INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE EMPLOYEE'S EMOTIONS ON THE CUSTOMER'S PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

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Introduction

The recent researches show that there is a strong relationship between emotions of a customer service employee and customer's purchase behaviour. These researches prove that emotions are transferred from employees to customers and vice versa. This process affects: employees' satisfaction and their work commitment and results in customers' satisfaction and their purchases behaviour (Robbins, Judge, 2012, pp. 162-186). Some researches also show that this influence might not be symmetric (Jeon, Choi, 2012, pp. 332-341).

It has been also noticed that the key emotional factor that influence customers' satisfaction and their purchase behaviour is customer service employee's job satisfaction (ibidem).

1. Emotions in Organizations

According to Phillips and Gully, emotions are intense, short-term psychological and behavioural reactions to a specific object, person or event that prepare us to respond to it (Phillips, Gully, 2012, p. 146). Moods, in contrary, are long-term emotional states and are not directed toward anything in particular. They are less intense and can last for longer than emotions (Moorhead, Griffin, 2012, pp. 63-82).

Everybody experiences emotions and moods on daily basis at work and they play a significant role in our behaviour. Except a physical and intellectual work, employees work emotionally. An Emotional Work is an extent to which the organization requires emotions that should be involved during the interactions with customers. As an example: from the airlines employees it is expected to demonstrate the happy mood, from the workers of the funeral company a sad appearance, and from a doctor a neutral emotions are expected (Robbins and Judge..., op. cit.).

Emotional Work exists in every job and at every work. Managers require form their employees a proper emotional approach toward customers and colleagues. This sounds reasonable as long as these emotions correspond with the real feelings of employees. But, employees may be also required to demonstrate emotions that are in contrary to their real ones. As an example: it is required a polite behaviour toward colleague who one knows that talk behind his/her back. Such a contradiction in demonstration of emotions is called an emotional dissonance and may lead to frustration, anger, trauma, and eventually to emotional exhaust. Nonetheless, the work obliges a permanent cooperation with all parties and therefore a permanent proper behaviour. In such circumstances it is important to learn how to separate real emotions from the demonstrated ones. People generally know how to do it in various life situations: during wedding ceremonies they express happiness and during funerals sadness, no matter what the real emotions are (ibidem).

The same techniques can be used toward colleagues and customers, at work. In customer service work it is vital for business to recognize own emotions and control them, and recognize customers' emotions and respond to them in a way to meet their expectations and needs. Such ability is called an Emotional Intelligence (Gumińska, 2006, pp. 163-188). Boyatzis et al. suggest that "Emotional Intelligence is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation" (Boyatzis, Goleman, Rhee, 1999). Kelsey Rush explains that studies led by Dr Galit Meisler, from Haifa University in Israel, suggests a direct correlation between levels of Emotional Intelligence and work satisfaction. The results of the studies show that employees with high levels of Emotional Intelligence are more satisfied and committed to their job (http://kelseyrush..., 2013). Figure 1 shows the link between Emotional Intelligence and job satisfaction.

Fig. 1. Link between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction
Source: http://kelseyrush.com/2010/09/the-link-between-emotional-intelligence-job-satisfaction

This ability has been recently taken by managers under the consideration while recruiting staff for customer service positions. In a traditional management style the most important abilities were hard competences, so those that can be proved by e.g. certificates. In a modern management style the soft competence such as: Communication Skills and Emotional Intelligence are becoming equally important to hire the right people for the customer service position.

According to Martin Christopher, emeritus Professor of Marketing & Logistics at Cranfield School of Management at Cranfield University in the UK, there are at least three reasons for such managerial approach. Firstly, an organization should create a customer value through managing relations. Secondly, there is a need for creativity when developing new ways of delivering value to customers. And thirdly, there is a new trend in marketing called Service (http://www.consafelogistics...).

Also, according to Vargo and Lusch, a modern marketing in organizations should go away from a model where a dominant logic is based on the exchange of goods (goods-dominant logic) and switch to a new model focused on intangible resources, the co-creation of value, and organization–customer relationships. This trend has been called: Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo, Lush, 2004, pp. 1-17).

The Service-Dominant Logic recognizes experiences and emotions of both customers and customer service employees. Studies on Service-Dominant Logic provide new knowledge on value creation where value means not just fulfilling the customer's needs but creating emotional environment, that will build a long lasting impression in his/her minds. "Educated consumers may be no longer affected by advertisements when making a purchase decision. Rather, they rely heavily on peer opinions, communicated by viral marketing or word of mouth/mouse, and accessed through social media" (Edvardsson, Ng, Min, Firth, Yi, 2011, pp. 540-556).

2. Employee Commitment and Customer's Purchase Behaviour

Employee Commitment refers to an employee's level of job satisfaction with a particular organisation and its goals. Those customer service employees who are highly committed are also strong supporters of the values and goals of the organisation and are eager to make an effort to achieve these goals (www.einsteincollege...).

An affective organizational commitment appeals to employees' emotional attachment and involvement with the organization (ibidem). High organizational commitment leads to employee's work engagement and job satisfaction and thus affects customers' satisfaction and their purchase behaviours (Harter, Schmidt, Hayes, 2006, pp. 268-279). According to Hartline *et al.*, there are three main factors that affect customer's purchase intensions through employee's job satisfaction (Hartline, Ferrell, 1996, pp. 52-70). These factors are:
- empowerment,
- training,
- service rewards.

Empowerment refers to a situation in which managers give the customer service people on authority to make day-to-day decisions about job-related activities. It affects the initiation and determination of employee's task behaviour. Empowered customer service people can respond to customers' needs quickly and effectively. It makes employees more customer-focused, responsive and responsible as well as this improves their morale and self-image. Therefore, an organization should equip its employees with information and give them an authority to make independent decisions that can move forward the organization. Hartline and Ferrell underline the role of empowerment as customer service employees' requirement for flexibility to enable them to make on-the-spot decisions to fully satisfy customers' needs (ibidem).

Allowing customer service people to use their discretion in serving customers has positive influences on their job satisfaction, loyalty, and self-esteem (Lee, Nam, Park, Lee, 2006, pp. 251-264). In return, customers benefit from employees' empowerment through: more responsive service, complaints dealt quicker and higher quality service provided by the well-motivated staff. Steers suggests that an increase in use of empowerment as a component of organizational service orientation, leads to higher levels of employees' commitment and their job satisfaction and results in customers' satisfaction and their positive purchase behaviour (Steers, 2001, pp. 46-56).

Also, human relation skills are soft competences that are essential for all customer service employees. Various trainings play a significant role in gaining these skills. It was found that training affects organizational commitment, participant knowledge, and organization-related self-esteem (Lee et. Al., op. cit.). Lee *at al.* says that trainings not only increase employees' satisfaction with their jobs and workplace but mainly improve skills and abilities relevant to employees' tasks and their professional development, which positively influence customers' satisfaction and their purchase behaviour.

Customer service employees' behaviour is also influenced by clear, specific service reward programs. This means that rewarding and recognizing excellent service highly affects job performance, job satisfaction and employee commitment with an organization. According to Schlesinger and Heskett, although service reward does not influence employees' prosocial behaviour directly, but it is consistent with the claim that the linkage between reward and service performance increases service quality and organizational performance through satisfying customers' needs (Schlesinger, Heskett, 1991, pp. 71-81).

Jeon and Choi observe that supervisory behaviour has been found important in affecting employees' emotions, too. Supervisory behaviour refers mainly to organizational justice and supervisory support. When employees perceive fair treatment from the organization, they respond by delivering high quality service to their customers. Empirical studies also suggest that perception of fairness affects job satisfaction, which, in turn, positively affect job performance. These

studies predict that employees, who perceive fairness via appropriate rewards at the workplace, are more eager to deliver a high level of services in interaction with customers and this, in turn, increases customer's satisfaction and their purchase intentions (Jeon, Choi, op. cit.).

Additionally, employees' perception about supervisory degree of support and consideration from managers suggests that quality of customer service is highly related to leadership (Netemeyer, Boles, McKee, McMurrian, 1997, pp. 85-98). "Thus, this study posits that employees with high perceptions of leadership support, deliver a higher quality of customer service, and this enhance customer's satisfaction and affect positively their purchase behaviour" (Jeon, Choi, op. cit.).

3. Influence of Employee's Emotions on Customer's Emotions

Customer service employees' expression of emotions produce a corresponding emotional state in customers, for example: the exposure to smiling or frowning images produced corresponding changes in the facial expressions of viewers. Such behaviour is called an Emotional Contagion. Pugh found that when service employees smile, increase eye contact, display gratitude, and extend greetings, and as a result customers experience more positive emotions (Pugh, 2001, pp. 1-27). The Figure 2 shows links comprising both emotional contagion and affect infusion.
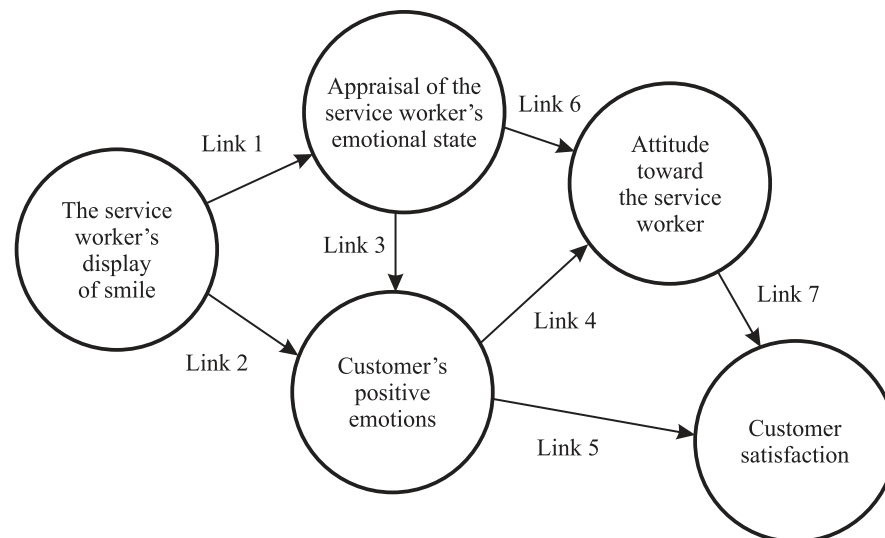

Fig. 2. Emotional contagion and affect infusion
Source: M. Söderlund, S. Rosengren, Revisiting the smiling service worker and customer satisfaction, "International Journal of Service Industry Management", 2008, Vol. 19, Iss. 5, pp. 552-574

Jeon and Choi say that employee displayed emotions are positively associated with customer's positive emotions and satisfaction. Customers often interpret an employee's emotional display as part of the service, suggesting that customers hold expectations about the display of positive emotions. Thus, an employee's displayed emotions will influence a customer's satisfaction. Previous research has also

supported that "service with a smile" positively impacts customer's impression of the service and have a significant impact on his/her satisfaction (Jeon, Choi, op. cit.).

Aspect of satisfaction may also refer to Customer Climate. This is a customer's perception of the environment shared by other clients receiving service, in which he/she plays an integral role. Customers provide each other ideas useful in service assessment. Interactions among them are important aspect of the service experience and subsequent service evaluation. According to Martin and Pranter, a positive customer-to-customer experience can increase level of service satisfaction and stimulate purchase behaviour (Martin, Pranter, 1989, pp. 5-15).

Some researches have indicated the positive and significant association between a customer's positive affect and satisfaction. When a customer experiences positive emotions in a service encounter, he/she will express higher levels of satisfaction. These researches have shown a link between customer positive emotions and behavioural intentions. Customers who experience positive emotions are more willing to return to experience positive emotions, again (Lin, Liang, 2011, pp. 350-372). Furthermore, it was found that people in positive emotions are more willing to engage in positive word of mouth, while Baker *et al.* reported that customers experiencing more positive emotions are more willing to make a purchase (Baker, Grewal, Parasurman, 1994, pp. 328-39).

Evidence of the impact of customers' emotions on their purchase behaviour derives from a wide base of service research that can be summarized as: customer satisfaction has a positive influence on behavioural intentions such as: likelihood of recommending, purchase volume, loyalty and repurchase behaviour (Lin, Liang, op. cit.). Anderson and Srinivasan claimed that "dissatisfied customer is more likely to search for information on alternatives and more likely to yield to competitor overtures than is a satisfied customer" (Anderson, Srinivasan, 2003, pp. 123-38). In addition, Szymanski and Henard also found that satisfied customers do not partake in negative word-of-mouth and lead the organization to the financial success through their higher repurchase behaviours (Szymanski, Henard, 2001, pp. 16-36). The Figure 3 illustrates the customer satisfaction-behavioural responses model:
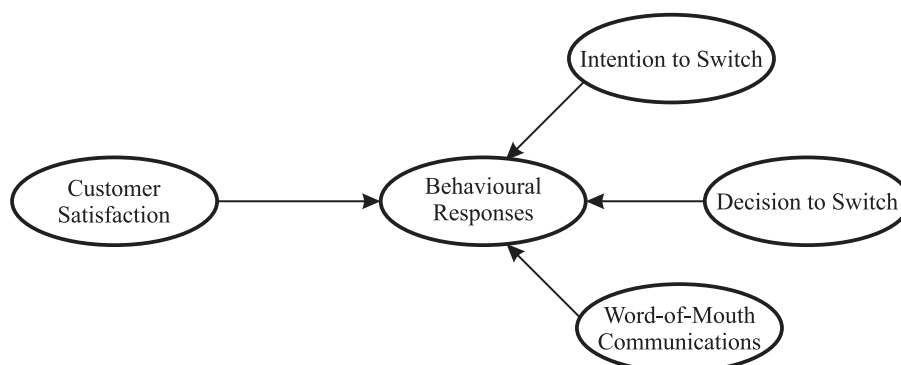

Fig. 3. Behavioural responses to customer satisfaction

Source: A. Athanassopoulos, S. Gounaris, V. Stathakopoulos, Behavioural responses to customer satisfaction: an empirical study, "European Journal of Marketing", 2001, Vol. 35, Iss. 5/6, pp. 687-707

It has been also noticed in the scientific literature that behaviour of satisfied employees plays an important role in creating customers' perception of business interactions. Jeon and Choi say that "this phenomenon may occur as satisfied employees are more apt to be friendly, enthusiastic, attentive, and empathetic toward customers" (Jeon, Choi, op. cit.). Such customer service people' approach verbally and nonverbally influence emotions of customers and lead them to repurchase intentions.

Schneider and Bowen said that employee's job satisfaction is positively related to customers' perceptions of service (Schneider, Bowen, 1985, pp. 423-433). This concept suggests that employees who have higher levels of job satisfaction also believe they are able to deliver excellent service. Brief and Motowidlo say that it is also expected that happy employees are more inclined to share these positive emotions with customers (Brief, Motowidlo, 1986, pp. 710-725). This was also consistent with Brown and Lam who provided empirical evidences showing the strong relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Brown, Lam, 2008, pp. 243-255). Maister also suggests that employees' satisfaction increases their rating of work quality and client relationships, and in turn, increases the company's financial performance through customers' positive purchase behaviour (Maister, 2008, pp. 364-369).

It is worth mentioning here that the influence of customer's emotions on employee's emotions has been also supported by a few theories such as: the social exchange theory and the psychological contract theory. Central to these conceptions is the norm of reciprocity (Jeon, Choi, op. cit.). If customers like a performance of an employee and express gratitude or satisfaction, in turn, it is also expected to lead to a higher level of employee satisfaction. In other words, positive reinforcement from customers increases employees' level of satisfaction, too.

However, studies conducted by Jeon and Choi, showed that this may not always be the case. The results of their research showed that customer's satisfaction does not affect employee's satisfaction equally, as the former researches did not include critical factors for employees' satisfaction such as employee's disposition and organizational climate or culture (ibidem).

It is necessary to mention, that in some instances the high customers' satisfaction and employees' satisfaction, may not occur at the same time. Pierce pointed out that some organizations may embed managerial culture that leads people to coercion. Coercion is a state in which high levels of customers' satisfaction is achieved by controlling the behaviour of employees through managerial decisions, only (Pierce, 1996, pp. 4, 9-15). Employees are forced to proceed under strict managers' directions. This makes them feel unhappy and may result in decrease of customer's level of satisfaction and negatively influence their purchase behaviour.

Therefore, important to the market success of any organization today is to establish a proper relationship between the organization, its employees and its customers. In companies where service is important, people provide the product.

This product is a personal day-to-day contact with customers, and these individual contacts determine the success or failure of the product. According to Lewis, when organizations put customers and employees first, the pay-off will be in terms of increased employees' satisfaction and commitment and customers' satisfaction and loyalty which will affect positively their purchase behaviour (Lewis, 1991, pp. 31-34).

As companies today become more and more competitive, they must be able to differentiate themselves from the competitors. Managers these days should focus less on profit goals or market shares but rather they should understand that, in the new Service-Dominant Logic, customers and customer service employees should be in the centre of their concern. "Successful service managers pay attention to the factors that drive profitability in this new service paradigm: investment in people, technology that supports front-line workers, revamped recruiting and training practices, and compensation linked to performance for employees at every level" (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, Schlesinger, 1994, pp. 164-74).

"The service-profit chain establishes relationships between profitability, customer loyalty, and employee satisfaction. The links in the chain are as follows:
- profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customers' loyalty;
- loyalty is a direct result of customer satisfaction;
- satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers.
- value is created by satisfied, loyal, and productive employees;
- employee satisfaction, in turn, results primarily from high-quality support services and policies that enable employees to deliver results to customers" (Jerome, Kleiner, 2005, pp. 21-25).

This chain reaction of satisfaction shows an influence of employees' job satisfaction and commitment on customers' satisfaction and their loyalty which eventually affects customers' positive purchase behaviour.

Satisfying customers is a company's ability to create a true teamwork among all departments of the organization: customer service, sales, marketing, finance, logistics, and etc.; to encourage every individual for the constant awareness that customer service is in everyone's interest. This emphasizes the importance of customer service as a common responsibility.

In general, when organizations focus on external customers only, they keep forgetting the impact of the internal customer service on overall external customer satisfaction. Both an internal customer service and external should match. Internal customer service concerns service directed to others departments within an organization. It refers to the level of responsiveness, quality, communication, teamwork and morale. Satisfied employees are better team players and are more productive. Organization's values that emphasize treating employees as a valuable asset are translated to good external customer care. Additionally, organizations that care about their people find it easier ask them to care about their external customers, and customers do notice that (Grzybowska et al, 2012, p. 174).

Conclusions

If the customer service is an important issue to the organization, then people are important. The organization's success through positive emotions of both employees and customers is achieved thanks to efforts of many individuals. It starts with hiring the right people for the right job and then coaching them through the company culture that believes in its employees and focuses on customer service. This is then supported by the company's policies and practices along with a management style that recognizes and involves employees. This creates positive emotions in employees which as an effect creates positive emotions in customers. All of these increase customers' positive purchase behaviour that eventually brings profit to the organization.

Maister provides a support for focusing on employees first. His study proves that strong financial performance is caused by employees' attitudes toward quality and client relationships that affect clients' purchase intentions (Maister, 2008, pp. 364-369).

Heskett and Jones conducted a study that proved that the primary source of job satisfaction was the customer service employees' perception of their ability to meet customer needs. Those who felt they did meet customers' needs, registered job satisfaction levels more than twice as high as those who felt they did not. But even more important, the same study found that when a customer service person left the company, customer satisfaction levels dropped sharply from 75% to 55% (Hesskett, Jones, op. cit). As a result of this analysis, management should try to reduce turnover among customer service employees and should enhance their job skills and job satisfaction to create positive emotions that will affect, in turn, positively customers' purchase intentions.

A satisfied employee is more likely to be motivated to serve the customer better. Customer's satisfaction, in turn, affects revenue in two ways. A satisfied customer is more likely to make repeat purchases at the same organization and recommend it to others and is also willing to purchase the products or services at a higher price (Banker, Konstans, Mashruwala, 2000, pp. 1-36).

It is an organization's employees who influence emotions and behaviours of customers, and it is customers who bring profit to organization through the purchase and use of its products and services. If an organization cares about both employees and customers, the pay-off will be in terms of increased employees' positive emotions such as: work engagement, work commitment and job satisfaction, and will affect customers' satisfaction and their positive purchase behaviour (Lewis, 1991, pp. 31-34).

WPŁYW EMOCJI PRACOWNIKA DS. OBŁUGI KLIENTA NA ZACHOWANIA ZAKUPOWE KLIENTA

Streszczenie: Celem niniejszego artykułu jest podkreślenie związku, jaki istnieje pomiędzy emocjami pracownika działu obsługi klienta i zachowaniami zakupowymi klientów. Podsumowując, to klienci są tym elementem w łańcuchu biznesowym organizacji, który przynosi jej zysk dzięki dokonanym zakupom produktów i usług. Emocje pracownika wpływają na emocje klienta, a tym samym na jego poziom satysfakcji, a w efekcie przekładają się na zachowania zakupowe tego klienta.
Słowa kluczowe: satysfakcja klienta, zachowania klienta, obsługa pracownika, emocje pracownika

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