each factor exceeds its squared correlations with all other constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). We next examined the squared multiple correlations of all the scale items and eliminated four items with values of less than 0.40 (Nunnally 1978). The revised model provided a reasonably good fit to the data (chi-square = 1,165.2, degrees of freedom = 634, $p < 0.000$; CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.93, IFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.078 and RMSEA = 0.067).

Finally, we used the structural model to test all the hypotheses. For H1, we found that perceived physical attractiveness has a positive relationship with salesperson's extra role (H1b, $\beta = 0.172$; $p < 0.05$) and need identification (H1c, $\beta = 0.063$; $p < 0.10$) behaviors but not service manner (H1a). Similarly for H2, communication ability has a positive relationship with only service manner (H2a, $\beta = 0.325$; $p < 0.001$) and need identification (H2c, $\beta = 0.303$; $p < 0.001$) but not extra role (H2b) behaviors of the salesperson. For H3, we found positive relationship between perceived expertise and service manner (H3a, $\beta = 0.359$; $p < 0.001$), extra role (H3b, $\beta = 0.347$; $p < 0.001$) as well as need identification (H3c, $\beta = 0.148$; $p < 0.05$). For H4, we found a significant positive relationship between perceived trustworthiness and service manner (H4a, $\beta = 0.183$; $p < 0.01$) and need identification (H4c, $\beta = 0.304$; $p < 0.001$) but not with extra role behavior (H4b). Thus, we found mixed support for H1, H2 and H4 and full support for H3.

For the next set of hypotheses, we tested the influence of the three service behaviors on three customer outcomes. For H5, we found that customer's willingness to disclose personal information was influenced by the salesperson's service manner but in a negative direction (H5a, $\beta = -0.860$; $p < 0.001$), contrary to our hypothesis. However, customer's perception about the salesperson's extra role

Table 2 Scale summary

Scale items	Factor loadings	Mean (M)	SD	Item-to-total correlation
Perceived attractiveness (Ahearne et al. 1999)—reliability (α) = 0.85				
1. Is very good-looking	0.93	5.67	1.09	0.81
2. Has an attractive appearance	0.94	5.54	1.12	0.85
3. Would generally be thought of as beautiful/handsome	0.76	5.34	1.10	0.73
Communication ability (Ahearne et al. 1999)—reliability (α) = 0.85				
4. Wastes time talking about unimportant issues	0.65	6.17	0.95	0.60
5. Listens to my needs/concerns	0.88	6.00	1.04	0.77
6. Tailors his/her presentations to my need	0.87	6.1	0.94	0.75
Perceived expertise (Ahearne et al. 1999)—reliability (α) = 0.92				
7. Understands my needs	0.80	6.05	1.06	0.76
8. Is an excellent source of information about the products/services he/she represents	0.95	6.05	0.92	0.89
9. Is able to recommend products and service for dealing with difficult cases	0.87	6.04	0.91	0.82
10. Is knowledgeable about the products and services	0.87	6.08	0.93	0.84
Perceived trustworthiness (Ahearne et al. 1999)—reliability (α) = 0.78				
11. Is always honest in his/her dealings with me	0.85	6.10	1.01	0.71
12. Is someone I feel I can trust	0.91	6.18	0.88	0.76
13. Never tries to mislead me	0.65	5.80	1.38	0.57
Willingness to disclose personal information (Cho 2006)—reliability (α) = 0.91				
14. I am willing to provide my personal information when asked by this sales representative	0.89	5.68	1.39	0.83
15. I am willing to disclose even sensitive personal information to this sales representative for the purpose of fulfilling my order	0.88	5.27	1.57	0.84
16. I am willing to be truthful in revealing my personal information to this sales representative	0.89	5.68	1.40	0.82
Customer satisfaction (Ramsey and Sohi 1997)—reliability (α) = 0.91				
17. The amount of contact I have had with this salesperson was adequate	0.74	7.93	1.73	0.72
18. I am satisfied with the level of service this person has provided	0.97	8.50	1.38	0.87
19. In general, I am pretty satisfied with my dealings with this salesperson	0.97	8.58	1.37	0.88
Behavioral intentions (Ramsey and Sohi 1997)—reliability (α) = 0.98				
20. It is probable that I will contact this salesperson again	0.92	8.40	1.64	0.93
21. I am willing to discuss business with this salesperson again	0.93	8.48	1.61	0.94
22. I plan to continue doing business with this salesperson	0.98	8.41	1.61	0.95

Table 2 (continued)

Scale items	Factor loadings	Mean (M)	SD	Item-to-total correlation
23. I will purchase from this salesperson again	0.98	8.41	1.61	0.95
Service manner behavior (Lloyd and Luk 2011)—reliability (α) = 0.95				
24. The service employee showed patience	0.91	6.17	0.82	0.86
25. The service employee was helpful	0.88	6.17	0.88	0.85
26. The service employee smiled at me	0.82	6.16	0.91	0.83
27. The service employee was polite	0.84	6.30	0.81	0.82
28. The service employee was relaxing to interact with	0.82	6.16	0.97	0.80
29. The service employee showed passion for their job	0.78	6.15	0.84	0.78
30. The service employee was cheerful	0.78	6.13	0.87	0.78
Need identification behavior (Lloyd and Luk 2011)—reliability (α) = 0.85				
31. The service employee understood my needs	0.75	6.16	0.88	0.71
32. The service employee was knowledgeable	0.76	6.20	0.87	0.71
33. The service employee anticipated my needs	0.84	6.09	0.84	0.71
Extra-role service behavior (Bettencourt and Brown 1997)—reliability (α) = 0.94				
34. Voluntarily assists customers even if it means going beyond job requirements.	0.76	5.62	1.13	0.75
35. Helps customers with problems beyond what is expected or required	0.83	5.67	1.06	0.81
36. Often goes above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers	0.91	5.42	1.25	0.87
37. Willingly goes out of his/her way to make a customer satisfied	0.91	5.65	1.14	0.87
38. Frequently goes out the way to help a customer	0.95	5.49	1.18	0.90

behavior (H5b, $\beta = 0.281$; $p < 0.01$) as well as need identification had a strong positive effect on their willingness to disclose (H5c, $\beta = 0.837$; $p < 0.001$). Interestingly, customer satisfaction was influenced by only need identification (H6c, $\beta = 0.931$, $p < 0.001$) and not service manner (H6a) or extra role behavior (H6b). Similarly, behavioral intention was affected only by need identification (H7c, $\beta = 0.932$, $p < 0.001$) and not by service manner (H7a) or extra role (H7b) behaviors. Hence, we got only partial support for H5, H6 and H7 (Table 3).

Discussion

In this study, we examine two sets of influences in an adaptive selling context. First, we assessed the impact of four salesperson's attributes as perceived by their customers (physical attractiveness, communication ability, expertise and

Table 3 Hypotheses and results summary

Hypo #	Hypothesized relationship	Std. beta Coeff.	Results
H1a	Physical attractiveness → Service manner	0.022	NS
H1b	Physical attractiveness → Extra role	0.172*	Supported
H1c	Physical attractiveness → Need identification	0.063#	Supported
H2a	Communication ability → Service manner	0.325***	Supported
H2b	Communication ability → Extra role	0.155	NS
H2c	Communication ability → Need identification	0.303***	Supported
H3a	Expertise → Service manner	0.359***	Supported
H3b	Expertise → Extra role	0.347*	Supported
H3c	Expertise → Need identification	0.148*	Supported
H4a	Trustworthiness → Service manner	0.183**	Supported
H4b	Trustworthiness → Extra role	0.087	NS
H4c	Trustworthiness → Need identification	0.304***	Supported
H5a	Service manner → Willingness to disclose	−0.860**	Supported
H5b	Extra role → Willingness to disclose	0.281**	Supported
H5c	Need identification → Willingness to disclose	0.837***	Supported
H6a	Service manner → Customer satisfaction	−0.198	NS
H6b	Extra role → Customer satisfaction	0.070	NS
H6c	Need identification → Customer satisfaction	0.954***	Supported
H7a	Service manner → Behavioral intentions	−0.181	NS
H7b	Extra role → Behavioral intentions	0.207**	Supported
H7c	Need identification → Behavioral intentions	0.932***	Supported

NS not supported

#$p < 0.10$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$, all two-tailed

trustworthiness) on their perceptions about three types of service behaviors (service manner, extra role and need identification). Second, we explored the influence of customer perceptions about service behaviors on three important customer outcomes (willingness to disclose personal information, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions). In order to explore these relationships, we used a field-survey design with actual customers in a real business environment, namely retail telecom outlets in Hong Kong.

The results from our field-survey seem to provide a preliminary support to our basic premise as mentioned above. Specifically, we found that among all the four salesperson characteristics included in our study, only their perceived expertise seems to affect customer perceptions about all the three types of their subsequent service behaviors; whereas the other three characteristics (physical attractiveness, communication ability and trustworthiness) only affect some of the subsequent customer perceptions. This is an interesting finding because in the context of retail telecom services, the customers may rely more on the perceived expertise (as reflected in their knowledge about various plans and offers, availability of the network in different locations and its technical aspects) rather than how good the salesperson looks or how well s/he talks. Moreover, even trustworthiness does not

seem to be a very important variable as the service encounters happen in the retail outlets of a reputed and trusted telecom company in Hong Kong and all the salespersons are known to represent this company.

A further look at the strength of associations among the four salesperson characteristics with each other shows that the association between perceived communication ability and trustworthiness is much stronger compared to physical attractiveness and expertise. This finding may be particularly useful in the adaptive selling environment wherein it seems that rather than only look good, the salespersons should also demonstrate their ability to identify their customers' needs, show good communication skills throughout the interaction process, possess the required knowledge and expertise about the products and service handled by them, and present themselves as a trustworthy salesperson. This may help them customize their sales presentation and recommend products and services that satisfy a particular customer's specific requirements.

After the initial contact, the salespersons serve the customer and identify the products and services that best fits customer needs. For example, they may recommend either a home broadband or a wireless broadband service in respond to a customer's internet service enquiry, since both services offer broadband access. To achieve higher successful rate by introducing the key benefits that appeal to that specific customer, the salesperson would customize the sales message before presenting to the customer. We argued that during this interaction, an evaluation and judgment process would take place, where the customer would evaluate the salesperson in terms of his/her attitude and performance, and their own satisfaction level. Specifically, we hypothesized that the three types of service behaviors (service manner, extra role and need identification) of the salesperson would affect customer evaluation and judgments.

Our findings show that customers' perceptions about the salesperson's service behavior play an important role on how they evaluate their shopping experience and their subsequent behavioral intentions towards the salesperson and the company. Specifically, our result show that extra role and need identification behaviors of the salesperson have a positive influence on the customer's willingness to disclose personal information, whereas perceived service manner is negatively associated with disclosure. While the first two findings are as expected, the third finding is somewhat counter-intuitive as we hypothesized service manner to also have a positive effect on customer's willingness to disclose personal information to facilitate the selling process. However, prior research also shows that customers find it rather risky to disclose their personal information to salespeople (Luo 2002). Others argue that people tend to disclose to those whom they trust and like, which may not be true with salespersons (Jourard 1964; Worthy et al. 1969).

Willingness to disclose is a key element of adaptive sales as well as the customer's evaluation and judgment processes. A salesperson's ability to elicit personal information from customer is critical in adaptive sales, so that they can change their sales messages dynamically based on customer needs. By knowing more about customer's expectation and the services they need, salesperson can identify the appropriate products and service from the company's service offerings,

and to prepare more customized selling scripts and messages to present to customers. This is probably why in our study; service manner (a seemingly superficial act by the salesperson) did not have a significant influence, unlike extra role and need identification behaviors (which are possibly considered more relevant and meaningful by the customers).

Similarly, we found that only customer's perception about the salesperson's need identification behavior (and not service manner and extra role) have a strong positive influence on customer satisfaction. In other words, if customers perceive that the salesperson is able to correctly identify their needs, they are likely to evaluate their shopping experience more positively resulting in a higher level of satisfaction. This is particularly true in adaptive selling environment where salesperson should adjust their sales presentation to recommend products and services that meet customers need. Hence, it is more important that salespersons should demonstrate their ability to proactively identify customer's needs rather than just show courtesy and politeness, which may be perceived as superficial or unimportant by the customers.

Finally, we found that both perceived extra role and need identification behaviors of the salesperson have a positive impact on customer's behavioral intentions. Specifically, customers who perceive the salesperson to make extra efforts to serve them and identify their needs are more likely to purchase from them and patronize them again. This is also an important finding because it shows a direct link between customer perceptions about a salesperson's extra role and need identification behaviors and their own behavioral intentions. Therefore, managers would find it useful to train their frontline sales and service employees to learn these important skills. Interestingly, salesperson's service manner behavior again does not seem to be important enough to have a significant impact on customers' behavioral intentions.

Overall, our research highlights that in today's increasingly complex and competitive marketplace, managers need to understand that it is not enough to hire good looking frontline sales and service employees with good communication skills; instead they also need to help their employees develop the expertise needed to do their job and address customers' queries so as to develop trustworthiness, especially in an adaptive sales context. Moreover, it is not enough for the frontline employees to be well-dressed, well-mannered and polite; but they also need to make the extra efforts to understand and satisfy their customers' actual needs, which makes their customers more willing to disclose their personal information, to be more satisfied and more likely to make the purchase and patronize again, possibly becoming loyal customers over time.

Our study has some limitations that future research may address. First, our study was conducted in a single service industry in a single city hence our model can be tested in diverse research and cultural settings. Future research may also include other salesperson characteristics such as their personality traits and cultural orientations. Finally, we study only the customers' perspective in this study, hence it would be useful to the employees' point of view as well.

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The Mediating Role of Role Stress in the Relationship Between Goal Orientation and Job Satisfaction Among Salespersons: An Empirical Study

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Introduction

Research on goal orientation among salespersons has attracted considerable levels of interest in the past few decades as it has been seen to be an important construct in explaining a sales person's engagement with the job. According to Silver et al. (2006), goal orientation establishes a mental framework of how individuals interpret, evaluate, and act in pursuit of their task, or achievement of their goal. Practical implications of this research can be found in critical sales management issues like selection, training and performance appraisal (Payne et al. 2007). Moreover as Dweck and Leggett (1988) contends, the overall learning in an organisation is heavily impacted by goal orientation of the employees working in the organisation. Goal orientation also significantly affects how individuals approach challenges and face failure. Since the sales job involves facing new challenges and encountering new customers as well as products on an ongoing basis as each new customer or a new sales contract is a challenge, how a sales persons approaches these challenges has a bearing on the success as well as sustainability of the sales organisation. Often salespersons also have to face failures when potential sales contracts are lost to competitors. Sales persons low in learning goal orientation or

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high in performance orientation will in these circumstances feel heavily disappointed with failure almost to the extent of not trying out new sales techniques or taking up new products.

As Sumrall and Sebastianelli (1999) reports, since sales persons are more prone to role stress than other employees due of the boundary spanning nature of the sales job role stress becomes a critical factor in personal selling. Role stress is strongly linked to a sales person's performance (Churchill et al. 1985) and job satisfaction (Brown and Peterson 1993). However, studies typically look at the consequences of role stress and those studies that have considered the antecedents of role stress in a sales context are few (Sawyer 1992). In this study we present a model that links goal orientation of salespersons as an antecedent variables that impacts role-stress and job satisfaction. We adopt control theory (Carver and Scheier 1981) and social cognition theory (Bandura 1989) in developing this model. The model is empirically tested in the context of a sample of sales persons working in the publishing industry in India. In the subsequent sections, we review the relevant literature and develop the hypothesis. Subsequently we explain the results from the empirical study.

Goal Orientation

The goal orientation concept originated from the domain of education psychology to understand the achievement motivation patterns among students (Payne et al. 2007). Subsequently, this framework was also found to be very appropriate in the case of organisational research and has been extensively used to understand organisational behaviour and attitudes of employees in organisations over the past four decades. There has always been a debate about the nature of goal orientation—especially regarding the questions whether goal orientation is an individual trait or a state of mind. While initial conceptualisations considered goal orientation to be a stable personal trait (e.g., Colquitt and Simmering 1998), subsequent formulations treated goal orientation both as a trait as well as a state. Presently, researchers consider goal orientation to exist both as a trait and as a state with the trait goal orientation having a significant impact on state goal orientation (Payne et al. 2007). Research on goal orientation received a big impetus after Dweck and Elliott (1983) identified two dimensions of goal orientation—learning orientation and performance orientation. According to this conceptualisation, performance oriented individuals are more concerned about gaining favourable judgements of their performance while learning oriented individuals are more concerned about improving their competence. Researchers have used this classification extensively to understand individual goal orientation. Initially there was a widespread belief that these two orientations are two bipolar extremes. However there is a now a strong consensus among researchers that the two dimensions are not bi-polar but could exist simultaneously though they are independent and distinct. Thus individuals can have simultaneously high levels of Learning orientation and Performance orientation (Button et al. 1996; Harris et al. 2005; Matzler and Mueller 2011).

The goal orientation concept has been widely applied in sales management research (e.g., Kohli et al. 1998; Sujan et al. 1994; VandeWalle et al. 1999; Harris et al. 2005). Hitherto sales person's goal orientation has been associated with a limited number of outcome variables like sales performance, customer orientation, sales orientation, and effort. However results linking learning/performance orientations and outcomes like sales performance, adaptive behaviour and effort in the extant literature show high levels of variation, with several studies giving different results (Silver et al. 2006). Further, in the extent literature there is a perceptible lack of understanding about the nature of association between learning/performance orientation and a host of other important attitudinal constructs relevant to sales management like role-conflict, perceived fairness, burnout etc. Understanding these linkages are also very important as learning/performance orientation (LO/PO) of an individual influences an individual's overall mindset towards engaging with the organisation.

Several authors have in fact pointed out that the LO/PO of an individual crucially impacts such other aspects like the way the individual interacts with the other members of the organisation (Janssen and Van Yperen 2004) or providing and seeking help in organisations (Chaiburu et al. 2007) etc. The impact of a salesperson's LO/PO on stress related variables like role conflict and role ambiguity is therefore strongly plausible as role conflict and role ambiguity stems from a individual's interactions with and subsequent interpretation of the organisation. It is also possible that goal orientation of individuals strongly influences the choice of tasks (Dweck and Elliott 1983). As can be surmised, when salespersons have to choose between different tasks, individuals with performance orientation deliberately choose tasks which allow them to look smart which might sacrifice learning. On the other hand, individuals with learning orientation would choose a task that would allow them to learn something new and useful but at the sacrifice of looking smart.

The Importance of Role Stress

Role conflict and role ambiguity are two important aspects of role stress. Building on the earlier work in organizational research by Kahn et al. (1964) and Behrman and Perreault (1984, p. 12) defined role conflict in the sales domain as "the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with the role"; whereas role ambiguity refers to "the perceived lack of information a salesperson needs to perform his or her role adequately (e.g., effort instrumentalities) and his or her uncertainty about the expectations of different role set members" (Singh et al. 1996, p. 70).

Role stress and its components viz. Role conflict and role ambiguity have attracted considerable research attention in the context of sales management literature (Dubinsky et al. 1992; Boles et al. 2003). In fact the existence of role conflict among sales persons was identified as early as 1966 by Belasco (1966) in a

pioneering article about salesperson roles. The importance of role stress in sales management is explained by the fact that as salespersons are in constant contact with customers, they constantly feel a strong need to balance the expectations and also often get conflicting orders from customers, co-workers and managers (Churchill et al. 2000). Role conflict and role ambiguity has been found to be related to constructs like job satisfaction (Boles et al. 2003; Netemeyer et al. 1990), organisational commitment and commitment to quality (Wetzels et al. 2000).

Due to its importance in the context of performance in organisations (Stamper and Johlke 2003), several studies have explored the causes of role-stress to some detail. Studies that considered antecedents of role conflict in the sales management literature are relatively few. Of the few studies that have looked at the antecedents of role stress in sales persons have considered organisational-level constructs like supervisory support (Teas 1983; Behrman and Perrault 1984; Boshoff and Mels 1995), communication frequency (Behrman and Perrault 1984), leadership quality (Fry et al. 1986), empowerment (Wetzels et al. 2000) and organisational support (Stamper and Johlke 2003). However only a limited number of studies have considered personality traits as antecedents for sales person role-stress. Notably personality traits such as self-efficacy (Mulki et al. 2008) and locust of control (Behrman and Perrault 1984) have been considered as antecedents to role-stress among sales persons in the past. The present study looks at Goal orientation—a personality trait—that hasn't yet received much attention as an antecedent to role-stress in sales persons. In the succeeding sections, the hypotheses' linking goal orientation and role-stress is developed and the conceptual model presented.

Hypotheses

Goal orientation of individuals significantly influences how an employee engages with other members of the organisation and interacts with the larger organisational set up. As Janssen and Van Yperen (2004, p. 368) contends, "In most work and organizational settings, employees do not act in isolation but interact with colleagues, supervisors, or customers to perform their job duties. Employees differing in goal orientations are likely to differ in the way they develop and maintain relationships with other actors in their work context". The relationship between goal orientation and role stress can be considered using the control theory framework. Control theory proposes that goals represent reference points that are compared to current performance outcomes (Harris et al. 2005). Changes in behaviour occur whenever there is a discrepancy between these reference points and outcomes. Further, the interaction of the person with the environment forms the context in which the perceived discrepancies between desired and current outcomes emerge (Harris et al. 2005). The control theory framework has been applied in the sales management research previously by Palmer and Pickett (1999) and Harris et al. (2005).

According to Dweck and Leggett (1988), individuals with a learning orientation are oriented towards improving and mastering their skills and abilities and view achievement situations as opportunities to improve their competence. Further, they are not unduly worried about their mistakes and persist in efforts even when they fail. Kohli et al. (1998) supports this contention in the context of salespersons and point out that a learning orientation may lead a salesperson to develop skills that are beneficial in the long term and to spend more time with difficult accounts even if such behaviour detract them from short-term results. According to Sujan et al. (1994) learning orientation leads salespersons to enjoy the process of discovering how to sell effectively. Learning orientation has been associated with several positive outcomes in the sales management literature. For example Park and Holloway (2003) found that learning oriented salespersons show more adaptive selling behaviour; Harris et al. (2005) showed that learning orientation leads to more customer orientation among salespersons and Vandewalle et al. (1999) showed that learning orientation enhances planning among salespersons.

The performance goal orientation on the other hand focuses more on immediate performance achievement. "The performance goal is about winning positive judgements about your competence and avoiding negative ones" (Dweck and Leggett 1988, p. 15). In other words, when individuals pursue performance goals, they want to look smart and want to avoid looking dumb. Performance goal seekers achieve their goals either by playing safe or taking up tasks that are simple and completely avoiding mistakes. In learning orientation, the goal is to learn new tasks, new skills and understanding new things.

A performance goal is about measuring one's ability. It focuses on measuring themselves on their performance and when they do poorly, they condemn their intelligence and fall into a state of helplessness. Studies have shown that in the face of difficult tasks, performance orientated individuals will easily drift into a state of helplessness which leads to a deterioration in their performance. On the other hand individuals with learning orientation do not worry about their intellect, stay focused and maintain their problem solving tasks (e.g., Ames and Archer 1988; Butler 1992). According to Roeser et al. (1996), individuals with performance orientation were thrown off by novel problems and tasks as they would typically spend more time worrying about their ability to solve the problems rather than devoting enough time solving them.

Goal Orientation and Role Conflict

Role conflict is defined as "the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" (Kahn et al. 1964, p. 19). In any personal selling context sales persons frequently face conflicting demands both from the customer side as well as from the management through the sales supervisor. Such conflicting demand can lead to situations where it becomes very difficult to satisfy both the sides leading to

role-conflict. In fact complying with either of the conflicting sets of demands could lead to short-term failure. However based on control theory, sales persons high in learning orientation have a long-term perspective and have a superordinate goal of mastering tasks that have a long-term orientation (Kohli et al. 1998; Harris et al. 2005). Salespersons who therefore have a learning orientation are not necessarily distracted from potential short-term failures. Moreover, learning orientation too often involves a focused mindset towards learning skills and improving abilities—a mentality that enables salespersons to be not excessively distracted by conflicting pressures.

On the contrary as Sujan et al. (1994) contends, sales persons who have high performance orientation are focussed on short-term results. Excessive performance orientation could also lead to higher levels of self-awareness (Kanfer 1992). When the individual sales persons have high Self-awareness, he/she attaches greater importance to the individual's performance appraisal without necessarily meeting customer needs. Such an orientation leads to situations where customer's needs often conflicts with the priorities of the sales person (Harris et al. 2005) which leads to role-conflict. Thus, sales persons with higher levels of performance orientation will face greater role conflict and sales persons with higher learning orientation faces less levels of role conflict.

H1: Sales persons with high levels of learning orientation will often face lower levels of role conflict
And
H2: Sales persons with higher levels of Performance orientation will face higher levels of role conflict.

Goal Orientation and Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is associated with insufficient information to perform the role as an employee adequately (Kahn et al. 1964; Walker et al. 1975). Also role ambiguity could occur when the individual is unable or incapable to understand the nature of his/her roles. According to Sawyer (1992, p. 130), role ambiguity is defined as "the degree to which the individual understands the processes required to achieve the work goals and responsibilities". Further, the experienced role-ambiguity reflects the way an individual internalises, perceives and interprets objective role-ambiguity in the work context.

VandeWalle et al. (1999) and Sujan et al. (1994) argue that learning orientation positively and performance orientation negatively involve higher levels of planning and information seeking among sales persons. Further as Elliot et al. (1999) show individuals with high levels of learning orientation indulge in deep-level processing while individuals with performance oriented indulge in superficial processing of information. Hence, learning orientation prompts individuals to seek greater information and spend greater amounts of time in planning which in turn could reduce

role ambiguity. Performance oriented on the other hand indulge in lesser levels of planning and process minimal levels of information about a task, and therefore they tend to know little about their roles leading to greater levels of role ambiguity. In addition to this argument, the relation between goal orientation and role ambiguity can also be argued based on the feedback seeking behaviour or employees. The extent and nature of feedback received by an employee is an important antecedent of role-ambiguity (Sawyer 1992). The higher the level of feedback, the lesser the role-ambiguity. In the extant literature on goal orientation of employees, it is seen that Learning orientation leads to higher feedback seeking and performance orientation leads to lower levels of feedback seeking by employees (Janssen and Van Yperen 2004). Hence a negative relationship between learning orientation and role ambiguity as well as a positive relationship between performance orientation and role ambiguity is plausible.

H3: Sales persons with higher levels of Learning goal orientation have lower levels of role ambiguity
And
H4: Sales persons with higher levels of Performance goal orientation have higher levels of role ambiguity.

Role Stress and Job Satisfaction

A host of studies in sales management have shown that Role conflict and Role ambiguity are both negatively related to job satisfaction (e.g. Teas 1983; Brown and Peterson 1993; Boles et al. 1997, 2003; Sumrall and Sebastianelli 1999). Hence based on existing research, we propose:

H5: Role Conflict negatively influences Job satisfaction among salespersons.
H6: Role ambiguity negatively influences Job satisfaction among salespersons.

Mediating Role of Role Stress in the Relationship Between Goal Orientation and Job Satisfaction

Previous studies in goal orientation have looked at the direct link between goal orientation and job satisfaction. While Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) has found empirical support for the positive association between learning orientation and job satisfaction and a negative association between performance orientation and job satisfaction, Harris et al. (2005), found no association between learning orientation and job satisfaction and a positive association between performance association and job satisfaction. We argue that the differences in the result are mostly due to the presence of mediating variables. Given the linkage between goal orientation and
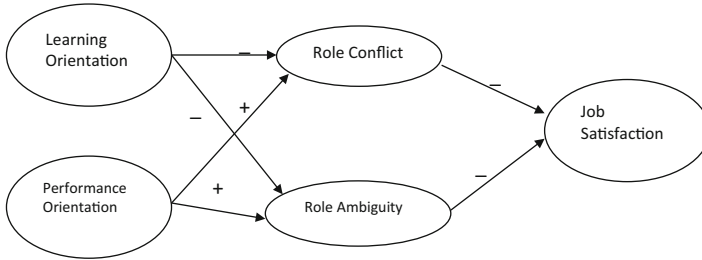
Fig. 1 The conceptual model

role stress and the direct impact of goal orientation on job satisfaction, the mediating role of role stress on the relationship between goal orientation and job satisfaction can be suggested. Hence:

H7a: Role conflict mediates the relationship between Learning orientation and job satisfaction and

H7b: Role conflict mediates the relationship between Performance orientation and job satisfaction.

Further

H8a: Role ambiguity mediates the relationship between Learning orientation and job satisfaction

And

H8b: Role ambiguity mediates the relationship between Performance orientation and Job satisfaction.

The hypothesised relationships are presented in Fig. 1.

Empirical Study

In order to test the hypotheses salespersons from a large publishing house were contacted personally by a researcher for questionnaire administration. A total of 82 questionnaires were administered to the salespersons. In this sample just nine respondents were female and the rest were males. The respondents were all contacted during a training program with the questionnaire. All the salespersons worked in Gujarat and the northern parts of India.

Measurement Scales

The learning orientation, performance orientation construct was measured using the scale developed by Sujan et al. (1994). Both Learning orientation and Performance

orientation was measured using five items using a five point strongly agree—strongly disagree scale. Role ambiguity and Role Conflict were measured using the Rizzo et al. (1970) scale. Role conflict was measured using five items and Role ambiguity was measured using a six items with a five point strongly agree-strongly disagree scale. Job satisfaction was measured using six items that considered the sales person's satisfaction with different facets of the job. The items were anchored between 'very high satisfaction' to 'very low satisfaction' across a five point scale.

Measurement Model

The measurement model and the hypothesised model linking the constructs were assessed through a Partial Lease Square (PLS) analysis using the smart PLS software. The PLS methodology has been extensively applied across the different research streams in management and strategy in the recent past (Henseler et al. 2009). The PLS methodology is very appropriate for samples which may not strictly follow a normal distribution and also for samples which are relatively small (Mintu-Wimsatt and Graham 2004; Julien and Ramangalahy 2003; Nijssen and Douglas 2008).

The reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs were assessed for as a first step. All the item loadings were significant and greater than 0.7, which is the generally recommended threshold for establishing convergent validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent construct was also examined. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), to establish convergent validity, the AVE should be greater than 0.5. All the constructs exceed these conditions (see Table 1).Composite reliability was measured using the internal consistency measure (ρc) developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). A construct is considered reliable if ρc is at least 0.70 (Nunnally 1978). Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of AVE (i.e. the diagonals in Tables 2 and 3) with the correlations among latent variables (i.e. the off-diagonal elements in Tables 2 and 3). For each reflective construct, the square root of its AVE should be greater than its correlation with any other construct, which means that it shares more variance with its own measures than with other constructs in the model. This condition is met in all the cases. In addition, another test of discriminant validity can be obtained by calculating the cross-loadings. It was verified that each reflective item loads more on the construct it intends to measure than on any other construct, and that each latent variable relates more to its own manifest variables than to the indicators of other constructs.

The relationship between the constructs were assessed through path analysis implemented through the smart PLS software. All the path coefficients are presented in Table 2. To test the relationships between the constructs a bootstrapping procedure was used with 200 re-samples as suggested by Chin (1998). Using this methodology, the t-values of the path coefficients were extracted. The result of the path analysis is presented in Table 2. Overall, the predictors offer good

Table 1 Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and correlation between constructs

	Composite reliability	Square-root of AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Learning orientation	Performance orientation	Role-ambiguity	Role conflict	Job satisfaction
Learning orientation	0.98	0.95	0.97	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Performance orientation	0.97	0.94	0.97	−0.64	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Role-ambiguity	0.98	0.93	0.97	−0.53	0.87	1.00	0.00	0.00
Role conflict	0.97	0.94	0.97	−0.75	0.73	0.62	1.00	0.00
Job-satisfaction	0.98	0.94	0.97	0.53	−0.71	−0.68	−0.59	1.00

Table 2 Path analysis: (PLS) coefficients and indices

Path from	Path to	Standardised coefficient
Learning orientation	Role conflict	−0.47
Learning orientation	Role ambiguity	NS
Performance orientation	Role conflict	0.42
Performance orientation	Role ambiguity	0.9
Role conflict	Job satisfaction	−0.275
Role ambiguity	Job satisfaction	−0.514
R^2 values	Role conflict	0.76
	Role ambiguity	0.66
	Job satisfaction	0.52

explanations for the focal constructs. Though PLS methodology doesn't have any indices for model validity or parsimony, the R^2 value of the focal constructs are generally used as an indicator (Chin 1998, p. 232). Since the R^2 values are all above 0.5 for the three endogenous constructs, it is possible to assert the capability of the model to explain the relationships between the constructs considered.

Testing the Mediating Effect

To test the mediating effect, the PLS path analysis was run with the mediating variable, and then without the mediating variable separately for the two mediating variables: role conflict and role ambiguity. The path coefficient from the independent variable to the mediating variable as well as the path coefficient from the mediating variable to the dependent variables as well as their standard errors were entered into the sobel test for testing the strength of the mediating effect. The sobel test statistic was used to conclude whether the mediating effect was significant or not. The results of this analysis is shown in Table 3

Discussion

Analysis of the path analysis coefficients shows a general support for the basic conceptual model. Performance Orientation is seen to be positively impacting a sales person's perception of role conflict as well as role ambiguity while learning orientation is seen to be negatively impacting role conflict but not role ambiguity. As hypothesised, sales persons with high performance orientation are therefore prone to higher levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. Hence both H3 and H4 are supported. Higher learning orientation definitely reduces role conflict, but its impact on reducing role ambiguity is not statistically significant. Therefore H1 is

Table 3 Results of mediating analysis

	From	To	Standardised coefficient	Standard error
Role conflict mediating LO and JS	Learning orientation	Job satisfaction	0.539*	
	Learning orientation	Role conflict	−0.7493*	0.0385
	Role conflict	Job satisfaction	−0.4426*	0.1423
	Sobel' statistic		3.07*	
	Learning orientation	Job-satisfaction with role conflict	0.213	0.138
Role ambiguity mediating LO and JS	Learning orientation	Job satisfaction	0.539*	
	Learning orientation	Role ambiguity	−0.531*	0.0908
	Role ambiguity	Job satisfaction	−0.558*	0.0883
	Sobel's statistic		4.292*	
	Learning orientation	Job satisfaction with role ambiguity	0.238*	0.0886
Role conflict mediating PO and JS	Performance orientation	Job satisfaction	−0.715*	0.0612
	Performance orientation	Role conflict	0.730*	
	Role conflict	Job satisfaction	−0.155	
	Sobel' statistic		−1.33	
	Performance orientation	Job-satisfaction with role conflict	−0.601*	
Role ambiguity mediating PO and JS	Performance orientation	Job satisfaction	−0.715*	0.0612
	Performance orientation	Role ambiguity	0.874*	0.040
	Role ambiguity	Job satisfaction	−0.257**	0.153
	Sobel's statistic		−1.67**	
	Performance orientation	Job satisfaction with role ambiguity	−0.48*	

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.001$

supported, but H2 is not supported. This is an interesting result that needs to be further probed. As hypothesised and also as seen in extant theory, role conflict and role ambiguity have negative influences on job satisfaction. Hence H5 and H6 are both supported.

Results from the mediation analysis give greater meaning to the relationships between the variables. The relationship between Learning orientation and job

satisfaction is seen to be fully mediated by Role conflict since the sobel statistic is significant and the direct link between LO to JS is insignificant when RC is introduced in the equation as a mediating variable. Hence it can be said that learning orientation reduces role conflict, which in turn reduces job satisfaction.

Role ambiguity on the other hand has a partial mediation effect in the relationship between LO and JS. While the sobel statistic is significant, the direct relationship between LO and JS is also significant even when role ambiguity is introduced as a mediating variable. The slight reduction in the strength of the relationship between LO and JS when role ambiguity is introduced is due to the significant mediating effect.

In the case of Performance orientation, role conflict is not seen to have any mediating impact in the relationship between PO and JS. This is evident in the statistically insignificant value of the sobel's statistic. Hence role conflict has no role in the relationship between performance orientation and job satisfaction. In fact a direct significant negative value is seen as the indicator or the relationship between PO and JS. PO can therefore be considered as directly impacting a sales person's job satisfaction even when role conflict is not present. PO therefore impacts both role conflict and satisfaction independently. This is an interesting result to consider for further investigation.

The mediating role of role ambiguity in the PO–JS relationship is also quite muted. While a partial mediation is seen to be present, it is seen that the sobel statistic is significant only at $p < 0.1$ level. Hence it can be concluded that while role ambiguity has a partial mediation effect it is quite weak. The relationship between PO and JS is therefore more or less independent of RA. PO therefore has negative effect on JS as well as a positive effect on RA.

The results from the mediation analysis therefore give important insights into the working of LO and PO in its influence on job satisfaction. This also clarifies results from previous studies which tried to understand the relationship between goal orientation and job satisfaction. In totality these results are important in building a more comprehensive theory about sales persons attitudes and behaviours.

However the results of the study should not be read without considering the limitations. First of all, the present study operationalises goal orientation across the two conventional dimensions of learning orientation and performance orientation though in the latest research on goal orientation considers performance orientation to be comprising of two dimensions: a performance approach dimension and performance avoidance dimension (Elliot and Harackiewicz 1996). We justify the operationalization base on two aspects. First, in the sales management literature, the three dimensional framework has received mixed results. While Silver et al. (2006) found support for the three-dimensional classification of goal orientation, Ahearne et al. (2010), did not find validity for the three dimensional framework. Second, sales management research has traditionally adopted the two dimensional framework for goal-orientation to understand its antecedents and consequences. Future studies could consider the same relationships in the context of a three-dimensional framework. The small sample size and the fewer number of females in the sample also adds to the limitations.

Directions for Future Research

The study establishes that goal orientation can be a significant antecedent for role stress and also that role stress variables can mediate the relationship between goal orientation and job satisfaction. This study provides important pointers for future research. Given the main result that goal orientation can impact role stress, future studies can include other important dependent variables like performance, effort, commitment etc. to see whether role stress mediates the relationship between goal orientation and these consequences of role stress. Studies could also look at moderating variables in the relationship between goal orientation and role stress. The goal orientation can also be operationalised into the new three dimension approach to see whether performance approach and performance avoidance orientation have different influences on role stress. Further, the reasons for the mediation effect of role stress variables can be studies. Such a study could take a qualitative approach for a deeper understanding of the reasons. The same study can be replicated in other contexts with a larger sample.

Practical Implications

A slew or practical implications can be drawn from the study. With the roles of the sales person subject to constant change in a market environment characterised by high levels of buyer power and a focus on service orientation, it is important to recruit sales persons who are relatively immune to role conflict and role ambiguity. The study shows that role conflict and role ambiguity are impacted by the goal orientation of the sales person. Hence to avoid constant dissatisfaction and the consequent turnover of sales persons, working out a purposeful recruitment process is one of the ways to achieve this. Since the study show empirical support to the linkage between goal orientation and role-stress, the case for assessing the goal orientation of sales persons during the recruitment process is supported. Further since goal orientation is both a trait as well as a state; attitudinal training in achieving the correct goal orientation may be imparted to sales persons to reduce role-stress.

The study also point toward a significant role for role stress. While role stress is seen to be created by the goal orientation of sales persons, previous studies have pointed to other antecedents of role stress. The mediating role of role stress in the relationship between goal orientation and job satisfaction signifies the need to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity through reducing the effect of other antecedent variables. Greater emphasis on purposive leader member exchange, a functional implementation of control strategies are all areas which needs to be focused upon. The study therefore adds to the understanding about how learning orientation could improve sales person effectiveness. The linkage between goal

orientation and job satisfaction also supports the need to engender a purposive type of goal orientation among sales persons.

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Management Interventions and Prosocial Behaviours: Understanding the Mediating Mechanisms

Anna-Lena Ackfeldt and Neeru Malhotra

Introduction

The services marketing and management literature advocates a positive relationship between front-line employee (FLE) job attitudes and behaviours and customers' perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction (e.g. Bettencourt et al. 2005; Chan and Wan 2012; Hartline and Ferrell 1996), which, in turn, affect firms' financial performance (Babakus et al. 2003; Bowen and Waldman 1999; Heskett et al. 1994). Front-line employees (FLEs) are thus critical to the success of any service organisation (Chan and Wan 2012). Consequently, the predictors of FLE service-delivery performance are important to understand. In this chapter, we specifically focus on understanding the predictors of FLE pro-social service behaviours (PSBs) from the firm perspective.

PSBs are defined as "the helpful behaviors of employees directed towards the organization or other individuals" (Bettencourt and Brown 1997, p. 41). PSB is a three-dimensional construct, which comprises behaviours that may be directed at co-workers and/or customers that are both role-prescribed and discretionary in nature (Bettencourt and Brown 1997). Bettencourt and Brown (1997) define *in-role customer service* as the performance of expected customer-directed service behaviours. *Extra-role customer service behaviours* refer to discretionary behaviours in serving customers that extend beyond FLEs' formal role requirements. *Cooperation* represents those FLE behaviours that are helpful and internally directed, that is, towards other members of their immediate workgroup (Bettencourt and Brown 1997). Cooperative behaviours share a theme of helping colleagues to avoid and/or solve work related problems, i.e. behaviours with a strong flavour of service orientation (Bettencourt and Brown 1997; MacKenzie et al. 1998).

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Although the importance of PSBs to organizations is recognized, it remains an understudied area of employee behaviours (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006; Bettencourt and Brown 1997, 2003). It is argued that organizations should value and foster the performance of PSBs, because of the positive effects on work unit effectiveness and customer relationship performance (Bettencourt and Brown 1997).

The early research on job performance in the sales and marketing context primarily focused on the in-role aspects of performance, i.e. sales revenue and volume (Brown and Peterson 1993; MacKenzie et al. 1998). It was soon recognised that it was beneficial to broaden this narrow view of job performance to include extra-role aspects of job performance (MacKenzie et al. 1998). However, so far, the primary construct of interest to marketing scholars has been OCBs. Consequently, there have been calls for further research into specific service behaviours like PSBs (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997; Podsakoff et al. 2000).

This chapter contributes to the services marketing and management literature by putting forth a conceptual framework to enhance our understanding of the antecedents of PSBs. The conceptual framework draws on Bagozzi's (1992) reformulated attitude theory and role theory (Solomon et al. 1985). PSBs are employee behaviours that are the outcome of an appraisal of management interventions, and emotional responses (job attitudes) and role stress mediate these relationships.

In the next section, key antecedents to PSBs are discussed, under three broad categories: (a) management interventions (internal communication, training and development and empowerment), (b) job attitudes and (c) role stress. This is followed by a conceptual framework that establishes linkages among these antecedents and PSBs.

Management Interventions

It is clearly challenging to explain, predict and manage human behaviour, not only in the workplace. Nevertheless, in the organizational context, understanding how to reduce harmful effects of role stress, foster positive job attitudes and, encourage the performance of PSBs, and other forms of employee behaviour, arguably remains an important topic in services, organizational behaviour and HR literatures. In fact, it is the responsibility of senior managers to formulate and implement strategies that positively influence their staff, which is also critical to the firm's success (Cable and Judge 2003; Gibson et al. 2007). The role of internal processes and strategies implemented by service managers in influencing employees' work attitudes and service behaviours, which, in turn, positively influence customer evaluation of service quality and satisfaction is highlighted in the literature (cf. Aryee et al. 2012; Babakus et al. 2003; Bettencourt and Brown 1997; Bitner et al. 1994; Gibson et al. 2007; Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Hartline et al. 2000; Heskett et al. 1994; Singh 1993, 1998). Consequently, effective management of employees in general and FLEs in particular is essential to service organizational success in the long-term.

The employee behaviour literature suggests that organizational level managerial strategies (such as, training and development, internal communication and empowerment) can influence job attitudes and employee service behaviours (including, Ackfeldt and Wong 2006; Aryee et al. 2012; Babakus et al. 2003; Hartline and Ferrell 1996). For instance, Babakus et al. (2003) investigated the effects of employee cognitive appraisal of management commitment to service quality on the formation of job attitudes and service recovery performance. They found that management commitment indirectly influences customer perceptions of service quality, via FLE emotional and behavioural responses (Babakus et al. 2003). Interestingly, it is also suggested that customers rate customer directed employee behaviours as indicators of service quality (Hartline and Ferrell 1996), which highlights the importance of strategic HRM (Aryee et al. 2012; Gibson et al. 2007; Piening et al. 2013). Therefore, the importance of a genuine commitment by senior management to provide excellent service cannot be overstated. Such a commitment increases the likelihood that it is translated into an investment in and actual implementation of service quality improvement and maintenance programmes. The key management interventions are now discussed below.

Internal Communication

Effective communication is essential for organizational growth and long-term survival in today's knowledge intensive business environment (Kitchen and Daly 2002; Welch 2012). Internal communication is the extent to which "organizations provide organization-related information to their employees, such as information about changes in organizational policies and procedures, financial results, employee and group successes, and customer feedback" (Ng et al. 2006, p. 477). Thus, the importance of effective internal communication cannot be overstated.

Organizational policies, procedures, managerial decisions, need to be conveyed in a way that is understood by the employees responsible for the implementation (Ng et al. 2006). As service providers to both internal and external customers, FLEs require information on customer needs, about their organization, and how their contribution is vital to both the organization and its customers, in order to be able to successfully perform their job (Conduit and Mavondo 2001; Ruck and Welch 2012). Thus, without effective two-way communication channels, FLEs would lack the necessary knowledge and information, and may not feel confident in their jobs.

Training and Development

Training and development refers to professional growth that may occur when employees are provided with training and development activities that match their

particular needs and interests (Hart 1994). It should be noted that training and development refers to opportunities for professional learning and growth, which is broader than merely training for service delivery as such programmes may also incorporate career planning and promotion opportunities for employees (Ackfeldt and Coote 2005). Investment in human capital, such as training and development, is vital as it may be source of competitive advantage (Cheng and Hampson 2008). Training and development is, consequently, a long-term orientated investment in FLEs; a key driver of success in service firms (Evanschitzky et al. 2012). Such programmes are essential as these help to enhance FLE customer interaction skills and their ability to understand customers better (e.g. Aryee et al. 2012; Elmadag et al. 2008; Heskett et al. 1994; Ueltschy et al. 2007), as well as support FLE empowerment (Aryee et al. 2012).

Empowerment

Scholars and practitioners alike have shown interest in work place empowerment, which is a managerial strategy that endorses the sharing of power and control between managers and sub-ordinates (Bowen and Lawler 1992; Conger and Kanungo 1988; Chan and Lam 2011). Empowerment exists when leaders have confidence in their subordinates' ability to make decisions, are willing to give employees the scope to make decisions and encourage them to use their initiative (Conger and Kanungo 1988; Chan and Lam 2011; Hartline et al. 2000).

Role Stress

Job-related role stress is made up of three distinct but interrelated constructs: (1) role ambiguity, (2) role conflict and (3) role overload (Singh 1998; Örtqvist and Wincent 2006). *Role ambiguity* refers to individual employees' perception that there is a lack of clear and relevant information, which is needed to perform the job role to at least a satisfactory standard, and when there is an uncertainty about the expectations about the roles different organizational members play. Knowledge of the expectations that surround a particular role would otherwise serve to guide employee behaviour, and, also, provides knowledge regarding the appropriateness of behaviour (e.g. Agarwal and Ramaswami 1993; Singh 1993, 1998; Tubre and Collins 2000).

   Role conflict occurs when individual employees perceives that the demands and expectations of two or more members of their role set (i.e. co-workers, supervisors/managers and/or customers) are incompatible and/or incongruent (Agarwal and Ramaswami 1993; Singh 1998; Tubre and Collins 2000). Finally, *role overload* arises when an employee perceives the cumulative role demands go beyond his or her abilities and motivation to perform a task (Singh 1998).

Job Attitudes

Job attitudes, in general, are important to understand and manage from an organizational perspective, because these are associated with important outcomes, such as organisational efficiency and job performance. Job attitudes are the knowledge structure that summarizes and organizes the range of emotions and thoughts that stem from actual work experience with a specific job (George and Jones 1996). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two key positive job attitudes (George and Jones 1997; MacKenzie et al. 1998), which are often discussed in the literature in conjunction with each other but are conceptually different (Meyer et al. 1998).

Job satisfaction and organisational commitment are two of the most commonly researched positive job attitudes that are modelled as predictors of employee behaviour. FLEs who experience positive job attitudes are more inclined to perform extra-role behaviours. This line of reasoning is supported by the reciprocity principle (Gouldner 1960). Positive job attitudes are important to foster, as employees who experience job satisfaction and organizational commitment are less likely to consider leaving their job, i.e. turnover intentions.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as an employee's overall affective state that results from an appraisal of all aspects of his/her job (Babin and Boles 1998; Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Such satisfaction judgments capture the extent to which an employee feels pleased, happy, and rewarded, or displeased, unhappy, and exploited. Ackfeldt and Wong (2006) argue that FLEs who are satisfied are arguably more likely to achieve higher performance levels than those who experience lower job satisfaction. Based on motivational theory, higher job satisfaction facilitates employee efficacy and productivity (Allen and Rush 1998). However, relatively little is understood concerning the linkages between the broader dimensions of PSBs in general and customer-directed service behaviours in particular.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment may be defined as the belief that membership in the organization is important and worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely (Hartline et al. 2000; MacKenzie et al. 1998). According to this definition, organizational is a uni-dimensional construct, but several conceptualizations exists. This has given rise to a debate in the literature regarding the definitions and

measurement of organizational commitment (Johnson et al. 2009; Klein et al. 2014), including dimensionality.

Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualized organizational commitment as a multi-dimensional construct. They proposed a three-component model based on the three general themes of organizational commitment that is found in the literature, i.e., the affective attachment (affective), the perceived costs (continuance), and the obligation (normative) associated with the concept of commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990). Research findings have supported the existence of these three separate, but interrelated components of commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990; Meyer and Smith 2000). Each of the three components of organizational commitment is discussed next.

Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to identification with and involvement in the organization. This dimension corresponds to the uni-dimensional conceptualization of organizational commitment. Affective commitment has its roots in the concept of exchange (Meyer and Allen 1991). An individual FLE who feel affectively committed to the organization (s)he works for, wants to remain and is willing to exert effort on behalf of the organization. This is because of the positive work experiences and benefits that derive from the relationship with this organization. Therefore, in terms of reciprocity, affective commitment may be labelled 'reciprocity by desire' (Meyer and Allen 1991).

Normative commitment refers to an employee's feelings of obligation to remain an employee of the organization that (s)he works for. Such feelings develop due to the internalization of normative pressures prior to entry or following entry into an organization (Weiner 1982). It may also develop as a feeling to reciprocate the rewards paid in advance, or costs associated with employment incurred by the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991), hence, implies reciprocity by obligation. It is clear from the literature that affective and normative commitment are correlated (Johnson et al. 2009), but conceptually distinct (Allen and Meyer 1996).

The third component is *continuance commitment*, which is defined as commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991). Anything that increases perceived costs, such as side-bets or investments like losing attractive benefits or giving up seniority based privileges, are generally considered to be antecedents to continuance commitment (Meyer et al. 1993). Continuance commitment is quite distinct, and does not relate significantly with neither affective nor normative commitment (Meyer and Allen 1991; van Dam 2005).

Attention now turns to the conceptual framework, which explains the linkages among managerial interventions, PSBs, role stress and job attitudes.

Conceptual Framework

Managerial Interventions and PSBs

Internal communication plays a vital role to firms' knowledge management (Roy and Roy 2002; Ruck and Welch 2012), and goes beyond the transfer of information; a behavioural response by FLEs may also be required (Kelly 2000). FLEs require an effective flow of information to perform their work roles (Oliver 2000). Past research suggests that internal communications can enhance both employee job attitudes and performance (Goris et al. 2000; Johlke et al. 2000), including PSBs (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006).

The direct effects of training and development on PSBs have not enjoyed much research attention, but taking part in training and development activities had been linked to job performance (Cheng and Hampson 2008). Ackfeldt and Coote (2005) found positive support for the training and develop–OCB link, which is indicative of a norm of equity or reciprocity (Gouldner 1960). Consequently, FLEs reward an organization's efforts to provide opportunities for learning and growth by engaging in discretionary behaviours, which arguably should also apply to PSBs. Other outcomes of training include increased self-efficacy (Cheng and Hampson 2008), which suggests training and development along with empowerment levels are managerial interventions that should be considered in tandem.

Research suggests that empowered employees experience more positive job attitudes, higher levels of self-efficacy and respond better to the needs of customer than employees who are not (Bowen and Lawler 1992; Chan and Lam 2011; Singh 2000). Empowering FLEs is, therefore, particularly important because it enables them to be more flexible in their responses to customers' needs (Bowen and Lawler 1992). Encouraging FLEs to have greater discretion over job-related decisions can enhance customer satisfaction, thus, improving organizational effectiveness (Conger and Kanungo 1988).

Support for the positive effects of empowerment is well documented, but the empirical evidence of the behavioural consequences of empowerment is mixed. Ackfeldt and Wong (2006) found a strong positive influence of empowerment on PSBs in their study. Lytle et al. (1998) found a positive correlation between empowerment and service oriented behaviours, but Hartline et al. (2000) not. It is possible that these contradictory findings are industry specific, but it may also be that the relationship is indirect via variables not included in these studies. On balance, it seems reasonable to argue that empowerment positively affect job attitudes and PSBs, because it can enhance FLEs' experience at work and ability to interact with customers.

Managerial Interventions and Role Stress

One key aim of internal communication is to reduce FLE perceptions of role ambiguity (Johlke et al. 2000). That is, management has the ability to reduce role ambiguity in staff by communication salient information, in particularly relating to customers' needs and wants (Nelson et al. 2007). Research relating to influence of internal communication on role conflict is minimal. However, it is reasonable to expect that internal communication also has the potential to diminish role conflict and overload by clearly communicating what is expected of FLEs, and keeping them informed. Effective internal communication would keep FLEs equipped with plenty of knowledge and information that would help them to handle the challenges of role stress inherent in boundary spanning positions (Ackfeldt and Malhotra 2013).

Empowerment and training and development can help managers combat the challenges of role stress in service organizations. The virtues of empowerment have been extensively discussed in the literature. Ackfeldt and Malhotra (2013) found that empowerment was particularly useful in combating the dysfunctional effects of role ambiguity on organizational commitment. But it is also recognized that empowerment may have undesirable implications for FLEs. FLEs may associate empowerment with greater role stress (e.g. Chan and Lam 2011; Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Singh 2000), but it may simply be that not all FLEs want to be empowered due to the associated extra responsibilities (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006).

Training and development is another key managerial intervention that may help battle the dysfunctional effects of role stress on organizational commitment (Ackfeldt and Malhotra 2013). FLEs who perceive high training and development activities, rate their affective commitment levels to be higher than those who do not, regardless of the level of role conflict they experience. Training and development activities might do more harm than good when FLEs experience high levels of role conflict, and their levels of continuance commitment is high (Ackfeldt and Malhotra 2013). Clearly, empowerment and training and development must be used wisely and contextually so that these can adequately serve the purpose of buffering the deleterious effects of role stress on organizational commitment accordingly.

However, it is interesting to note that implementation of managerial interventions, such as training and development and empowerment, are likely to have implications on the nature of FLE roles, their job performance and, consequently, the nature of their performance appraisals. Hence, to be effective, these interventions call for inter-functional co-ordination in clarifying the 'new' role expectations of FLEs in order to avoid any deleterious impacts following such interventions. More precisely, managers need to work closely with their HR department to ensure job descriptions are appropriate and up-to-date, and then make good use of internal communication channels.

Managerial Interventions and Job Attitudes

Given the importance of afore mentioned job attitudes in influencing PSBs, it makes sense to identify the key drivers shaping these. Internal communications can enhance employee job attitudes and job performance (Johansen et al. 2012; Goris et al. 2000). Internal communication has been found to influence organizational commitment positively (Carrière and Bourque 2009; Johlke et al. 2000; Ng et al.2006). This is because internal communication enhances employees' psychological attachment to their organization, as "it encourages employees to perceive themselves as core members of the organization and to contribute to the organization's goals" (Ng et al. 2006, p. 477). Most research on the outcomes of internal communication includes positive relationships on job attitudes (Lyden and Klingele 2000; Mueller and Lee 2002), however some studies find no support for this link (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006). Thus, empirical evidence seems mixed.

Few studies have studied the relationship between training and development and job attitudes (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006), despite the importance of providing FLEs with training and development opportunities to develop, for instance, customer interaction skills (Bitner et al. 1994; Elmadag et al. 2008; Heskett et al. 1994). Undertaking training, learning or self-development activities increases FLEs' job-related knowledge, as well as enhances self-efficacy and self-esteem. Research suggests that induction programmes help to engender positive job attitudes, especially employees' organizational commitment (Cheng and Hampson 2008), by reducing anxiety and role ambiguity (Bowen and Waldman 1999). FLEs also view training and development activities as a sign of managerial commitment (Babakus et al. 2003; Elmadag et al. 2008; Kinicki et al. 1992) and helps foster FLE commitment to service quality which engenders positive employee attitudes and behaviours (Elmadag et al. 2008). Overall, past literature suggests that training and development influence employee job attitudes.

Research suggests that empowered employees experience more positive job attitudes, display higher levels of self-efficacy, and respond better to customer wants than employees that are not (Bowen and Lawler 1992; Chan and Lam 2011; Singh 2000). Empowering FLEs is important, because it gives them greater task autonomy, control and flexibility when responding to customers' needs (Bowen and Lawler 1992), which can enhance customer satisfaction.

Empowerment has been comprehensively discussed in the organizational strategy literature, but empirical support for the benefits claimed took time to emerge. The benefits of empowerment on FLEs include increased self-efficacy (Chebat and Kollias 2000; Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Self-efficacy is, in turn, positively linked with job satisfaction and FLE behaviour on one hand, and customer's perceptions of service quality on the other (Chebat and Kollias 2000; Hartline and Ferrell 1996). The attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of empowerment however, are not clear cut.

Singh (2000) found a positive correlation between empowerment and employees' affective states, but Hartline and Ferrell (1996) report a negative

relationship. Ackfeldt and Wong (2006) found a non-significant relationship between empowerment–job attitudes in their study. The empirical evidence for the consequences of empowerment is not uniform (Chan and Lam 2011). It is possible that the contradictory findings are due to differences in industry contexts of the different studies. Alternatively, it may be that the some of the impacts of empowerment on FLE behaviour are mediated by job attitudes. On balance, it seems reasonable to expect that empowerment will influence FLEs' capacity to exercise PSBs, as well as lead to more positive job attitudes in a service context.

Job Attitudes and PSBs

To date, few studies have looked into job attitudes as antecedents of PSBs (exceptions include Ackfeldt and Wong 2006; Bettencourt and Brown 1997; Bettencourt et al. 2005; Lee et al. 2006). As there is little research to date on the antecedents of PSBs, the argument for including organisational commitment and job satisfaction as job attitudes draws mainly on the findings from the OCB literature. Much of the OCB research to date has investigated either job satisfaction or organizational commitment, but mainly job satisfaction (including Netemeyer et al. 1997). Meyer et al. (2002) recommend that both positive job attitudes should be considered in empirical studies so that employee behaviour can be better understood and managed. The inclusion of both job attitudes may also help avoid miss-specification of the proposed conceptual framework. Moreover, it is intuitively appealing to postulate that employees who engage in positive behaviours directed at customers and colleagues would do so, in part, because they experience job satisfaction and are committed to their organisation.

Bettencourt and Brown (1997) investigated job satisfaction as an antecedent of PSBs but found no support for this path, and neither did Ackfeldt and Wong (2006). Lee et al. (2006) found that job satisfaction positively influences role-prescribed customer service behaviours, but not extra-role customer service behaviours. Lee et al. (2006) did not find any significant effects of organizational commitment on neither role-prescribed nor extra-role customer service behaviours. Bettencourt et al. (2005) proposed that organisational commitment and job satisfaction completely mediate the relationship between organisational justice and customer-oriented boundary-spanning behaviours. Full mediation was, however, not supported. More specifically, although job attitude was not found to influence service delivery behaviours in FLEs, these were found to influence other types of employee behaviours (Bettencourt et al. 2005).

It is clear from literature that organizational commitment is associated with many important work outcomes, such as, OCB (Johnson et al. 2009), higher job performance (Cohen 1992; Ellinger et al. 2013), productivity levels (Koslowsky 1991) and other favourable employee behaviours (Lages 2012). Compared with staff members with lower levels of organizational commitment, having higher levels improves punctuality and absenteeism, and reduces turnover intention

(Cohen 1992; Koslowsky 1991). As a result, managers need to understand and foster organizational commitment. Past research has examined the impacts of organisational commitment on indicators of organisational performance, but there still a paucity of empirical effects of organizational commitment on PSBs (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006).

Role Stress and PSBs

Being boundary spanners, FLEs are prone to experiencing role stress (Ackfeldt and Malhotra 2013; Örtqvist and Wincent 2006). Based on marketing, organizational behaviour and management research into the outcomes of role stress, role stress is expected to be negatively related to extra-role behaviours (Bettencourt and Brown 2003; MacKenzie et al. 1998). FLEs who are clear about their job roles, and know what is expected of them are more likely to perform well (Mukherjee and Malhotra 2006) and, as a result, feel more confident to engage in behaviours that share a theme of helping customers and colleagues. On the other hand, high levels of role stress would cause FLEs to perceive the organization as being unsupportive and unfair (Meyer and Allen 1991), and, hence, would reduce their confidence and enthusiasm to engage in discretionary behaviours directed towards helping their customers and colleagues.

Role Stress and Job Attitudes

Research shows that the role stress–job attitudes relationships are generally negative (for instance, Brown and Peterson 1993; Singh 1998; Örtqvist and Wincent 2006). However, research has also revealed that some role stress may be positive for both organizational commitment and job performance (Boles and Babin 1996; Singh 1998). In their meta-analysis, Örtqvist and Wincent (2006) found that role stressors influence job attitudes negatively, but to varying degrees. They found that role ambiguity and role conflict have a medium effect size on job attitudes, whilst role overload have a small effect size.

Based on role theory (Glazer and Beehr 2005; King and Sethi 1997; Solomon et al. 1985), role ambiguity and conflict should reduce the both affective and normative commitment. The negative relationship between role stress and affective and normative components of organisational commitment is based on the idea that individuals who work in an environment characterized by high role stress are less likely to be willing to expend effort on the organization they work for (Örtqvist and Wincent 2006). To date, little research has been focused on the role stress–continuance commitment relationship.

It stands to reason that individual FLEs who feel that they have to remain in the organization, although they do not really want to, will perceive that the influence of
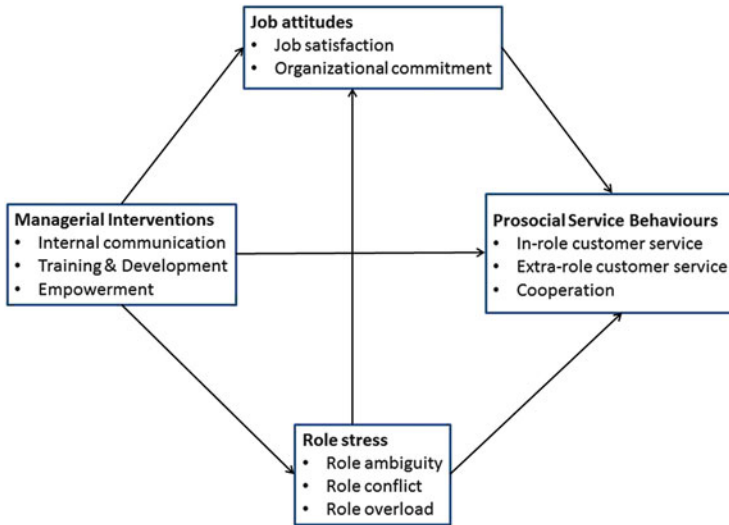
Fig. 1 Conceptual model

role stress increase their level of continuance commitment. When it is clear to individual employees that they want to quit, but the prospects of finding a new job are limited or the "side-bets" of leaving are high, the level of experienced continuance commitment is likely to be high (Meyer and Allen 1991; Meyer et al. 2002). Individuals who experience high levels of continuance commitment are also more prone to feel the effects of role stress due to pre-existing perceptions of reduced control of the work environment (Addae and Parboteeah 2008). Experiencing continuance commitment along with role stress is likely to negatively influence job performance (Luchak and Gellatly 2007; Mukherjee and Malhotra 2006) (Fig. 1).

Discussion, Conclusions and Avenues for Future Research

In this chapter, a conceptual framework for investigating the potential antecedents of PSBs in a service setting is presented. The conceptual framework puts forth that managerial interventions, role stress and job attitudes influence PSBs directly; role stress and job attitudes could also potentially mediate the managerial intervention–PSB relationships.

Managers who seek to build PSBs and positive job attitudes, whilst reducing the harmful effects of role stress ought to consider internal communication, empowerment and training and development as cornerstones of their strategy for managing FLEs. However, recognizing systematic differences in the relationships between these practices and PSBs is crucial.

As discussed above, job attitudes are affected by managerial decisions and interventions (Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Singh et al. 1996), and job attitudes, in turn, influence PSBs. However, mostly researchers studied the direct effects. For this reason, future research ought to investigate the mediating and moderating mechanisms that underlie the relationship between managerial interventions and PSBs.

The OCB literature, upon which PSB builds, takes the traditional view that attitudes predict behaviour. There is emerging evidence that OCB predicts job satisfaction (Munyon et al. 2010). The behaviour–attitude relationship has not been explored while studying PSBs. This is an interesting avenue for future research, as it may shed light on the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the relationships between job attitudes and customer-directed service behaviours.

Internal communication is also understudied in the services marketing and management (Ackfeldt and Wong 2006) and communications literatures (Welch 2012). Further research into this existing area is needed, as the mechanisms by which internal communication influence role stress, job attitudes and employee behaviour are not fully understood. Internal communication demonstrate and reinforce organizational support and care towards its employees, and seem quite promising in helping FLEs identify with their organization and its goals, as well as elicit a sense of belonging (Johlke et al. 2000). Research into what employees like to be communicated and preferences for medium of internal communication is lacking (Ruck and Welch 2012). Understanding the needs and wants of employees are in terms of internal communication and preferences for mode of communication, is important in order to manage internal communication effectively and efficiently. Such knowledge and understanding may also contribute to improve internal communication satisfaction ratings amongst employees (Ruck and Welch 2012).

Future research should also examine whether customer-helping behaviours differ from in-role service behaviors. Helping customers is an in-role behavior for FLEs, who are evaluated on their ability to interact with customers (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997). Also, the costs associated with extra-role behaviours of a helping nature should be assessed. Since these may consume valuable organizational resources and reduce the productivity of FLEs (Ackfeldt and Coote 2005; Singh 2000), they need to be justified for organizational success.

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Customer Responses to Service Failure and Recovery Experiences

Jaywant Singh and Benedetta Crisafulli

Introduction

Customer interface with a service is an exchange in which the customer pays and receives the expected provision in return. Customers are satisfied when they feel that their expectations are met. Conversely, customer perceptions towards services might be negative when dissatisfactory experiences are encountered. Customers frequently suffer delays when waiting for services; it is estimated that customers wait up to 18 minutes when calling energy suppliers and even up to 30 minutes when calling airtime service providers (BBC 2009; Winch 2013). Interestingly, while customers generally live with such minor inconveniences, they are intolerant to service failures. Examples of common service failures are flight overbooking, bank overcharging, and inadequate employee behaviour. Such service failures can have negative consequences for firms. These include the costs of handling complaints and compensating customers. For example, the Royal Bank of Scotland paid out £125 million as compensation to customers for a technical service failure (Saigol 2013). In addition, service failures can cause customer dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and switching behaviour. Such poor outcomes are frequently reflected in bespoke satisfaction surveys, as well as large-scale indices such as the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) that shows consistently lower scores for services when compared to products.

The proliferation of service failures is in line with the exponential growth of the services sector globally. This sector accounts for more than 70 percent of the GDP in industrialised economies (The CIA World Factbook 2013). Spurred on by new technologies and service innovations, such growth has ramifications for service firms as well as for customers. From the organisational perspective, this rapidly

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changing environment witnesses the creation of new formats of services and poses additional challenges of managing customer expectations. For example, the development of online portals has necessitated firms to manage new forms of customer-firm interactions. From the customer perspective, new service offerings have increased choice and availability, leading customers to easily defect if the service is below par. Moreover, customers nowadays constantly demand better services, and are savvy with communicating their dissatisfaction using new media. A case in point is the report from the UK Ombudsman Services (Ombudsman Services 2014) which suggests that UK customers complain more than in the past through a variety of online and offline media.

In the light of the above paradigm-shifting changes, firms find it difficult to fully gauge customer dissatisfaction, and manage service failures by delivering service recovery. The UK Ombudsman Services Report also suggests that the rise in customer appetite for complaints is not matched by organisational responses to managing such complaints (Ombudsman Services 2014). Although firms realise the need to respond to complaints, they act within the constraints of available resources, and the complaint-handling mechanisms are often designed and implemented on an ad hoc basis. Effective handling of customer complaints, however, can save time and financial resources of firms by preventing further complaints and the escalation of dissatisfaction (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman 2009). Service firms not responding effectively to customer complaints run the risk of damaging their reputation and brand image.

At the core of this problem is the need to have a better understanding of customer evaluations of organisational recovery efforts, and this forms the central theme of the present chapter. In particular, this chapter envisages service failure and recovery as intrinsically linked events representing stages of the same service experience. As in the instance of a hotel service, a guest may go through multiple stages of failure and recovery experiences. First, the hotel guest may be given a room smelling of smoking, may feel upset and seek redress by lodging a complaint. In response, the frontline hotel staff may attempt service recovery by providing an apology and/or compensation. Finally, if the recovery is effective, the guest may form positive perceptions about the hotel, be satisfied and return for custom. Customer response at each of these stages involves a number of psychological processes. Gaining an understanding of these psychological processes is crucial to firms, as customers are the ultimate judges of organisational recovery efforts. As a consequence, service research dominates high-quality business and marketing journals, along with a growing body of empirical evidence on service failure and recovery.

Research in this domain addresses a wide range of issues such as customer affective and cognitive responses to service failures, customer evaluations of service recovery including the attribution of blame and perceptions of justice or fairness, along with the additional factors affecting service recovery management, such as branding and customer-firm relationship. Although extensively studied, these issues are often addressed in discrete streams of research, hindering a holistic understanding of the subject matter. In response, this chapter takes an overarching view of research on service failure and recovery experiences from the perspective of customers and critically evaluates related literature. Specifically, we treat failure
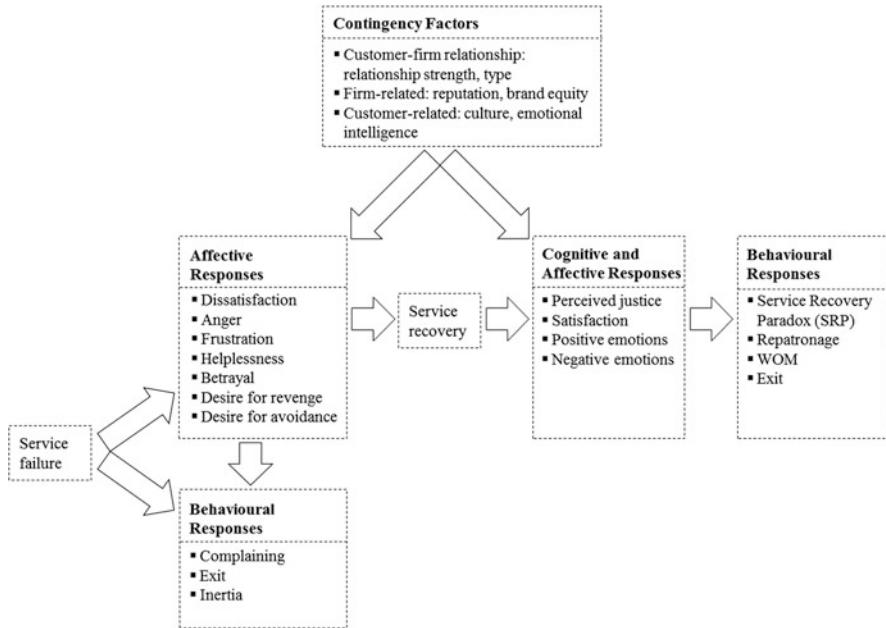
Fig. 1 The stages of service failure and recovery experiences

and recovery as stages of the same overall service experience, and we map out the state-of-the-art of research at each stage of this experience (Fig. 1). We review research evidence on the role of service recovery and its impact on customer perceptions and emotions. Drawing upon research from consumer psychology, we highlight the significance of the relationship between cognition and emotions during service experiences. We also discuss the role of customer-firm relationship and firm reputation in this context. We conclude by envisaging several novel avenues for future research.

Customer Responses to Service Failures

Service failures represent 'any service-related mishaps or problems (real and/or perceived) that occur during a consumer's experience with the firm' (Maxham 2001, p. 11). In response to a service failure, customers are often dissatisfied due to the service performance not meeting expectations, as explained by the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm advocated by Oliver (1989). Dissatisfaction represents a negative affective state, which is a function of specific negative emotions, such as disappointment and regret (Zeelenberg and Pieters 2004). In addition to causing dissatisfaction, service failures often elicit negative emotions of anger, frustration, and helplessness, as consistently shown by research (e.g., Bougie et al. 2003; Kalamas et al. 2008; Gelbrich 2010). These negative emotions follow

the cognitive appraisal of service failure events. During cognitive appraisal, customers evaluate events against their personal goals. Thus customers show positive emotions when events are goal congruent (i.e. the service meets expectations), but negative emotions when events are goal incongruent. Such negative emotions drive vindictive behaviour especially among customers who have a long history of positive experiences with the firm. As shown by Grégoire et al. (2009), long-term customers resent and express strong desire to take revenge against the firm after a service failure.

When service failures trigger negative emotions, customers tend to attribute the causes to the firm in a mechanism that often exacerbates the initial anger and frustration. The act of blaming the company for the failure is explained by the attribution theory, first given by Heider (1958), and later espoused by Folkes (1984) and Weiner (1985). By attribution is meant the assignment of responsibility, blame or causation, which happens mostly for negative events (Weiner 1986). In service failures, which are negative events, customers play the role of amateur researchers and speculate about the cause of the failure in an attempt to explain the reason why this event occurred. When blaming the firm for the failure, customers express anger at the firm and frustration about uncontrollable factors, as shown by Gelbrich (2010). Despite the prevalence of attribution theory explaining customer responses to negative events, the sequence of negative emotions and attributions appears unclear. It may be that anger following poor customer service leads to attributions of blame, which in turn produce further anger and frustration. As pointed out by Fiske and Taylor (2013), attributional reasoning is, in fact, dynamic; customers may feel unhappy about a negative event and make causal attributions, which then lead to other emotional responses.

Further, customer attributions and negative emotions may lead to complaining behaviour. Customers are found to react differently in terms of complaining after emotionally stressful experiences such as service failures. Gelbrich (2010) suggests that anger fosters word of mouth to family and friends, aimed at taking revenge against the company. Remarkably, even when a service failure has caused anger and complaining, customers show little intention to exit the relationship with the firm, as reported by Voorhees et al. (2006). Thus, it appears that customers complain with the intention to "save" their relationship with the firm. Even so, a vast majority of consumers do not complain (Chebat and Slusarczyk 2005). This inconsistent complaining behaviour following service failures finds some explanation in recent studies on coping behaviour. In response to service failures, customers show differential coping strategies such as active and expressive coping, or denial. Customer adoption of one or the other coping strategy is often dependent upon individual abilities, such as emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, which in turn influence their decision to complain or not (Duhachek 2005; Tsarenko and Strizhakova 2013).

The above discussion underlines the central role played by emotions in explaining customer response to service failure events. Despite its breadth, research in this area presents difficulties. For instance, it may be challenging to distinguish mood states of happiness or sadness with emotions such as joy and disappointment.

Bagozzi et al. (1999) refer to mood states and emotions as distinct components of affect. Mood states are lower in intensity, diffused, non-intentional and are longer lasting than emotions. Contrarily, emotions are high in intensity, and have a referent. In the instance of service failures, the unsatisfactory service experience can act as referent for anger (e.g., a customer is angered by the poor service at a bank). The differential effect of mood states and emotions during service failure recovery experiences is still unaddressed and merits further research.

Furthermore, much of the extant research in this domain adopts a valence-based approach to measuring emotions. For instance, dissatisfaction relating to service failures is often examined, whilst specific emotions such as frustration and regret are overlooked. In this regard, future research could examine specific, discrete emotions in order to make more robust generalisations about existing findings. Lastly, as consumption becomes progressively digitised, consumers find new spaces where to vent their negative emotions following a service failure. This raises the question of whether the digital environment encourages complaining behaviour and negative word of mouth by broadening the range of opportunities for creating negative publicity about the firm. While attention towards the digital environment is growing, further research can examine post-failure customer behaviour in the online space.

Following service failure and the ensuing customer response, as discussed above, firms often attempt service recovery, which represents the second stage of the customer overall experience with the service. Customer responses to service recovery have been extensively investigated under areas such as the service recovery paradox, justice perceptions, and affective reactions towards the recovery. These areas are discussed in the section below.

Customer Responses to Service Recovery

Service recovery entails the actions taken by the firm and its employees to rectify a service failure. Examples of service recovery include compensation, discounts, upgraded or free services, and/or apology. Customer evaluations of service recovery are underpinned by a variety of psychological mechanisms. For instance, customers undertake cognitive appraisal of the fairness of recovery efforts, and this can lead to affective outcomes such as satisfaction. In an effort to understand such psychological mechanisms, research in this area has proliferated over the last few decades. In the sections below, extant research on how customers evaluate service recovery actions is critically reviewed.

Service Recovery Paradox

Effective service recovery can enhance perceptions of service quality, firm competence, customer satisfaction and, ultimately, loyalty (Boshoff 1997). On some

occasions, customer satisfaction with recovery is found to be even higher than satisfaction prior to the failure, resulting in a peculiar effect termed the 'service recovery paradox' (SRP). The SRP is defined as a situation in which 'a good recovery can turn angry, frustrated customers into loyal ones. It can, in fact, create more goodwill than if things had gone smoothly in the first place' (Hart et al. 1990, p. 148). This seemingly paradoxical effect has raised much interest amongst service researchers. Empirical evidence on the occurrence of SRP is however mixed, as discussed below.

The occurrence of SRP finds theoretical explanation in the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver 1989). Specifically, the paradox results when customer expectations for service recovery are positively disconfirmed by the actual recovery performance, which exceeds customer expectations. Magnini et al. (2007) show that the SRP is more likely to occur when the severity, controllability and stability of the failure are perceived to be low. In other words, SRP is more likely to occur if the service failure causes a minor inconvenience (severity), is out of the firm's control (controllability), and it is unlikely to reoccur (stability).

While some scholars find support for the SRP (e.g., Michel 2001; Maxham and Netemeyer 2002; Hocutt et al. 2006; Magnini et al. 2007), others do not (e.g., McCollough et al. 2000; Andreassen 2001; Maxham 2001; Ok et al. 2006). The inconsistency of research findings on the occurrence of SRP has been attributed to three methodological aspects by deMatos et al. (2007). These include: research design, sample selection, and service category. In a meta-analysis investigating the research evidence on SRP, the authors show that longitudinal studies tend to provide stronger evidence for the occurrence of the SRP than cross-sectional studies. Further, students seem to be more concerned about recovery (i.e. compensation) than nonstudents, thus also more likely to experience a paradoxical increase in satisfaction following service recovery. Likewise, studies in the hotel service setting find greater support for the occurrence of SRP, than studies conducted in other service contexts. When experiencing failures with hotel services, customers seem to be more concerned about solving the problem and continuing their travel plan, thus there is greater chance that SRP occurs. With the exception of the meta-analysis by deMatos et al. (2007), little attempt has been made to provide an explanation for the conflicting evidence on the occurrence of the SRP. Additionally, the cognitive and/or affective mechanisms underpinning the SRP represent an area for further exploration.

Perceptions of Justice

In a service recovery situation, customers evaluate the fairness (or justice) of the recovery efforts rendered by the firm. The firm may be seen as being fair or unfair regarding the amount of compensation, the manner in which employees handled the failure, and regarding the process of providing redress. Accordingly, customers form perceptions of *justice* (or fairness) when evaluating service recovery. The concept of

justice (or fairness) originates from the well-established justice theory (Homans 1961). According to justice theory, a social exchange is perceived to be fair when 'it corresponds to some standard or criterion of what is morally right' (Furby 1986, p. 153). Traditionally, justice has been an area of interest in organisational research for explaining conflicts and employee responses to management practices (Greenberg 1990). Scholars now concur that issues of justice permeate a variety of social exchanges, such as exchanges between student and teacher, partners in a relationship, buyer and supplier, as well as customers and the firm. In marketing, justice principles have been applied in the context of pricing (e.g., Xia et al. 2004; East et al. 2013), business-to-business relationships (e.g., Kumar et al. 1995), and recently, in customer-firm exchanges. Oliver and Swan (1989) and Goodwin and Ross (1990) are amongst the first studies to highlight the importance of justice in understanding customer-firm exchanges. In this context, justice plays a crucial role in explaining customer perceptions of service experiences, especially when these are unsatisfactory.

Scholars suggest that the delivery of unsatisfactory services creates conflict between the customer and the firm (e.g., Blodgett et al. 1997; Homburg and Fürst 2005). This is especially the case following a service failure, when the customer perceives injustice because of unmet expectations. In order to restore justice, the firm delivers service recovery. Customers evaluate the recovery by assessing the justice being meted out by the firm in attempting a redress (Tax et al. 1998). Such evaluation relates to different facets of justice, which represent dimensions of the justice construct. Three justice dimensions are well-established, namely, distributive, procedural and interactional. These dimensions and related research in the services context are discussed below.

Distributive justice concerns the manner in which outcomes are allocated. In a service recovery context, outcomes include tangible (e.g., refund, discount) and intangible compensation (e.g., apology). Customers perceive distributive justice when compensation is fairly allocated. Equity theory, proposed by Adams (1965), explains what constitutes a fair allocation. According to equity theory, customers evaluate the outcome of recovery encounters by cognitively calculating the ratio of benefits received over the sacrifices made. As a result, the outcome is perceived to be fair when one of the three principles of distributive justice is met: (1) equity, when perceived benefits obtained from the recovery outcome are greater than sacrifices incurred; (2) equality, when perceived benefits are equal for all customers; and (3) need, when perceived benefits meet the needs of customers. In a service recovery context, distributive justice is thus created when benefits of the recovery compensation are greater than the time and effort spent complaining (equity), when all customers receive equal compensation (equality), or the compensation meets customer needs (need).

As suggested by Aggarwal (2004), the importance of the equity, equality or need principles of distributive justice differs across types of customer-firm relationship. When involved in communal relationships, customers are concerned about receiving a recovery that meets their needs. Conversely, in economic relationships, customers are motivated by financial repayments and equitable compensation is therefore an effective mechanism for restoring distributive justice. Considering that

the majority of customer-firm exchanges have a strong economic orientation, it is not surprising that the delivery of equitable compensation is a major concern of customers during service recovery experiences.

Procedural justice involves the procedures followed in allocating outcomes. In a service recovery context, customers evaluate the fairness of the processes followed by the firm in allocating compensation. This dimension of justice finds its theoretical foundations in the theory of procedural justice given by Thibaut and Walker (1975). A key explanation of procedural justice is related to perceived control (Tyler 1989). Service recovery research shows that customers perceive procedural justice when recovery procedures allow them to voice both discontent about the service experience (Sparks and McColl-Kennedy 2001), and preference about the recovery outcome (termed the 'recovery voice' by Karande et al. 2007), when the recovery process is quick (e.g., Boshoff 1997; Smith et al. 1999) and service employees are accessible (Homburg et al. 2010).

Interactional justice relates to perceptions about the manner in which outcomes are communicated. This dimension of justice was introduced by Bies and Moag (1986) to study employee reactions towards organisational recruitment practices. In a service recovery context, customers form perceptions of interactional justice based on how service employees treat them while attempting a recovery. Thus, employee behaviour is crucial in shaping perceptions of interactional justice. Research shows that customers perceive interactional justice when service employees are able to understand or even anticipate customer requests (McCollough et al. 2000), treat them with politeness, respect, empathy and honesty (McColl-Kennedy and Sparks 2003; Chebat and Slusarczyk 2005). In addition, the act of admission of responsibility for the service failure provides reassurance to the customers, as shown by Bies and Moag (1986). The employee behaviours described above are shown to repair customer self-esteem and to make customers feel valued by the firm.

Some scholars in organisational research domain introduced a fourth dimension of justice, namely, informational justice. Based on the four-dimensional conceptualisation of justice, interactional justice encompasses two aspects relating to the information conveyed during social exchanges (informational justice) and the interpersonal treatment offered (interpersonal justice). As explained by Colquitt (2001), interpersonal justice entails aspects relating to the sensitivity shown when communicating outcomes. Conversely, informational justice relates to the explanations provided in relation to outcomes. Service recovery research rarely distinguishes between the interpersonal and informational aspects of interactional justice, yet these are clearly distinct concepts. Perceptions of interpersonal justice are based upon the level of politeness, honesty and empathy shown by service employees while delivering recovery. By contrast, informational justice is created when service employees provide sincere explanations for the inconvenience caused.

The above discussion highlights the importance of justice perceptions in measuring the effectiveness of organisational recovery efforts. Despite extensive evidence in this area, a number of important questions still remain unanswered. For instance, further empirical research could examine the four justice dimensions within a single study. In addition, as the justice dimensions discussed above have

been developed in the context of offline service encounters, their validity in online contexts needs to be tested. When dealing with online services, interactions take place between customer and technology, rather than between human beings. Thus, interpersonal aspects of honesty and empathy might be less relevant in online failure contexts, than in offline contexts.

Affective Responses to Service Recovery

The literature increasingly recognises that customer responses to recovery encounters involve both cognitive and affective components. This is illustrated in recent service recovery research (e.g., Smith and Bolton 2002; Chebat and Slusarczyk 2005; Schoefer and Diamantopoulos 2008; Gelbrich 2010; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2011; Choi and Choi 2014). The above studies show that customer emotions function both as moderators and mediators of the relationship between cognitive perceptions of fairness and post-recovery attitudes and intentions. For example, Smith and Bolton (2002) show that emotions elicited by the service failure act as a moderator of the relationship between perceived recovery fairness and post-recovery satisfaction. Specifically, strong negative emotions are found to lower the impact of employee recovery efforts on customer satisfaction.

Emotions also function as a mediator of the relationship between perceived recovery fairness and post-recovery behaviour. Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005) show how fair compensation leads to customer loyalty, by means of eliciting positive emotions. Conversely, slow recovery can encourage customers to leave the company, through eliciting negative emotions. This mediating role of emotions is theoretically explained by the cognitive appraisal theory proposed by Lazarus (1991). According to this theory, customers engage in a cognitive process of evaluating the experienced event, which then elicits emotions. In a recovery context, customers undertake cognitive appraisal of the fairness being meted out by the firm when attempting recovery. The cognitive process of assessing fairness in turn elicits emotions. Justice perceptions, in this sense, are a form of cognitive appraisal and lead to positive or negative emotions (Schoefer and Ennew 2005).

The above discussion shows that cognition and emotions are equally relevant to explaining customer response to service recovery experiences. However, customer emotional processes during service failure and recovery experiences deserve further exploration. For instance, in the realm of research on the conceptualisation of emotions, much of service recovery research adopts a categorical approach to studying emotions (e.g., Chebat and Slusarczyk 2005; Schoefer and Diamantopoulos 2008; del Río-Lanza et al. 2009). Accordingly, emotions of the same valence are collapsed together into broad emotion dimensions, either positive or negative. Although informative, this conceptualisation of emotions can obscure some important nuances of specific (discrete) positive and negative emotions. In support of this assertion, Laros and Steenkamp (2005) show that discrete emotions

provide a more detailed account of customer affect towards genetically modified food, when compared with the valence-based approach to emotions.

In the service failure and recovery domain, research examining discrete emotions elicited by service failure recovery is still sparse, notwithstanding a few exceptions showing that unfair recovery leads to feelings of betrayal (Grégoire and Fisher 2008) and anger (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2011). Future research can examine how discrete emotions operate in a recovery context from the perspective of customers and service employees. Service employees also experience emotions when handling customer complaints and these may impact the success of recovery.

Further, it is debatable whether emotions are an outcome of cognition or vice versa, or whether emotions and cognition operate in conjunction. For example, Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005) refer to emotions as an outcome of cognitive evaluations of fairness. Thus, in their study, even though treated separately, both emotions and cognition shape customer loyalty after service recovery. Much of the service recovery literature treats the effects of emotions and cognition as separate and distinct, yet, in practice, these can operate in tandem, almost complementing each other. The complex relationship between cognition and emotions described in service recovery research can be seen through the lens of studies in psychology. In this domain, some authors support the affective independence hypothesis, suggesting that emotions and cognition are independent. According to this hypothesis, cognitive aspects invoked when evaluating products (i.e. features of the product) lose their relevance over time, when affect becomes more dominant (e.g., Zajonc and Markus 1982, 1985). However, a contrasting yet equally compelling view questions the affective independence hypothesis and contends that affect generated by an event is linked to a stimulus in memory, and related cognitive associations (e.g., Tsal 1985; Duncan and Barret 2007; Storbeck and Clore 2007). Overall, the debate on whether cognition and emotions are linked or independent is still open with no definitive conclusions. Future research could contribute to the above debate by testing the dependence or independence of cognition and emotions during service failure and recovery experiences.

In addition to the above, empirical research has shown that customer responses to service failure and recovery experiences depend on a number of other contingency factors, such as the context within which service failure and recovery take place, customer characteristics and prior perceptions about the firm. These factors also contribute to explain customer responses to service failure and recovery experiences. For example, prior positive relationship with a firm might cushion the negative effects of a service failure, or alternatively, in some instances the relationship could increase customer expectations of service recovery. These contingency factors are discussed in detail in the section below.

Contingency Factors in Customer Responses to Service Failure and Recovery

The review of the literature suggests that contingency factors in customer responses to service failure and recovery can be broadly divided into three main groups: customer-firm relationship factors, firm-related, and customer-related factors. Research evidence on each of these factors is discussed below.

Amongst the customer-firm relationship factors, there are: the quality of past service encounters, the type of customer-firm relationship existing prior to the service failure, the level of customer commitment to the relationship and the employee-customer rapport. Research shows that customers with a long history of past, positive encounters with the firm show high expectations of relationship continuity. The customers report low expectations of service recovery and tend to attribute the service failure to a temporary cause (Hess et al. 2003). Customers involved in such relational exchanges with the firm also show greater satisfaction (Priluck 2003) and loyalty towards the firm following service recovery experiences (Mattila 2001). Customers involved in a long-term relationship with the firm thus seem to develop a feeling of interdependence with the firm, and show greater willingness to forgive the firm following an unsatisfactory service experience. Karande et al. (2007) note that customers with a long history of successful past transactions with the firm are more likely to report perceptions of fairness towards recovery procedures, than 'new' customers. Long lasting relationships also build customer affective commitment, namely an 'emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in a firm' (Evanschitzky et al. 2011, p. 410). Customers high in affective commitment are more likely to show tolerance for service failures and willingness to help the firm improving the service delivery by lodging complaints, than customers low in affective commitment (Mattila 2004; Evanschitzky et al. 2011).

In contrast to the above, research shows that the customer-firm relationship can also have a counter-productive effect. As illustrated by Grégoire and Fisher (2008), customers involved in a strong relationship with the firm feel betrayed when experiencing a service failure. This group of customers is found to seek revenge against the firm by means of negative word of mouth and third-party complaints (Grégoire et al. 2009). The desire for revenge is however attenuated when apology and/or compensation is provided.

Further to the above inconsistent findings, Kaltcheva et al. (2013) highlight the significance of two aspects of customer-firm relationships, that is, personality relatedness (the extent to which the customer endorses the culture of the firm) and reciprocity (the degree of importance placed on distributive justice). In the above study, the authors show that customer-firm relationship exhibits a differential effect on customer responses to service failure along these two aspects. Specifically, personality-relatedness *mitigates* the negative effect of service failures on repatronage intentions and negative word of mouth, whereas reciprocity *amplifies* the negative effect of service failures on complaining behaviour. In other words, customers who appreciate the values of the firm are likely to use the service again after service failures, whereas those who are concerned about gaining benefits from

the relationship with the firm are likely to complain in the attempt to obtain a just recovery. Similarly, customer-employee rapport presents a twofold effect in explaining customer response to service failure and recovery experiences. As shown by Wan et al. (2011), customers involved in a friendly relationship with the employees react even more negatively than those involved in a business relationship when concerned about the obligation of the firm to meet customer needs. Thus, building a rapport of friendship with the customer appears beneficial up to the extent that the customer overlooks the obligations of the two parties.

Firm-related factors, such as firm reputation and brand equity, build a wealth of associations about the service brand in customers' mind. These associations exist prior to service failure and recovery experiences and influence how customers respond to these encounters. A number of studies show that firm reputation for excellent service quality and high brand equity can mitigate the negative impact of failure severity on customer satisfaction (e.g., Hess 2008; Brady et al. 2008; Huang 2011). Following a service failure, customers show greater tolerance for high-equity brands and highly reputable firms, regardless of whether service recovery is attempted or not. The explanation for the above is found in theories from consumer psychology, such as categorization theory proposed by Cohen and Basu (1987), assimilation theory suggested by Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1993), along with the anchoring and adjustment model by Hogarth and Einhorn (1992). These theories share the view that customer perceptions about the brand are re-accessed when a service failure is encountered. Positive memory associations, thus, function as a benchmark against which new information (i.e. service failure) is integrated.

Other contingency factors include customer characteristics such as cultural background and emotional intelligence. Responses to service recovery efforts vary depending on customer cultural background. Research shows that customers from Western countries focus on monetary compensation when evaluating the fairness of recovery efforts, whereas their Asian counterparts pay attention to recovery procedures and interaction with the employee (e.g., Hui and Au 2001; Mattila and Patterson 2004). In a study focusing on service failure and recovery in the Thai context, Kalafatis et al. (2014) find that Thai customers are more concerned about the way in which the frontline employees treat them, than about the amount of compensation received and the speed at which service recovery is delivered. These cultural distinctions resonate with Hofstede's dimensions of culture (Hofstede 1980). Accordingly, societies that are sensitive to risk (high in uncertainty avoidance) report perceptions of fairness and post-recovery satisfaction when the firm has clearly laid-out recovery procedures, as these reduce the perceived risk of unsuccessful service recovery. Similarly, societies high in power distance (e.g., Asian societies) seem to value recovery efforts when these are delivered by high status employees within the firm, rather than low status staff.

In addition to culture, emotional intelligence (EI) represents an important customer characteristic affecting responses to service failure and recovery experiences. EI is an innate resource denoting individuals' ability to 'reflectively regulate emotions to cope with environmental demands and pressures' (Gabbott et al. 2011, p. 235). Research conducted by Gabbott et al. (2011) demonstrates that post-failure

satisfaction is restored more easily when customers have high EI. Customers with high EI are able to interpret the service failure in a more positive light, to control their negative emotions, and to find a solution to the problem encountered, more than customers with low EI. This psychological phenomenon is explained by stress and coping theory, discussed earlier in this chapter.

The above review suggests that customer responses to service failure and recovery experiences are not only a function of the recovery efforts delivered by the firm, but these are also influenced by an array of contingency factors. In this area, a number of issues are worthy of further exploration. For instance, with regards to customer-related contingency factors, additional research could examine EI alongside other personality traits, which may also influence how customers respond to service failure and recovery experiences. Research addressing the role of customer personality traits in service failure recovery is scant. Similarly, much service recovery research relies upon Hofstede's dimensions in explaining how culture influences customer responses to service failure recovery experiences. Despite its wide adoption in cross-cultural research, Hofstede's framework has limitations. A key limitation is that culture is defined as belonging to a nation. However, members within a nation can also have different cultural values and such differences are overlooked (e.g., McSweeney 2002; Williamson 2002). Advancing research on cross-cultural differences in service failure and recovery outside the framework of Hofstede's dimensions could disentangle the dynamics among individuals and the cultural context that they inhabit.

Conclusions and Future Perspectives

This chapter gives a critical account of the current state of research in service failure and recovery. In particular, the streams of literature in service failure and recovery are here combined in order to provide a holistic understanding of this important domain in services research. From the discussion in the previous sections, it is evident that service failure and recovery experiences trigger many complex psychological processes, both cognitive and affective in nature. The discussion also highlights the central role played by frontline employees in managing organisational resources and meeting customer needs. Overall, the prominent position of service failure and recovery research evidently emerges from the preceding discussion. This section concludes the chapter by presenting additional avenues for research in the domain of service failure and recovery.

An issue that merits attention from researchers is that of online service failure and recovery. The online channel provides customers with a platform where to purchase and consume services efficiently. Yet online services can fail. Firms attempting recovery following online service failures face the challenges associated with the lack of customer interaction between customers and employees. Research in this area is still emerging. For example, Mattila et al. (2011) compare customer responses to service recovery efforts across online and offline contexts, and show that customers

prefer recovery modes that match failure types. Thus, for instance, compensation delivered online is a preferred option following online service failures. Surprisingly, customers prefer an apology to be delivered over the phone, rather than via email, even after experiencing online service failures. An explanation for the above finding is that an apology delivered over the phone indicates the firm's concern about attempting redress for the problem caused (the human touch). This shows that although online services reduce the opportunities to show empathy and develop rapport with customers, human interactions remain important in the online environment, especially when things go wrong (Schumann et al. 2012). Future research could investigate how customers respond to online service failures and recovery, in order to inform service managers on how to design online recovery strategies.

Another research avenue could focus on the role of customers as co-creators of service failure and recovery experiences. Following Vargo and Lusch (2004), the paradigm of co-creation in services has gained popularity in service research. Accordingly, studies have referred to customers as 'partial employees' who co-create services with the firm (e.g., Mills and Morris 1986; Schumann et al. 2012). The role of customers as partial employees has implications for service failure and recovery management as customers are given control over the delivery and success of service experiences. Despite its relevance, research investigating customer co-creation of service recovery remains sparse. Exceptions are Bendaupi and Leone (2003) and Dong et al. (2008). These studies suggest that customers report greater levels of satisfaction with the recovery experience when asked to co-create service recovery. In spite of their novel application of the concept of co-creation to the service recovery context, these studies have not considered how customers interpret the co-creation of recovery efforts, especially when the firm is solely responsible for the service failure. Future research could investigate customer self-perceptions and feelings of entitlement.

A further research direction includes the investigation of the role of firm-wide policies, such as service guarantees, in delivering service recovery. While much of the extant research examines employee-initiated recovery efforts, little is known about how organisational policies influence employee recovery efforts, and in turn, customer perceptions of recovery experiences. By introducing policies such as service guarantees, firms may also convey an image of competence to customers. A recent study by Crisafulli and Singh (2014) shows that customers perceive the recovery to be fair and exhibit intentions to repatronise the company when recovery procedures and compensation amount match the terms set in the service guarantee. In particular, this study finds that customers show perceptions of recovery fairness when inferring positive motives about the firm's decision to offer a service guarantee. These findings are consistent with the signaling literature, in which service guarantees are treated as a marketing signal of service quality and of firm's good intentions (e.g., Jin and He 2013). This area has thus far been overlooked and merits further attention. Future research could examine the extent to which firm-wide policies such as service guarantees send signals of the positive attributes of the company, and how such policies can be leveraged in a service failure recovery context.

Finally, future research could shed further light on the role of emotions during service failure and recovery experiences, and the interplay of emotions and cognition. Prior research demonstrates that emotions are important in explaining customer

responses to service failure and recovery experiences. Notably, service recovery research supports the view that emotions are an outcome of cognitive processes, thus following a cognition-emotion sequence (e.g., Chebat and Slusarczyk 2005). This perspective, however, conflicts with the debate in psychology literature suggesting that emotions precede cognitive appraisal, thus following an affect-cognition sequence (e.g., Zajonc and Markus 1982). This sequence may equally apply to service failure and recovery experiences. In fact, service failures may elicit (negative) emotions, which in turn may shape customer perceptions of recovery fairness, thereby suggesting the primacy of emotions over cognition. Building on the debate on the primacy of affect over cognition, further research is needed to provide clarity on the interplay of cognition and emotions during service failure and recovery experiences.

Further, the literature in psychology shows contrasting views on the interdependence of emotions and cognition. Some studies describe emotion and cognition as highly interdependent, due to emotional states being distributed throughout the brain in cognitive areas and performing cognitive functions (e.g., Tsal 1985; Storbeck and Clore 2007). This view, however, contrasts with Zajonc and Markus (1982) who argue that emotions and cognition are independent entities. Service recovery research appears to support the argument that emotions and cognition are highly dependent. This calls for further research that investigates the extent to which emotions and cognition work independently or in combination in the context of service failure and recovery experiences.

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Boundary Objects and End User Engagement: Illustrations from the Social Enterprise Domain

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Boundary spanning has been extensively researched in organization studies and in marketing. While organizational literature has examined boundary spanning from information acquisition-processing and representing the organization to external stakeholders (Aldrich and Herker 1977); and learning, innovation and product/service development (e.g., Carlile 2004; Tushman and Scanlan 1981) perspectives; the marketing literature has focused mainly on consumer centric and customer facing roles such as bringing in useful knowledge about their requirements and delivering quality services to them (Bettencourt and Brown 2003). Further, marketing domain has traditionally approached boundary spanning as a role involving unidirectional efforts by organizations to capture information and to utilize it internally to develop products and services. With this orientation, it has generally overlooked the interactions involved, which in turn have been studied in the organizational domain, the understanding of which can critically further the knowledge base of marketing and has implications for practice as well.

Study of boundary spanning role from the organizational lens (e.g., Lave 1991, 1993) highlights both the bidirectional nature and the micro processes of this interaction. Boundary spanning, then, becomes an interaction between the boundary spanner and the consumers, which often involves the use of 'boundary objects' to shape a shared common platform to exchange knowledge and engage with each other. In this chapter we demonstrate the role of boundary objects in facilitating boundary spanning interactions, based on empirical findings from a study in the social enterprise sector.

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Boundary Spanning and Boundary Objects

Marketing literature, primarily focusing on the psychological, behavioural and job related consequences of role ambiguity and conflict inherent in the individual boundary spanning function, acknowledges the importance of boundary spanners especially in frontline customer facing roles (e.g., Bettencourt and Brown 2003). Accordingly, research has identified psychological outcomes such as role stress (e.g., Goolsby 1992; Lysonski 1985; Singh 1998) and burnout (Singh et al. 1994), and their impact on job related outcomes such as job tension, satisfaction and performance (Lysonski 1985; Lysonski et al. 1989; Singh 1998), turnover intentions and organizational commitment (Singh 1998). Aspects such as optimism (Crosno et al. 2009), supervisory support (e.g., Edmondson and Boyer 2013) and perceived organizational support (Qiu 2012), all of which can enable coping with role stress and consequently improve job related outcomes for the boundary spanner have also been studied. Some research attention has also been on boundary spanning at the team (e.g., Jong et al. 2004), organizational (e.g., Callahan and Salipante 1979) and intra- and inter-organizational (e.g., Piercy 2009; Qiu 2012) levels. While these insights have been critical to the marketing domain, the interactional process of boundary spanning has received sparse attention in marketing literature; with some signs of change now emerging from studies such as that of Andersen et al. (2013).

Boundary spanning, in many marketing-business cases, is no longer a unidirectional activity. It requires the boundary spanner to engage bi- or multi- directionally with the consumer in order to gain relevant information, making it a complex process of interaction, where several factors can facilitate or hamper the boundary spanner's ability to harness useful knowledge. A deeper understanding of this interaction process, thus, can enable marketers to better comprehend and manage the actual dynamics of their boundary spanning role towards higher effectiveness. Organizational literature that intensely examines interactions across boundaries from a process perspective could prove to be of good use in this regard.

One of the key boundary spanning functions studied in organizational literature is information processing (Aldrich and Herker 1977), involving information acquisition from agents external to the organization and transferring it inside (Tushman and Scanlan 1981), for interpretation and utilization for the organization's benefit. Achieving this requires boundary spanners to gain access to and appropriately traverse both the domains—the host organization and the external group/community—acting as links across them. The differences between the two domains in their knowledge levels, perception, understanding and interpretation of objects and events cause differences in their mental models. These can act as barriers to interactions or their effectiveness. This generates the need for a common frame of reference for the two to engage, at and across, the boundary. For example, suppose a marketer needs feedback on the features of a new and complex mobile or tablet from an ordinary consumer. If her questions involve technical specs/jargons that the consumer doesn't understand, she might not be able to derive relevant information.

Instead, if she uses tools such as a simplified diagram/model along with use of simple language understandable to the consumer, she would be able to get the required information. Such tools or objects that form or provide a common platform for engagement between boundary spanners and external agents emerging as critical interactional bridges between them are termed as *Boundary Objects* (Star and Griesemer 1989).

Boundary objects are common artifacts, processes or discourses that can be understood and interpreted by individuals on different sides (Levina and Vaast 2005; Wenger 2000). They can be physical objects or abstract concepts (Star and Griesemer 1989; Wenger 1998), incorporating multiple social meanings while retaining a common structure (Star and Griesemer 1989), around which interactions can occur. In the words of Star and Griesemer (1989, p. 393), boundary objects are "plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them...They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable." For instance, standard operating procedures (SOPs) in organizations act as boundary objects between different specialized departments (such as R&D, marketing, HR, and operations). While the procedures will have different functional meanings in the different departments, they provide a common understanding of the work process between them, enabling interaction around the shared understanding. Similarly, prototypes of products, or a service concept, also can also act as boundary objects between potential consumers and internal teams such as manufacturing or design.

Thus, boundary objects have a common meaning between communities as well as unique meanings for each community, as illustrated in Fig. 1[1]. While the
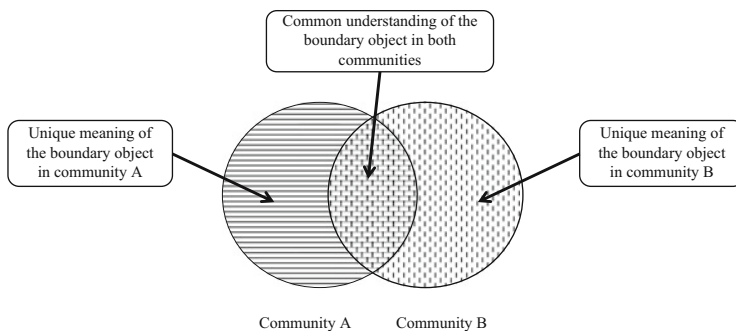

Fig. 1 The unique and common meanings of a boundary object within and between communities A and B

[1] All illustrations presented in this chapter have been developed by the authors themselves, using a variety of images available from free sources (to the best of our knowledge) on the internet, accessed through the image search tool at google.com; and used here purely for educational-academic purposes only.

overlapping sections of circles A and B depict common understanding of the boundary object for the two communities, the non-overlapping sections depict the unique meaning that it has for each community. Interactions across communities occur through this common meaning or understanding acting as a bridge between the two.

The idea of boundary objects can be understood by using the example of car manufacturing in the automobile industry. High competition in the automobile industry has resulted in companies making increasingly consumer specific models and their attractive variants. Suppose a set of consumers prefer a car that should suit a family of four, be compact for ease of maneuvering in the city traffic, have wood finished luxurious interiors, high technology systems, and deliver a mileage above the average standards of similar cars in the market. In order to meet these requirements, a car company would require different specialist departments such as manufacturing, technology design, architectural design, and concept design to work on the required model. If each department works independently on their individual specifications, they are likely to interpret them differently and come up with outputs which might meet requirements separately but might not fit together in the required model. For instance, while the engine might provide the required mileage, its design might be too big to fit in the body of the compact car, or while the technological equipments such as GPS systems might function perfectly, the wiring of the car might not provide for the incorporation of GPS into it. This could either result in failure to bring together the car, or in the car being far from the expectations of the consumer. However, if all the customer specifications are brought together and combined into a preliminary 'working' design diagram to begin with, then, it could act as a boundary object between the different departments for collectively working towards developing, detailing, perfecting and arriving at the final design. In each stage of this car's design and development process, such shared diagrams then provide a common frame of reference so that the different parts and systems developed by different departments, both inside and outside of the organization, meet individual specifications as well as function together, thus delivering the product based on the customer's actual requirements.

Thus, boundary objects become the loci around which collaborations, negotiations (Star 2010), knowledge sharing and/or collective action can occur. Simultaneously they might also create conflicts (Barrett and Oborn 2010) and act as inhibitors of learning (Oswick and Robertson 2009) if they are misinterpreted (Wenger 2000). Literature identifies several categories of boundary objects that are introduced, developed or co-created in the process of interaction between groups, departments or collectives, and which support learning (Carlile 2002). They could be artifacts, discourses and processes (Wenger 2000); structural (Benn and Martin 2010); repositories, ideal types, coincident boundaries and standardized forms (Star and Griesemer 1989); temporal (Yakura 2002); and visionary elements and standardized protocols (Briers and Chua 2001). Table 1 summarizes the different types of boundary objects with examples.

Understanding the emergence, development and role of boundary objects in boundary interactions is crucial to the development of effective mechanisms to

Table 1 Types of boundary objects

Type of boundary object	Description	Example(s)	Representative literature
Artifact	An object created by individuals or groups that serve specific objectives	Tools, documents, models or prototypes	Wenger (2000)
Discourse	Communicating thought through words	Common language	
Process	A series of actions directed at some end or outcome	Established routines	
Repositories	An ordered storage of objects/ information	Library	Star and Griesemer (1989)
Ideal type	An abstracted description of a concept which can be detailed and adapted	Diagrams, Atlas	
Coincident boundaries	Objects having same boundaries but different internal contents	State boundaries which can be interpreted and detailed differently	
Standard forms/ protocols	Templates and rules that are commonly understood ad followed	Performance report forms, quality check protocol	
Temporal	Artifacts which capture temporality of an activity and enable its contextualization	Timelines	Yakura (2002)
Structural	Physical structures which bring people together at a single site	Experimentation centre	Benn and Martin (2010)
Visionary	Concepts which evoke legitimacy and affective responses	Organization's objectives	

harness learning across boundaries in organizations. Towards this objective, we now take specific examples of boundary objects from the Social Enterprise sector that we identified through an empirical field study and explore their role in enabling knowledge acquisition and learning to develop community specific products and services.

Studying Boundary Objects: Social Enterprise Domain & Methodology

Social enterprises (SEs) are organizations that endeavour to create social value by utilizing entrepreneurial and business practices to address social problems and eradicate social disparities (Austin et al. 2006; Mair and Marti 2006; Nicholls 2006; Schwab Foundation), by converting ideas into context based solutions. This involves development of means of earned income, wherever possible; and innovation, both incremental and radical, is an integral part of the process. As part of innovative social value creation, SEs tend to interact actively across their

Table 2 Organizational demographics, role relationships and work structure

		Entrepreneurship Development Network (EDN)	Society for Social Action (SSA)	Education Foundation (EF)
Social enterprises: Demographic information	Sector	Economic development	Education	Education
	Domain of activity studied	Support for economic development (and better health) of underdeveloped areas	Regularization of education for children of migrant workers working in stone quarries (among other objectives)	Capability building of head masters of municipal schools for improving the education system
	Year of establishment	1995	1997	2008
	Organization size	280 employees + 28 part-time employees	22 employees + 52 part time employees	101 employees (long term interns included)
	Office under study	Regional Office (1 district)	Head Office (also the Regional Office for the city)	Regional Office (1 city)
	Funders	Multiple Indian and foreign funders (50–50 funding)	Multiple Indian and Foreign funders (30–70 funding)	Multiple Indian and Foreign funders
	Funding model	Not for profit	Not for profit	Not for profit
	Source of funding	Donations and grants; Market rate capital	Donations and grants	Donation and grants
SE role relationships & membership details	CEO	Idea generation, programme design, decision making	Idea generation, programme design, decision making	Idea generation, programme design, decision making
	Middle Management	Idea generation, programme implementation and design to suit regional requirements Regional level decision making	Programme implementation through coordination and reporting. (Membership: Some from target community, employed in SE)	Idea generation, programme implementation and design to suit regional requirements Regional level decision making
	Executives	Programme implementation (Membership: From target community, employed in SE)	Programme implementation (Membership: From target community, employed in SE)	Programme implementation (Membership : Long term interns in SE)

Table 2 (continued)

		Entrepreneurship Development Network (EDN)	Society for Social Action (SSA)	Education Foundation (EF)
Departments in head office (HO)/regional office (RO) studied		SHG, Health, Microfinance, Agriculture	Education	Principal leadership development programme (PLDP), Gandhi Fellowship programme (GF)
Chief activities studied		Supporting the target community to gain economic independence through microfinance. Promoting a saving culture through SHGs, especially among women. Working with government and target community to promote community health, and promoting advanced agricultural practices among the target community	Enabling children of migrant workers of stone mines to gain access to regularized education tailored to their psychological, social and contextual requirements (through the innovative progressive education programme)	Improving the quality of education in government run primary schools through development on relevant leadership competencies (through PLDP). Involving India's youth in this process and enabling development of specific leadership competencies in them (through GF)

organizational boundaries with external stakeholders and engage them in service development and delivery.

Employing the qualitative research approach of "purposeful sampling" (Patton 2002, p. 230) and iterative data collection and analysis, we collected and analyzed data from three Indian social enterprises.[2] Drawing the initial sampling frame from Ashoka[3] Foundation's list of social enterprises, we narrowed down to two age ranges: those established between 1991–2000 (relatively mature, N = 44) and 2000–2010 (relatively new, N = 18). We studied information available from their Ashoka profiles and their official websites in order to assess the presence of active learning processes in them. We also obtained the assessment of their top management on the SEs' ability to provide relevant data and willingness to participate in the study. Table 2 gives the SEs' demographic details, role relationships and activity profiles.[4]

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[2] This chapter has been developed from the doctoral dissertation work of the second author. Therefore, the source reference of data used (organizational details and quotations) and the methodology described in this chapter is: Tandon (2014).

[3] https://www.ashoka.org/.

[4] Names of the Social Enterprises used in this chapter have been changed to maintain anonymity.

Data was gathered over a period of 2 weeks in each SE through semi-structured interviews with employees at different levels in the organization (CEO, middle management and executives/field force), observations, informal discussions, performance data, annual reports and other secondary sources. All interviews and group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were probed to share learning episodes (e.g., Sole and Edmondson 2002) experienced in their course of involvement in the project. The second author spent as much time as possible in the SEs, and undertook field visits wherever possible to understand the context in which the SEs operated. Personal experiences, observations, informal discussions and reflections were also noted in fair detail in a field diary.

We drew inspiration from the coding methods of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) for data analysis, to develop categories and themes. We used constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) within and across cases (Eisenhardt 1989) to identify relevant themes. We identified boundary spanning and knowledge brokering as one of the critical themes and explored deeper into the boundary spanning process to examine the presence and role of boundary objects. It needs to be noted that boundary objects could not be directly identified from the data; instead they were inferred by combining primary data with field observations of the organizational processes in action; matching with Carlile's (2002) experience while examining boundary objects in new product development process:

> . . .collecting data about knowledge has proven difficult. Given my interest in knowledge in practice, surveys and relying on interviews is not a direct enough method of getting at knowledge. Observing individuals in practice and *focusing on the objects they work with* and the ends that they pursue provides a concrete delineation of what to observe and what to compare in terms of how knowledge is created and structured (Carlile 2002, p. 446, emphasis added).

Thus, to identify boundary objects, continuous observation of the collaborative learning processes in the SEs was essential. Accordingly, daily interactions in practice between the boundary spanners (from the SE) and the target community were observed and recorded. They were then combined with interview data to identify artifacts, concepts, processes, mental models, and so on, which were designated as boundary objects, and analyzed for properties that enabled them to facilitate successful learning interactions between the agents.

Boundary Objects in Social Enterprises

In the three Social Enterprises we studied, viz., *Entrepreneurship Development Network* (EDN), *Society for Social Action* (SSA) and *Education Foundation* (EF), key components of the services they offered to their target communities themselves emerged as critical boundary objects, the interactions around which facilitated vision alignment, development of a common understanding, mutual engagement and learning, which in turn enabled these SEs to work towards creating more target specific services. In the following sections, alongside a brief narration of the origin

and functioning of each of these SEs, we demonstrate how each boundary object acted as a critical link in the boundary spanning process, also highlighting the bidirectional nature of interactions involved.

Entrepreneurship Development Network (EDN): The *Self Help Group* (SHG) as a Central Boundary Object

Entrepreneurship Development Network (EDN) was started in 1995 in Lucknow (the capital city of Uttar Pradesh or U.P.—a State in India), with the objective of supporting economic development of underdeveloped rural areas by enabling the target community to undertake activities such as high yield farming and small businesses. Over the years, EDN expanded its objectives also to cover health and education aiming towards holistic community development; and by 2011, its operations had grown to cover 6,500 villages in the rural districts of U.P. and Bihar (another State in India).

EDN was headed by a CEO based at Head Office, which also housed the support functions. At the Regional Offices, programme development and delivery were undertaken by middle managers with the help of executives, who, in many cases, were target community members, employed by EDN. At the Regional Office we studied, EDN's programmes were undertaken through four departments: microfinance, health, self help group (SHG) and agriculture. Except in microfinance, the executives were mostly target community members. They were field based, held membership in SHGs and embedded themselves in the community; working closely to identify community needs and engaging them in the product/service development process. The middle managers closely monitored the work of executives and also engaged directly with the target community through regular field interactions.

SHGs are voluntary groups of 10–20 individuals who come together with the primary purpose of saving money and using it to develop micro-enterprises. In India, SHGs developed as social structures which could extend financial services to the poor in underdeveloped regions who did not have access to formal banking services and financial loans due to lack of assets and guarantees for loans. SHGs, as self-organized and self-managed groups, gradually began to be recognized as formal and responsible bodies, and identified as legal entities, eligible for financial transactions like opening bank accounts and obtaining loans. Simultaneously, SHGs also promoted savings within the group as well as enabled intra-group loans for self use with minimal rates of interest.

SHGs in India were, and still are, primarily groups of women, focusing on developing economic freedom for themselves and generating provision of money under reasonable terms for their beneficial use in the underdeveloped and developing regions of the country. By now, it is fairly recognized that SHGs have emerged as a successful social experiment and community experience overall. Hence,

currently, the trend towards emergence of men SHGs and youth SHGs are also noticeable.

When EDN was formed, it was envisaged as an organization for providing training to its target community members to develop Self Help Groups. SHG development process included its creation-formation, educating members about its functioning and procedures, teaching about and facilitating savings and inter-loaning between members, linking the SHG with the banks, and so on. On their part, EDN also saw SHG as an entry point into the target community for effecting holistic community development through interventions and services such as women empowerment, microenterprise development, microfinance, creation of political-environmental-social awareness, promotion of education and health-sanitation, vocational training and addressing other relevant community issues.

SHG as a *concept* and as a *social structure* emerged as a critical boundary object between the middle managers and executives of EDN and the target community. All departments of EDN utilized SHG as a critical base to connect with the target community and to develop and deliver products and services such as assessing need for loans and connecting to banks, identifying health problems and educating them on health, and assessing the progress of SHGs in terms of savings.[5] The concept of SHG was understood commonly both from a *technical* as well as an *operational* perspective between departments in EDN, and was used as a base for inter-departmental interactions and knowledge sharing.

The SHG[6] gained identity as a group with certain established processes and became the core around which different stakeholders could interact. For the community, it was a group that enabled them to save money, get microfinance and facilitate their economic development. For EDN (its executives and middle managers), the SHG was a vehicle to learn about the target community, develop and deliver its services, and gain community acceptance and co-operation. Interactions in the SHG enabled EDN to understand their contextual realities, this tacit knowledge feeding into learning for developing and delivering community specific services by each of their departments. Figure 2 depicts the above description.

Through the SHG, the target community actively engaged in the process of service delivery of EDN. Regular SHG meetings were conducted involving the middle managers, executives and the target community, and revolved around two aspects: SHG's financial status and its loan requirements, and discussion of topics such as ideas for new services and current community problems and possible solutions. For instance, some of these meetings pointed to the need for health education, especially among women in the village. Based on this input, EDN developed health education as a separate department, and employed and trained

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[5] It may be noted that the SHG was not the only boundary object or mode of connecting to the target community for all departments of EDN, as some departments had developed additional boundary objects as well. However, SHG was a central boundary object in EDN.

[6] There were many SHGs in practice. Here we use SHG as singular, to just convey its concept and role.
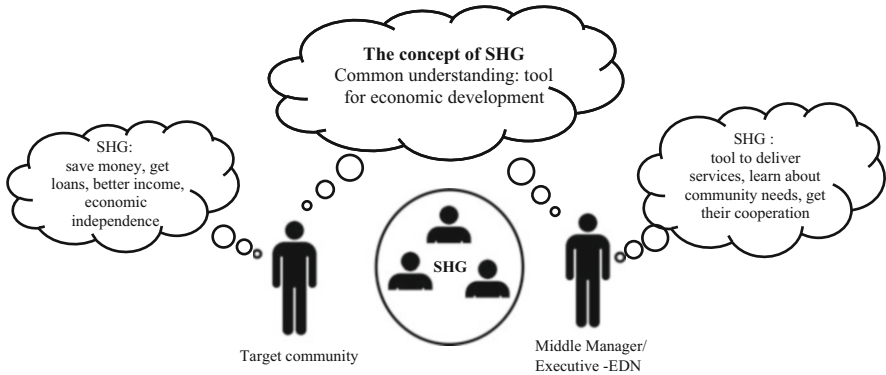
Fig. 2 The concept of SHG as a boundary object

Fig. 3 SHG as a social structure with its processes as a central boundary object

women from the target community as Village Health Guides, who, then provided health education and helped the community to connect with the State Health Services. These services were again delivered primarily through SHG meetings. Thus, SHG became a social structure, and through its processes, evolved as a boundary object, providing a common base for the different stakeholders to come together, interact and act (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 4 Loans box and register as boundary objects

Other Supporting Boundary Objects in EDN

Development of SHG as a central boundary object between EDN and the target community was supported through other boundary objects as well. In addition to SHG *processes* such as meetings, SHG *artifacts* such as the *loans box* and *loans register* were important objects around which EDN's interactions with the target community occurred. The loans box and register represented the amount of savings of the SHG, as well as provided basis for inter-loaning between its members, thus indicating the outcomes of collaboration between the Social Enterprise and the target community. For EDN, the loans register also provided formally recorded indicators of economic activity, development and progress (or otherwise) of SHG members, which became vital inputs to formulate and support developmental and income generating activities in the region. More importantly, interactions around the 'numbers' provided detailed information to EDN's middle managers about the social context, which was useful in developing community specific services (see Fig. 4), as is evident from the following narration:

Middle manager, *SHG*, *EDN*: After making SHG, our purpose is to attach them [the target community] to some income generation activity so that they also feel that their life is improving... we give them options, like some people are good at embroidery... we have a training centre... but suppose they cannot leave the house, we get them trained in the village itself. For example, if there are women of a community who say we cannot leave the house, we have children etc., so we employ a trainer who trains them for 3–4 months in their locality.

Therefore, *the SHG—a social structure*, *its processes and artifacts*—acted as boundary object for knowledge sharing and collaboration between the target community, and the executives and middle managers of the Social Enterprise (EDN) in the service development and delivery process. It enabled effective learning
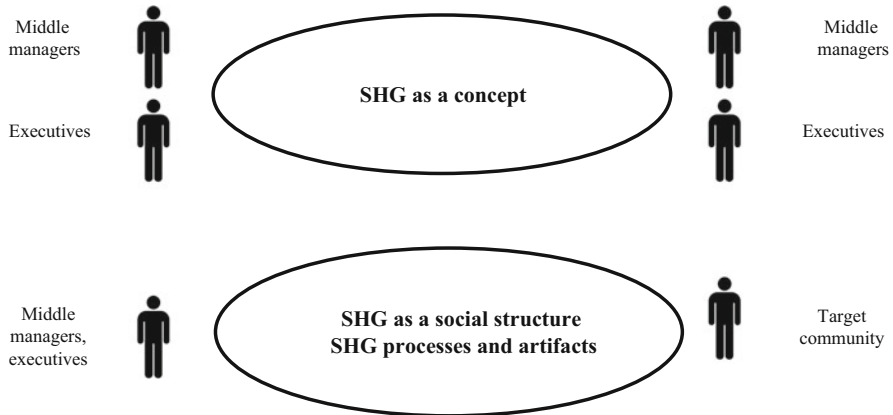
Fig. 5 Boundary objects between different stakeholders in EDN

interactions, and mutual engagement between the SE and the target community, thus enabling the SE to develop greater insights into the target community context and requirements, as well as enabling the target community to actively participate in the service delivery process. Figure 5 summarizes this role of SHG and other supporting boundary objects.

Society for Social Action (SSA): The Educational Programme and School as Boundary Objects

Society for Social Action (SSA) was established in 1997 in Pune (in Maharashtra, another Indian State) and worked with migrant stone quarry workers communities spread over 18 districts of the State. Being migrants, these workers were not part of the municipal corporation or other local governments of the region, and therefore did not receive any social security or other citizen benefits. They lived in the area of the stone quarry itself, which had high probability of accidents and health hazards, and without access to health, education, electricity and governmental supply of rationed food grains.

SSA, headed by a couple (husband as Executive Director and wife as Project Director; who together acted as CEOs), was involved in 11 different programmes with these migrant workers: innovative education, residential schools, supplementary nutrition, community health and safety, women empowerment, youth development, worker cooperatives, legal aid and counseling, informal worker organizations, advocacy for policy change and developing study resources and training. SSA's Head Office housed the support functions with seven middle managers looking after the above programmes. They also worked in the field co-coordinating programme implementation at the regional offices with the help

of executives who were part-time teachers belonging to the target community and nearby areas.

One of the earliest initiatives of SSA was the *innovative education programme* (for children of the migrant workers), rooted in contextual relevance, conducted in local language, developing/using contextually recognizable/available study tools/ materials, and so on. The programme covered 119 children in 1997–1998 and grew to include over 3,550 by 2010–2011. These children varied in their ages (from about 3 to 15 years), lived near the quarries in hazardous conditions (taking care of younger siblings or forced into child labour in the highly accident prone mines), were deprived of normal education, and were either illiterate or dropouts. Through the *innovative education programme*, SSA focused on working with the migrant worker families for regularization of their children's education.

The structure, curriculum and processes of the programme were developed by the CEOs. Middle managers implemented it in the field through the executives, gathered performance data, and took care of operational issues and problems encountered in implementation; referring any novel and other decision oriented issues to the CEOs. The executives (also called as 'animators') developed innovative educational tools, and monitored and reported students' progress regularly to SSA office.

In this process of development and delivery of the innovative education programme, we observed and inferred that the *programme* (that is, the *concept of innovative education pursued* itself) and the *schools* in the community became the *central boundary objects* around which SSA (the Social Enterprise) and the target community converged. Vertical (i.e. hierarchical) knowledge sharing, and problem deliberations and solution development between CEOs, middle managers and executives took place keeping the above concept of education as central. Executives and middle managers worked closely with the target community to deliver the programme and to bring back any issues that occurred in the delivery process, thus acting as boundary spanners. However, for further effectiveness in programme development and to make strategic changes as suited, the CEOs also directly worked with the target community (see Fig. 6).

In order to effectively develop and utilize the concept of education as a central boundary object, several other supporting boundary objects were also developed (see Fig. 7). Executives in SSA, who acted as teachers, were target community members. They were not highly educated and their teaching was chiefly in their regional language-Marathi. Context of the target community was also unique— migrant workers who came from different parts of the country and speaking many different languages, with largely uneducated children of all ages, who would also sometimes work in the quarries. Since the psycho-social characteristics of these children had its own uniqueness, use of special pedagogical techniques was essential and key to the success of the programme. While the syllabus and textbooks were adopted from the government schools, pedagogical techniques had to be different. The required pedagogical modifications were brought in through external experts (as trainers) and by the CEOs' own qualifications in the area. For training local
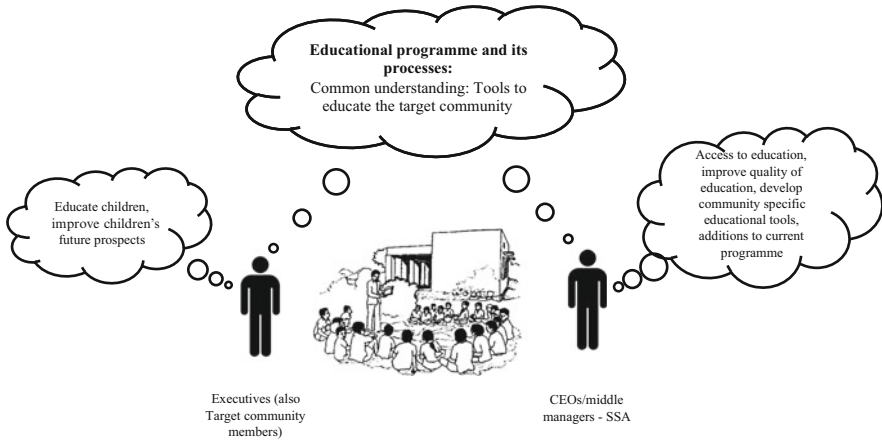
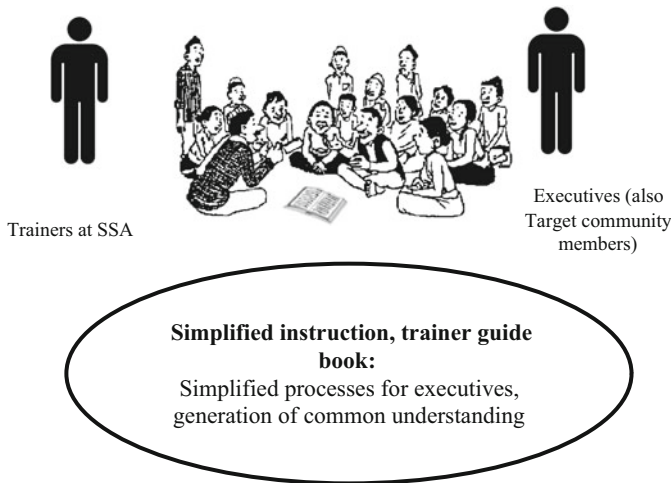Fig. 6 *Educational programme* as boundary object

Fig. 7 Supporting boundary objects in SSA

teachers in this pedagogy, the most important boundary object was the use of regional language and simplified processes to communicate with them:

Executive, *SSA*: We have different durations of trainings, we are trained about the syllabus, how to play with the children, which games can be played, what and how to teach the children (*Boundary object—simplified teaching processes*).

Middle manager (district supervisor), *SSA*: I have taught [in the school] for 6 months. I got 7 days training. In the training I was taught how to talk to the workers [target community], understand their context and then talk to them, how to tell the parents about education for their children. Then I was taught that if we

start teaching the children immediately when they come to school, they will run away, they do not know what is education. So first we have to teach them games, teach them through games, songs, then take their introduction. . . . (*Boundary object—simplified teaching processes*).

In addition, a trainer guideline book in 'Marathi' was also developed for teachers, which enumerated in detail what all were required to be done in the school. This guideline enabled monitoring, evaluation and training by SSA on the one side, and independent management of schools by the teachers and trainers on the other. Importantly, interactions between the CEOs, middle managers and executives revolved around the contents of the guidebook and its implementation as the base:

State coordinator, SSA: We have a guideline [named *Margdarshika* in Marathi], we use this to train and teach in the school (*Boundary object—printed trainer guide book*).

Further, to interact effectively with the target community—that is, the children—and to educate them, locally meaningful and relevant boundary objects had to be developed innovatively, in addition to the books—for instance, using *stones* as teaching tools. Since the children were unlikely to relate to items they have not seen (e.g. an apple or ice cream), but would understand items they saw in their day to day surroundings such as stones, teaching using stones and other objects available in the community context enabled ease of learning and translation with the target community (see Fig. 8):

CEO, *SSA*:....we realized that these workers, are illiterate and [their] children are grown up in age and have never gone to school. So ....we realized that if you make a 10 year old child sit in 1st standard, the child wouldn't be interested and would sit in the class for some time and slowly get out of the class and run away. So we realized that we have to provide education according to their understanding, according to their age group. So that is why we had to develop the curriculum according to the age group and the intelligence of the child. So how could we do that, so we take up the examples—the child understands what is Bhakri [Marathi for bread], if I tell the person about bread, bread is an English word, my child might not have seen bread in his life whereas they are eating Bhakri in day to day life and is made by their mother, they see, young girls make Bhakri. So we took up Bhakri as a subject. So now they have to discuss on Bhakri. I as a teacher don't have to explain to them, but they know better than me what is Bhakri, how is it made, from where it has come and how it is earned, means, in order to get Bhakri how much they have to work, hard work is put behind this Bhakri. So that way we had to develop in a different way of understanding. Otherwise [teaching them] A for apple [and similarly Hindi alphabets], they have never seen an apple so how will they understand. So we use their own language which they can understand.... Similarly, stones. . . they are working in stones, they see it daily. . .that became very easy for us to make children understand (*Boundary object—local objects*).
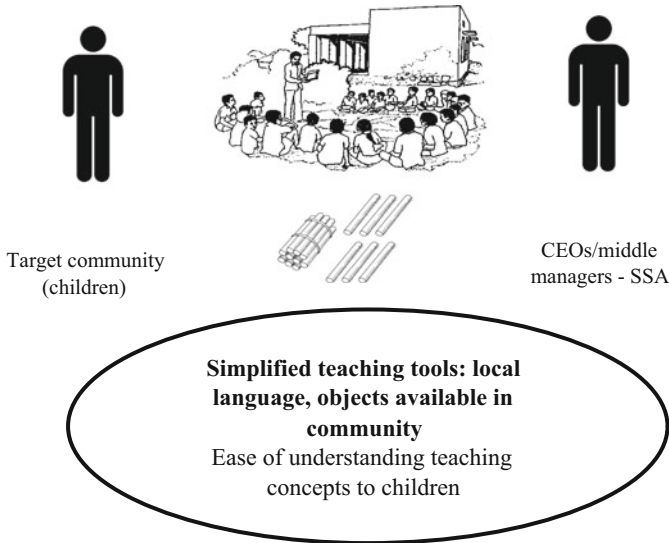
Fig. 8 Supporting boundary objects in SSA

We observed that in the work of SSA, interactions with the target community leading to significant inputs in developing community specific programmes, also occurred through *schools* (established in the target community) as *structural boundary objects*. The schools became a central boundary object around which many important community specific issues, even unrelated to educating the children, began to get common attention and action for redressal/resolution. As *CEO of SSA* stated:

We adopted a model of an educational programme. . .take education to their doors, and through the education programme, initially non-formal education programme, that brought all women, men and all children of all ages into the stream and then we slowly tried to classify them age wise and provide them say Balwadis [play school for small children], informal education and then realized that girls' problem of child marriages was very high, and superstitious practices were very high, so slowly for the last 15 years making the education as a point of revolution. . .(*Boundary object—school*) then while teaching in the school there were other issues—like sexual harassment issues came in, there were no ration cards, because of no ration cards they had no access to subsidized public food systems, they were not in the voting list, they were not in the census, they were not able to access any welfare schemes like the widows welfare schemes. People dying in accidents, there would be no compensation at all for them, the company would just pack up the body, take it to civil hospitals, government hospitals and pack it back home. So we all saw these conditions with open eyes and we started taking up the issues one after the other, say ration cards on a mass scale.
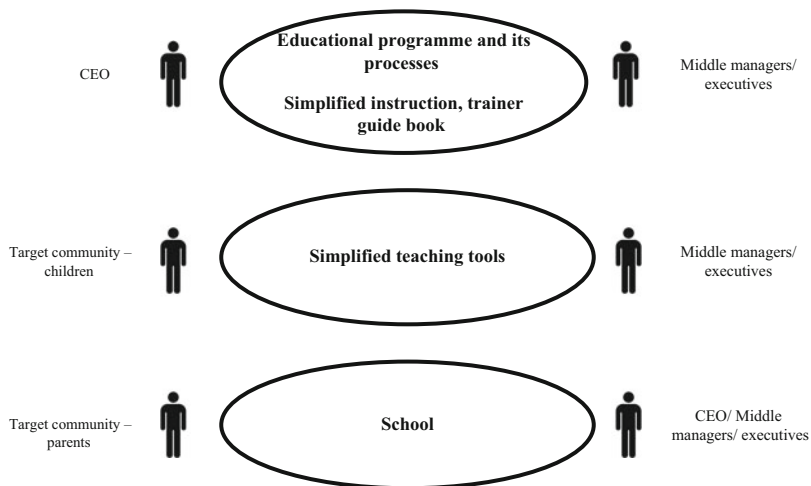
Fig. 9 Boundary objects between different stakeholders in SSA

CEO-2, *SSA*:...we used to give them various types of education where parents also
used to come and sit. It's not only bookish knowledge, take the book, make them
read and write but more so what type of life they must lead. That was more
important. We used to teach them about health, legal aid, about laws related to
children, workers women (*Boundary object—school*).

Figure 9 summarizes the facilitative role played by the education programme,
the school and other supporting boundary objects in SSA. Importantly, the SSA
experience also signifies a greater and deeper sociological role for the school when
it acted *as a central boundary object* between the Social Enterprise and the Target
Community. In addition to facilitating educational activities, the school also pro-
vided a means to the Social Enterprise to gain favourable access into the commu-
nity, learn about them and develop integrated programmes for their development. It
became a centre for collaboration on multiple fronts between the community and
the SE, and provided a common ground for the two entities to come together and
interact.

Education Foundation (EF): The Competency Framework as a Core Boundary Object

Identifying lack of quality in the delivery of primary education in Government
schools in India as a major deterrent to educating a vibrant young community
nationally, Education Foundation (EF), established in 2007, set its objective on
developing a comprehensive action plan to train and equip Principals/Head-Masters
(HMs) of these schools with relevant competencies to achieve this, resulting in two

intertwined programmes: the Principal Leadership Development Programme (PLDP), and the Gandhi Fellowship Programme (GF). At its organizational level, EF consisted of a CEO and support staff at the Head Office, and middle managers and executives at the Regional Office where the programmes were developed and delivered. These executives were long-term interns with EF (usually for 2 years), field based, and engaged with the HMs to deliver the services.

At EF, we studied the Principal Leadership Development Programme (PLDP). It spanned a period of 3 years split into time periods of 4 months each, and focused on developing four sets of leadership competencies in the Head-Masters: personal, instructional, institutional and social. Each 4 months period began with a Kick Start Workshop (KSW) around a specific theme, and culminated in planning activities for that period, termed as the Academic Support Programme. Following this, the long-term interns worked closely with the HMs to implement the planned activities, providing required support as per programme objectives. Subsequently, in another workshop that took place every month and attended by the interns, Head-Masters and Programme Managers from EF, reflections on, learnings from and experience of the Academic Support Programme were shared and discussed, leading to programme monitoring, evaluation and planning for the next time period.

At the core of Education Foundation's activities was a *competency framework* describing the set of competencies required to be developed in Head-Masters of Government owned schools (i.e. EF's target community) to improve the public education system. In order to be effective in its services here, EF needed to come up with individual specific competency maps to enable personalized development of each Head-Master along the planned competencies, and to consequently improve educational practices in each school. The middle managers and executives of EF worked closely with the HMs to achieve this, through consistent and continuous mutual engagement and exchange of relevant information and knowledge between them. This process became possible and effective only when there was a common frame of reference or a boundary object between the two sides. The *competency framework* acted as the boundary object here.

In the Kick Start Workshops with which each of the 4 months PLDP time periods began, the EF managers explained the programme objectives for that time period, drawing specific attention of the executives and Head-Masters to the skills and indicative behaviours listed in the competency framework. While for the managers and executives of EF these competencies were the targets they wanted to achieve; for their target community (i.e. Head-Masters), these formed the skills they were willing to develop. Thus, while the two entities recognized the competency framework and comprehended it from their different perspectives, as a boundary object, it was the framework that enabled them to work together and to co-create field based action plans around it (see Fig. 10):

Middle manager [Dept. 2]: We introduced the idea of competencies in the workshop this time to share with the Headmasters that these are the competencies on which work is happening... so as to let them assess their competencies, where are they and if there is a scope to triangulate it with them.... These rubrics can be
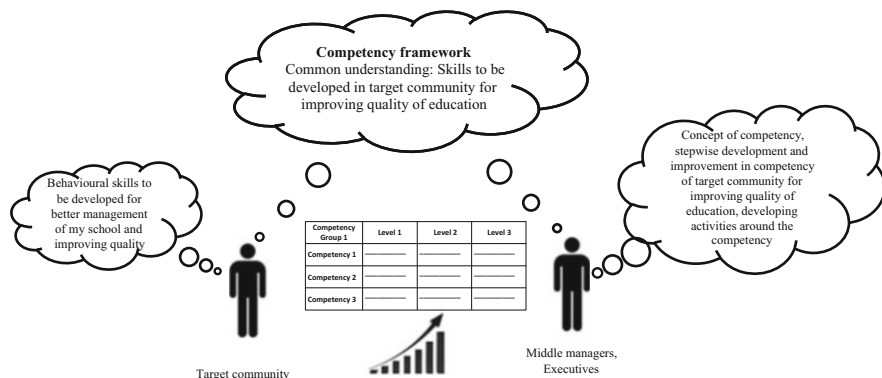
Fig. 10 Competency framework as boundary object

my aspiration, that today I am at the first or the second star [level of competency], and I have to reach the fourth level, to do that what is the vision I have for myself and my school. This was something that was appreciated, accommodated and worked in the field (*Boundary object—competency framework*)

Team member [Dept. 2]: [In] capacity building work [we undertake] . . . Kick Start Workshop. . .[conducted by middle managers, and attended by the target community and executives] . . . immediately after the 4 days [of workshop], at the 4th day, each Head-Master [target community] makes a plan. He creates a vision for his/her school, then share with the [executives]. That is the 1st version. . . then that plan is being reviewed [by EF managers and executives]. Then the executive makes another plan, version 2, again it happens mutually with the HM, because that is the first step towards self-drive....so ok. . .they are agreeing to do this. . .to target these competencies and reach these competencies. . . (*Boundary object—competency framework*)

The competency framework also acted as a timeline or a road map, referred to as a *temporal boundary object* (Yakura 2002). Timelines between EF executives and the Head-Masters were planned around the development of specific competencies, thus providing a sense of continuity and a vision of the final outcome, at the same time entailing different co-created activities at different levels to achieve the same, including making required modifications around them:

Long-term intern, *EF*: I was working on instructional competencies of my HMs. On a personal level, I had thought that I would work on empathy as a competency, but after spending 2 and 1/2 to 3 months I realized that it was a highly ambitious objective, which was not relating to their behaviour pattern.... now I had to not only change the objective but also the complete plan (*competency framework— also as a temporal boundary object; and negotiated changes based on progress*).

Thus, the *competency framework* acted as a boundary object, and in this instance, a temporal boundary object as well, between Education Foundation (the

Social Enterprise) and its target community, enabling and facilitating active participation, mutual engagement, co-creation and vision alignment around it.

Discussion and Conclusion

The boundary object is often inconspicuous and taken for granted, yet its criticality in learning interactions across boundaries and in the development of a community of practice around it cannot be undermined. Quoting empirical evidence from three Social Enterprises, in this chapter, we illustrate the important role played by boundary objects in enabling and facilitating learning, active participation, mutual engagement, co-creation and/or vision alignment around it, during boundary spanning activities in organizations.

As illustrated in this chapter, boundary objects provide a common frame of reference for individuals with different mental models to interact. They also enable interest alignment such that the groups can collaborate for a common purpose. This extends the current understanding of the boundary spanning function in the marketing perspective which has traditionally focused on unidirectional information acquisition role of the boundary spanner. We illustrate that successful boundary spanning is a complex interactional process which involves use of boundary objects to develop a common ground for sharing relevant knowledge. Without the boundary object, the consumer needs would not be commonly and effectively understood, resulting in a possible disconnect between the consumer requirements and the product/service delivered.

Further, interactions around the boundary object also include active participation, mutual engagement and co-creation with the consumers. This implies that the boundary spanning function extends beyond traditional information search to involve consumer as active parties and owners in the service development and delivery process. This connects with the user innovation literature (von Hippel 2005) which highlights the importance of involving lead users and consumers in product/service development. Our analysis furthers this understanding and indicates that boundary objects play a critical role in enabling consumers to relate to the product or service and innovate on it. This mutual engagement can enable development of collaborative innovations that can be commercialized by the organization.

By drawing insights from the learning across boundaries perspective, we enable the marketing domain to look beyond the notion of the boundary spanner as an acquirer of information to acknowledge the interactional nature of this role. By carefully examining the consumer context and engaging with them by employing relevant boundary objects, the boundary spanners can develop a greater connect, thus resulting in the identification of not only relevant knowledge for the organization, but also, with additional efforts, resulting in engagement of the consumers in the service development and delivery process.

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Boundary Spanning Challenges in a Co-Creative Enterprise: Lesson from Social Problem-Solving Collaborations

Satish K. Nair

Introduction

Boundary spanning functions have been well-documented in management literature (Aldrich and Herker 1977; Hoffman and Bateson 2006; Hepso 2008). The field of marketing, especially sales management, services marketing, customer relationship management, and product development, has realized the importance of boundary-spanning elements. Hult (2011) has attempted to synthesize 31 different organization theories and use the marketing insights culled from them to advance knowledge on the boundary spanning marketing organization.

Boundary spanning roles have been classified between two extremes: from subordinate service roles to professional service roles (Hoffman and Bateson 2006). Such classifications look at people roles from low-stature, front-line service providers or order-takers progressing up to those of professionals within organizations whose power is derived from their professional qualifications. As Hepso (2008) notes, boundary-spanners are formally and informally integrated in organizations that have institutionalized certain ways to coordinate activities. The study of boundary spanning roles entails investigation into boundary role stress. Weatherly and Tansik (1993) studied the effects of role stress, boundary spanning and control in studying the tactics used by customer-contact workers. Singh et al. (1996) documented extensive literature on boundary role stress, especially two of its constructs, viz., role ambiguity and role conflict. The focus of role stress studies have shifted from the individual to organizational influences. Johnson and Sohi (2013) have quoted extensively in their study of role stress brought about by positions occupied by organizational boundary-spanners. Role stress has also been studied along with intrinsic motivation for the mediating effect on employee

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creativity (Coelho et al.2011). The present chapter culls lessons from social problem-solving collaborations to understand boundary role stress in the context of the co-creative enterprise.

Conventional studies on boundary-spanning roles have treated consumers as the recipients of the marketing organization's service elements. In other words, the traditional system of understanding value creation in organizations assumed a company-centric system. With the changing role of the consumer being recognized and given importance in recent times, it becomes necessary to revisit the facets of boundary-spanning roles in organizations. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a) questioned the traditional system of company-centric value creation and proposed a new frame of reference centered on co-creation of value. The co-creation of value arising from various levels of consumer-company interactions has been conceptualized by the authors as a spectrum of co-creation experiences.

Objectives

The present chapter examines boundary spanning challenges in the era of co-creation, in light of the above. The boundary role stress and the individual as well as organizational influences mentioned above assume significance in the context of the new frame of reference centered on co-creation. The exploration involves detailed literature review of collaboration, co-creation, cross-sector collaborations and, specifically, social problem-solving collaborations.

The chapter is organized into four sections. After the introductory study on boundary spanning functions, the next section reviews further literature on collaboration and boundary spanning, setting the stage for an exploration of the specific type of collaboration that underpins this study. The third section presents the framework for the type of investigation conducted in this study, the cross-sector collaborations, involving nonprofits with corporate entities. The section studies various models of cross-sector collaborations and selects one such framework for its applicability in the context of the co-creative enterprise. This section distils lessons from research on such collaborative efforts.

The final section discusses the implications for research and practice. This section links cross-sector collaboration with co-creation and boundary spanning functions and proposes research questions that can be empirically tested.

In the chapter, the terms alliance, strategic alliance, collaboration, partnerships and cooperation are used interchangeably. Similarly, nonprofit, not-for-profit, social and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are used here to mean the same set of players who partner with business entities, or for-profits, in cross-sector collaborations.

Collaboration and Boundary Spanning

There is substantial literature on strategic alliances or collaboration between various stakeholders and the organization. As Prahalad and Krishnan (2002) state, dynamic collaboration in the value network (comprising of suppliers, customers and partners) is increasing. Organizations have accepted that it is important to collaborate with partners, suppliers, customers and sometimes competitors. There is also an increasing level of interest in the study of co-creation in recent times (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004b; Pater 2009; Ramaswamy and Gouillart 2010; Tanev et al.2010; Ramaswamy 2011; Stern 2011; Gouillart 2012; Levin and Pater 2012; Cavender and Kincade 2013; Ramaswamy and Ozcan 2013a, b).

While many sectors have taken to co-creation in recent times, practices in the hospitality industry are noted here for the variety of ways in which customer co-created innovations have come up in the hotel industry (Trejos 2013; O'Neill 2014). As Trejos (2013) notes, co-creation, or 'crowd-sourcing' opinions from the public, is another play for lucrative 'Millennial' travelers, whose purchasing power is rapidly rising (referring to those born in the 1980s to the early 2000s who have unique habits that are influencing hotel design).

Research into boundary spanning and collaboration can be seen to have its underpinnings in the theory of organizational learning. Senge, in his famous work, *The Fifth Discipline*, identified two distinct types of organizational learning behavior: adaptive learning and generative learning (quoted in Pitta and Franzak 1996). While the former focusses the organization on adapting to serve the market, the latter requires it to challenge its own assumptions about its mission, customers, competitors and strategy. There are three stage to organizational learning: information acquisition, information dissemination and shared interpretation (Sinkula 1994). In order to distinguish organizational learning from personal learning, Slater and Narver (1995) added two more components: information dissemination and accomplishing a shared interpretation. Pitta and Franzak (1996) have used this latter framework to understand boundary spanning product development in consumer markets. They observe that consumer input improves chances of product success, quoting research that support involving consumers at the idea-generation stage and, thence, from product development on. This assumes significance for the present chapter since an analogy is drawn from the first phase of a social problem-solving collaboration, the problem-setting phase.

Collaboration and Value Creation

Doz and Hamel (1998) identified three common, underlying value-creating logics of alliances: (1) gaining competitive capabilities through co-option; (2) leveraging cospecialized resources, and (3) gaining competence through internalized learning. They present a set of important questions to practitioners in assessing value creation

potential. The subject of collaboration has also been explained from various perspectives by other researchers. On the twin dimensions of the intensity of collaboration and prerequisites for collaboration, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2001) have developed a taxonomy of collaboration as co-creation of value.

Studies have shown that it is the type of organizations entering into strategic alliances that determine the success of the partnerships. It has been found that when organizations with distinctly complementary capabilities come together, the chances of success are the highest (Ghosh 2010). It is this complementary nature of capabilities for successful collaborations that has led to increasing interest in customers being coopted into various collaborative efforts by marketing organizations.

Co-Creation: Tapping into Consumer Creativity

As Stern (2011) contends, co-creation turns market research into a more dynamic and creative process. He further observes that co-creation works best when marketers build a strong community. The advent of social media has given impetus to the process of tapping into consumers' creativity. Gouillart (2012) has documented this aspect with the case of the British luxury brand, Burberry. Describing the array of co-creation interactions developed by Burberry, Gouillart states that while the social platform is a key enabler, the ultimate power of the Burberry model resides in the co-creation forces it unleashes between the firm's internal sales, service, and marketing people and the firm's customers.

Tapping into this creativity proactively entails a drastic change in the way organizational communication is carried out. Recognizing this challenge, leaders in the co-creative enterprises take the bold step of relinquishing some measure of control over the development and distribution of organizational content. They enable and empower a wide range of people to shape and to spread company messages, not just internally but also, in some cases, externally (Groysberg and Slind 2012). Such a leadership role is echoed by Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2013a) who say that CEOs of the future must be orchestrators of co-creative engagement everywhere in the ecosystem in which the enterprise participates. They state that creating value together also means creative engagement that harnesses the collective intelligence of people. There are many examples of crowd sourcing, open innovation, and new business models that tap into the creativity of people from anywhere in the world today. In an ongoing Harvard Business Review Online Forum on the topic of the CEO's role, the two authors talk about platforms of engagement, based on human experiences, as the new loci of value creation and therefore the new engines of capitalism. Such experience-based engagement platforms —assemblages of people, interfaces, processes, and artifacts whose configurations evolve with value-generating experiences—are the key to unlocking the next sources of value in the system.

Elaborating on this theme in another work, Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2014) claim the payoffs of building co-creative enterprises include greater creativity and productivity, lower costs, lower employee turnover, new business models, and new sources of stakeholder and enterprise value. In a truly co-creative enterprise, leaders at all levels must go beyond the conventional institution-centered "cascade and align" view of management to an individual-centered "engage and co-create" view. To do this, organizations must design and support engagement platforms for, and with, individuals that give them the opportunity to debate, discuss, and establish priorities and participate in more co-creative fashion.

The present chapter recognizes these developments and emerging frameworks while reviewing boundary spanning roles in the context of the co-creative enterprise.

Cross-Sector Collaborations

While collaboration between similar organizations have been well-documented, cross-sector ones, involving non-profits with corporations, have not been studied as much (Austin 2000a). Over the past three decades, cross-sector collaboration for social problem solving has emerged in practice, with increasing attention from scholars. This section studies frameworks of cross-sector collaboration developed in recent times with a view to understanding boundary spanning challenges in the era of co-creation. Works of Logsdon (1991), Austin (2000b), Mirvis and Googins (2006) and King (2007) are studied and the framework of social problem-solving collaborations (Logsdon 1991) is applied here for addressing the challenges of boundary-spanners in co-creative enterprises.

Understanding Cross-Sector Collaboration

Tennyson et al. (2008) note that economic, social, cultural and environmental challenges are no longer simple and no longer simply local or national phenomena. As the world becomes increasingly complex, pluralist, crowded, polarized, unpredictable, turbulent, politically unstable and vulnerable, the authors found that cross-sector partnerships have grown as a response to these challenges. Cross-sector partnerships can be understood as collaborations between organizations from different sectors of society (such as business, government, civil society) that are typically put in place to achieve sustainable development goals.

Selsky and Parker (2005) conducted literature survey to study cross-sector partnerships in four 'arenas': business-nonprofit, business-government, government-nonprofit and trisector. Consolidating recent literature to highlight developments in various disciplines for organizational researchers, the authors bracketed prior studies into three 'clusters', based on partnership formation activities,

implementation activities and outcomes of such partnerships. Of the four arenas, the business-nonprofit partnerships are of interest in the present chapter. Studies on the partnership formation activities have revealed that whereas nonprofits' motives tend to be altruistic, businesses partner to pursue self-interests like enhancing corporate image, garnering social capital and accessing existing networks, selling products, and attracting, motivating and retaining desirable employees. Another important element of study at the partnership formation stage relates to trust between partners. While trust in business traditionally is based on constrained contractual exchanges, the same in case of nonprofits is based on shared values. The implementation activities relate to partnership building and maintenance, governance mechanisms and managerial requirements. The dimensions of trust, power and stakeholder relations also feature significantly in terms of understanding the implementation activities of such partnerships. Outcomes of business-nonprofit partnerships have been measured at three levels: direct impact on the issue and its stakeholders; impact on building capacity, knowledge, or reputational capital that can attract new resources; and influence on social policy or system change (Selsky and Parker 2005). These observations have significant implications for co-creative enterprises where the boundary-spanning roles of specific individuals and departments can show similar dynamics of interactions as exhibited in the three 'clusters' of business-nonprofit partnerships.

Dahan et al. (2010) studied corporate-NGO collaboration in the context of multinational enterprises entering developing markets. The study reveals that, in such cross-sector collaborations, partners contribute complementary capabilities along each stage of the value chain to develop products or services that neither could produce alone, creating and delivering value in novel ways while minimizing costs and risks. Another recent study revealed seven emerging trends in business-NGO partnerships in India (Pyres 2011). These were identified as growing business demand for community programmes and engagement with NGOs; moral imperatives as strong as business case for driving corporate engagement; emerging innovative approaches from business, government and NGOs; corporate foundations are leading the shift from philanthropic giving to more strategic development; growing demand for employee engagement; increasing recognition of the role of civil society and the role and drive for NGO transparency and professionalism; and, growth in demand for partnering expertise and intermediaries/brokers.

Lessons from Social Alliance Challenges

Berger et al. (2004) noted that even the most successful social alliances can be fraught with problems that can significantly impede or undermine their activities. They discussed six categories of problems: misunderstandings, misallocation of costs and benefits, mismatches of power, mismatched partners, misfortunes of time and mistrust. Many of the problems are predictable and can be pre-empted or at least mitigated if they are anticipated and dealt with appropriately. Many of these

problems are rooted in cultural differences between the sectors. Peloza and Falkenberg (2009) investigated the aspect further in the context of more complex types of corporate-NGO partnerships. While cross-sector collaborations have been touted as an important breakthrough in scaling up sustainable development, it is worrying to note that levels of mistrust between the two sides are, if anything, on the rise (Confino 2013). Confino elaborates upon this mistrust between corporates and NGOs based on an uneasy level of acceptance. He states that NGOs are dating corporates as a matter of necessity, given that government aid budgets are being slashed and individual donors are on the wane. On the other hand, companies would also, given the chance, prefer to be left alone to get on with running their businesses, but recognize they need to woo civil society to minimize reputational risk.

Another dimension to cross-sector collaboration challenges occur when the partners must tackle complex, ever-changing problems, and pursue solutions that are neither obvious nor stable (Lavizzo-Mourey 2014). Bates (2013) has identified challenges at different levels of the partnering process. These include conflicting needs of the various stakeholders involved and a lack of awareness, by the partners working to solve a social problem, of the top unmet needs that ought to be addressed.

Research has also highlighted the necessity to distinguish between stakeholder issues and social issues in terms of organization's social responsiveness. This is so because corporations and their managers manage relationships with their stakeholders and not with society (Clarkson 1995). This was one of the important conclusions of a decade-long study carried out with the objective of developing a framework and methodology, grounded in the reality of corporate behavior, for analyzing and evaluating corporate social performance. It is postulated here that the conclusion has significance in terms of understanding the ecosystem of a co-creative enterprise. Just as managers in a social relationship practice stakeholder management, and identify primary stakeholders and secondary ones, it is conjectured here that, in a co-creative enterprise, managers engage with different customers with differing levels of engagement and importance.

Peloza and Falkenberg (2009) contend that although excellent progress has been made in providing guidance to managers on building deeper relationships between their firm and NGOs, relatively little attention has been paid to the relationships that include multiple firms and/or multiple NGOs and the full spectrum of collaboration opportunities. They outlined a framework describing four types of relationships where a firm can partner with either a single or multiple NGOs and enter into a relationship on its own or through collaboration with other firms. Key contextual considerations for each of the four possible relationships were then derived. There is scope to argue on similar lines that a co-creative enterprise can find its multiple parts engaging with multiple customers, either on solving modules of a single problem or in developing separate solutions or products.

It is posited here that dynamics of interrelationship problems similar to that identified in the paragraphs above can be found in the case of companies and customers moving towards a co-creative framework.

Investigating Stakeholder Interrelationships in Social Problem-Solving Collaborations

Logsdon (1991) focused on the first phase of collaboration, the problem-setting phase, and proposed a framework to understand two essential factors for cross-sector collaboration. This is based on Gray's three-phase typology of collaboration: (1)problem-setting phase; (2)direction-setting phase; (3) implementation phase (quoted in Ansell and Gash 2007). The two factors identified by Logsdon as essential for cross-sector collaboration are discussed here in the context of company-customer co-creation. The first involves the interests of the two organizations in solving a social problem relative to their overall interests. The second factor is the organization's perceived interdependence with other groups as necessary for the social problem to be addressed effectively. A 2×2 matrix involving the two factors reveals four categories and approaches to dealing with an important social problem. The matrix has been used by Logsdon (1991) to explain how organizational commitment to cross-sector collaboration evolves. Two logical paths, viz. (a) interdependence to interest, and (b) interests to interdependence, are identified as alternative first steps in the problem-setting phase of collaboration. This is expounded upon in the next section in order to draw implications for research and practice.

Whereas Logsdon studied interests of the players involved and their perceived interdependence, Austin (2000b) focused on the temporal dimension of business-nonprofit alliances. In this work, Austin identified three stages: philanthropic, transactional and integrative, where the level of engagement of the two partners moves from low to high. How four key strategic dimensions, viz. collaboration mind-set, strategic alignment, collaboration value and relationship management, played out in the three stages of alliance relationship were then explained. However, Austin's framework has been consistently reviewed and revised by him and his various collaborators, which includes addition of a fourth stage and identification of collaborative value creation components (Austin and Seitanidi 2012).

Mirvis and Googins (2006) identified five stages in the development of 'corporate citizenship', using the latter term synonymous with corporate social responsibility. Akin to Austin's study, they investigated seven dimensions of citizenship that vary with each stage. While their study did factor in the partnering aspects, the focus was on the business entity. Another framework that also studied stakeholder relationships used transaction cost analysis to hypothesize how collaboration between corporations and environmental stakeholder groups are structured (King 2007). This study tracked the progression of relationship between the two partners from antagonism to one of 'constructive engagement'.

While all the four frameworks consider the temporal dimension to investigate the progression of alliance dynamics, Logsdon's 2×2 framework considers alternate paths or patterns through which collaborations can evolve. These patterns can be suitable for longitudinal analysis of cross-sector collaborations. It is submitted here that such a framework is more dynamic in its explanatory power and, hence,

more suitable for understanding business-customer co-creative environment. This aspect is elucidated in the following section while drawing lessons from the alternate patterns of evolution in the formation of such cross-sector collaborations.

Learning from Cross-Sector Collaborations: Implications for Research and Practice

The learning from the paths for the evolution (as enunciated in the preceding section) of organization commitment to cross-sector collaboration is that motivation to participate develops in predictable sequences. Such a lesson lends itself to its applicability in company-customer co-creation relationships. The chapter concludes based on inferences from the above discussions and suggests implications for further research and practice. One such proposition is that company—customer collaborations, or co-creations, exhibit similarity with company—nonprofit (cross-sector) collaborations in terms of partnership formation activities, implementation activities and outcomes of such partnerships.

Lesson from Logsdon's Framework

Gray identified six issues to be addressed during the first phase of collaboration, the problem-setting phase: (a) a common definition of the problem, stemming from interdependence; (b) a commitment to collaborate, based on both the interests of the organization and conditions relating to trusting other potential participants; (c) identification of other stakeholders with which to collaborate; (d) acceptance of the legitimacy of the other stakeholders; (e) the presence of a convener to bring the parties together; and (f) identification of which resources are available and which are needed for the collaboration to proceed (quoted in Logsdon 1991). Logsdon firmly believed that two factors are essential prior conditions for an organization to begin to consider before getting into any collaborative effort. These are (a) interests or stakes of the organization in the outcome and (b) its perceived interdependence with other groups in dealing with the social problem (Fig. 1).

Cell 1 indicates a low level of interest of either partner in the social cause. It is imperative that, for the collaboration to succeed, such players should be taken out of this area of neglect. Cell 2 indicates a situation when either player shows little interest in committing resources to the social cause despite realizing that interdependence is the way out to solve the social problem. This can result in, what Logsdon terms, 'free rider problem', when such a player assumes that the other partner will participate in the joint effort and it does not need to commit too much of time and/or resources. Cell 3 indicates a 'lone ranger problem' where a player may assume that it has the wherewithal to address a social problem on its
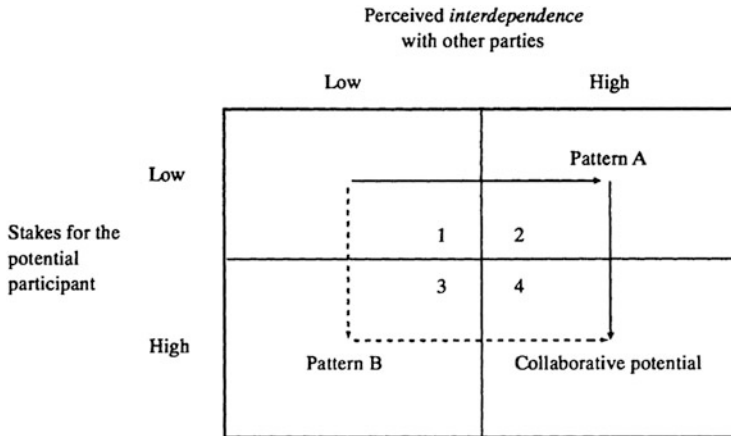
Fig. 1 Interest (stake)—interdependence matrix. *Source*: Logsdon (1991), p. 31

own. It may also occur in case the other partners are not easily identifiable to support or complement the process of addressing the social problem. Cell 4 indicates a level of coherence in the objectives of both set of partners, the business and the nonprofit. An organization that reaches this level is ready to evaluate the other conditions for success in the problem-setting phase of collaboration.

The above figure is also useful in explaining how organizational commitment to cross-sector collaboration evolves. Two patterns of evolution were suggested by Logsdon, based on the path that can be traversed from Cell 1 to Cell 4. The path 1→2→4, represented as 'Pattern A' in Fig. 1, indicates the formation of a collaboration to advance a shared vision. The path 1→3→4, represented as 'Pattern B' in Fig. 1, involves a conflict resolution collaboration (Logsdon 1991). The efficacy of this framework in explaining the co-creative enterprise is evident from the following explanation. Which of the two factors lend to stronger predictor of collaboration as well as whether the strength of each factor has a role in effective company-customer co-creation partnerships are areas that need to be empirically tested as the business world increasingly accepts an ecosystem emphasizing on co-creation. Another area of scrutiny that can be studied using this framework can involve case studies of failures in co-creation. The framework is important from the perspective of the practice of company-customer collaborations in the future. It provides important insights into where and how to intervene to move companies and select customers toward co-creation relationships.

In conclusion, it is observed that important lessons for the emerging co-creation ecosystem can be drawn from cross-sector collaborations. There is scope for syncretizing boundary role-stress studies cited in this chapter (Weatherly and Tansik 1993; Singh et al.1996; Johnson and Sohi 2013; Coelho et al.2011) with social alliance challenges. Boundary-spanning roles will also need to be reviewed in the case of co-creation. Roles that were well 'within' the organization and 'far away' from the conventional boundary-spanning ones will now need to be looked

as boundary-spanners. For example, research and development personnel will need to work closely with the customers. Similarly, product management teams will find a greater role to play in case of organizations fostering customer co-creation. It is posited that the challenges in dealing with such new boundary spanning roles can be explained using social problem-solving collaborations. This has important practical implications for marketing organizations.

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