Investigation of the Effect of Physical Attractiveness Displayed Emotion, Helpfulness and Appropriateness of Dress of Service of Contact Personnel on Customer Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the main and interactive effects of 4 service of contact personnel attributes, namely physical attractiveness, displayed emotion, helpfulness or appropriateness of dress service of contact personnel. We conduct a research to test the effects of appropriateness of dress Attributes on customer satisfaction sport store services. Results show physical attractiveness vs. physical unattractiveness did not result in customer satisfaction. But another employee' attributes (displayed emotion, helpfulness or appropriateness of dress) lead to customer satisfaction and helpfulness has the strongest impact. In addition, service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion interacts with helpfulness to influence on customer satisfaction. The implications of the findings are discussed and future research directions proposed.

KEYWORDS: service of contact personnel Attributes, Customer satisfaction, High-contact service and displayed emotion.

INTRODUCTION

There is a long belief in service research to recognize the service encounter (i.e., the person-to-person encounter between a customer and a firm’s representative) as important for the overall success of the service firm (Solomon et al., 1985).

Many practitioners and marketing scholars researched about the role of Frontline employee at service encounters (e.g. Kennedy, Lassk, and Goolsby 2002; Yi and Gong 2008). It is well-recognized that service quality is profoundly affected by Service contact personnel and front line employees play an important role in creating customer satisfaction.

The human factor has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and service quality (Shao, 1999; Dolen and Lemmink, 2004; Choi and Kim, 2013; Keh et al, 2013). Because contact personnel impact on customer during "moments of truth". Customer interact with the organization and it is a customer service experience during the “moment of truth”(Grönonroos, 1990). When customer contact with Service contact personnel, This communication is effective.

The present research investigates the effects of employees’ attributes on customer satisfaction and purchase intention during “moments of truth”. Such Service contact personnel's attributes include physical attractiveness, displayed emotion, helpfulness or appropriateness of dress.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

This section has presented prior research on the four different attributes of Service contact personnel's attributes (i.e., physical attractiveness, displayed emotions, appropriateness of dress and helpfulness) that are perceived by customers.

Supplementary, a complete approach was taken to investigate the differential effects of these attributes on customer satisfaction with the employee.

Many researchers believe that individuals make several immediate automatic appraisals when faced with a stimulus. In the marketing literature, service of contact personnel’s physical attractiveness is defined as the extent to which the service personnel are perceived by the customer as possessing an appealing and pleasing physical appearance (Ahearne, Gruen, & Jarvis, 1999). Customers often use physical
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attain attractiveness to estimate frontline employees as it helps to form an impression on which further adjudication are made (Keh et al., 2013). Building on the preceding discussion, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: service of contact personnel physical attractiveness is positively related to customer satisfaction with the employee.

It has been widely acknowledged that having a friendly service employee who serves with a smile can result in positive customer reactions (e.g., Hennig-Thurau, Groth, Paul, and Gremler, 2006; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Building on the preceding discussion, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion is positively related to customer satisfaction with the employee.

Dress of an individual can be defined as the total arrangement of material supplements to the body and visible modifications of the body (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992; Workman and Johnson 1994). Dress, therefore, includes items (e.g., jewelry, accessories, garments) added to the body as well as modifications (e.g., pierced ears, coiffed hair, tattoo) of the body.

In an advertising context, O’Neal and Lapitsky (1991) examined the influence of dress on the credibility of a message source and intent to purchase. They indicated that subjects assigned significantly higher purchase intent ratings when a message source was dressed appropriately than when a message source was dressed inappropriately.

The relationship between dress, in general, and customer expectations has been conceptually acknowledged by several scholars. The dress is one of the tangibles associated with a company’s service (Baker, 1986), and the tangibles associated with the service have been proposed to directly influence customers’ expectations (Zeithaml et al., 1993). Building on the preceding discussion, it can be hypothesized that:

H3: Appropriateness of dress service of contact personnel is positively related to customer satisfaction with the employee.

Service of contact personnel helpfulness indicates to the point to which frontline employee either provides help to the customer or gives the impression of being interested in the customer, and shows a willingness to help (Anderson, Pearo, and Widener 2008; Johnston 1997). It reflects the motivational aspect of employee behavior (Keh et al. 2013).

Helpfulness is one of the four most important attributes that effect and predict customer satisfaction (Al-Eisa and Alhemoud 2009) since it positively influences customer satisfaction (Podsakoff, Mackenzie). Building on the preceding discussion, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: service of contact personnel helpfulness is positively related to customer satisfaction with the employee.

Therefore, it is significant to go beyond a basic thought of the main effects of each service of contact personnel attribute, and investigate possible interactions among them. These interaction effects are new to the literature.

H5: service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion has a stronger effect on customer satisfaction when service of contact personnel physical attractiveness is lower than when it is high.

H6: Appropriateness of dress displayed positive emotion has a stronger effect on customer satisfaction when Appropriateness of dress service of contact personnel is high than when it is low.

H7: Appropriateness of dress displayed positive emotion has a stronger effect on customer satisfaction when service of contact personnel helpfulness is higher than when it is low.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The sample was conducted at ten-sport stores representing in Tehran a major city in Iran. The ten stories were similar in terms of size and product assortments, but brands of sport stores representing were different from together. After deleting imperfect responses, the final sample size was 264. Among the respondents, %45/8 was female, and %53/8 aged between 18 and 50. Almost of responses was bachelor or master’s degree. They included 39.8% fully employed people, 23.5% part time employed people 19.3%
students, and 2.7% retirees and 14.7% were unemployed people. The average shopping duration at the store, 22.3% spent less than 20 minutes and 27.3% spent 20-40 minutes. 18.9% spent 40-60 minutes and 31.4% more than one hour. As for the customer-store relationship, 14% began shopping at the Target store at least one year ago, and 37% had been customers for two years, 35% had been customers for three years and 11% had been customers for more than three years.

Customers who come out the sport stores representing were accepted. The advantage of having measurements taken immediately after the service experience was that the encounter and associated emotions were still fresh in memory and could be correctly recalled before they had altered or were forgotten (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982).

Customers must have encountered with service of contact personnel in sport store representing and then they could answer the survey. All the items were captured on 10-point scales (0=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree). Finally, the respondents answer some demographic information.

RESULTS

We used four items for measuring of helpfulness (α=0.91): The employee I met gave prompt service to me, The employee I met told me exactly when services will be performed, The employee I met was never too busy to respond to my requests, The employee I met showed a sincere interest in solving it when I had a problem (Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996; Keh et al. 2013).

We used three items for measuring of physical attractiveness (α=0.77): The employee I met is very good looking, The employee I met has an attractive appearance, and the employee I met would generally be thought of as beautiful/handsome (Ahearne, Gruen, & Jarvis, 1999; Keh et al. 2013).

We used five items for measuring of displayed positive emotion (α=0.89): The employee said “Hello,” “how are you today,” or other greetings to me, the employee said “Thank you” to me, the employee made eye contact with me; the employee smiled at me, the employee was pleasant (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988; Keh et al. 2013).

We used four items for measuring of helpfulness (α=0.91): The employee I met gave prompt service to me, The employee I met told me exactly when services will be performed, the employee I met was never too busy to respond to my requests, the employee I met showed a sincere interest in solving it when I had a problem (Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, 1996; Keh et al. 2013).

We used four items for measuring of Customer satisfaction (α=0.71): I am pleased with the overall service provided by the employee, I feel delighted with the overall service provided by the employee, I am completely satisfied with the experience by the employee, I am happy with the overall service provided by the employee (Seiders et al., 2005; Voss, Parasuraman, & Grewal, 1998; Keh et al. 2013).

We used five items for measuring of appropriateness of dress (α=0.81): The employee dresses was wrinkled–pressed, inappropriate–appropriate, dirty–clean, nonprofessional–professional, and sloppy–neat to me (Shao et al. 2004).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first conducted using AMOS 8.0 to test the measurement model (i.e., Service of contact personnel physical attractiveness, Service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion, Service of contact personnel helpfulness, Appropriateness of dress service of contact personnel, customer satisfaction with the service of contact personnel and Purchase intention). As can be seen from Table 1, Indicated Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Variables in this research. After presenting the conceptual model, there is the fundamental question, whether the measurement model is appropriate (the validity of the measurement model)? For evaluating the validity of the measurement conceptual model specific items that include DF= 2.669, CFI=0.92, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.08, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)=0.84, a Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)= 0.90 and an Incremental Fit Index (IFI)= 0.92. As shown in Table 1, all the indices – RMR, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, IFI and RMSEA – are at acceptable levels. All the fit indicators were above the common acceptance levels suggested by the literature (Bollen, 1989; Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993). Overall, the results showed that our model provides a valid framework for the measurement this model.
Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Variables

<table>
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<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFI</td>
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</table>

An average variance extracted (AVE) (see Table 2) for each construct was greater than the squared correlation coefficients for corresponding inter-constructs, which confirmed discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

In addition, as shown in Table 2, Indicated AVE. This table showed that our model is valid.

Table 2. Correlations (squared correlations), Reliability, AVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEDPE</th>
<th>SEPHA</th>
<th>SEAD</th>
<th>SEH</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>AVE</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>0/79</td>
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<td>0/70</td>
<td>0/86</td>
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<tr>
<td>PI</td>
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<td>0/62</td>
<td>-0/62</td>
<td>0/63</td>
<td>0/78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVE</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
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<td>Reliability</td>
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<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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</table>

SEDPE: Service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion, SEPHA: Service of contact personnel physical attractiveness, SEAD: Appropriateness of dress service of contact personnel, SEH: Service of contact personnel helpfulness, CS: Customer satisfaction with the service of contact personnel, AVE: Average variance extracted.

Table 3. Shows the results from the hierarchical linear regression analyses on customer satisfaction. Specifically, employee physical attractiveness ($\beta = 0.31, t = 237.7 \ p < 0.001$) displayed positive emotion ($\beta = 0.117, t = 2.787 \ p < 0.001$) appropriate of dress ($\beta = 0.25$) and helpfulness ($\beta = 0.431, t = 9.596 \ p < 0.001$) all had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction with the employee (Model 2 in Table 3), and provided further support for H1–H4 except physical attractiveness (H1). Further, service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion interacted with employee physical attractiveness to influence customer satisfaction with the employee ($\beta = 0.30$) Thus, H5 was not supported, employee displayed positive emotion interacted with appropriateness of dress service of contact personnel to influence customer satisfaction with the employee ($\beta = 0.30, t = 0.783 \ p < 0.001$) Thus, H6 was not supported, employee displayed positive emotion interacted with service of contact personnel helpfulness to influence customer satisfaction with the employee ($\beta = 0.30$) Thus, H7 was supported.

Table 3. Testing the Moderating Effects of Employee Displayed Emotion Using Hierarchical Linear Regression on customer satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control variables</th>
<th>Model 1 $\beta$</th>
<th>Model 2 $\beta$</th>
<th>Model 3 $\beta$</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0/012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping frequency</td>
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<td>0/041</td>
<td>0/038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of shopping</td>
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<td>-0/007</td>
<td>-0/013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer emotion</td>
<td>0/836**</td>
<td>0/436**</td>
<td>0/434**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent variables

| Displayed positive emotion | 0/117**         | 0/107**         |
| Physical attractiveness   | 0/310**         | 0/227**         |
| Appropriateness of dress  | 0/025           | 0/031           |
| Helpfulness                | 0/431**         | 0/447**         |
| Interactions               |                 |                 |

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Conclusion
The present research examines effects of service of contact personnel attributes on customer satisfaction (i.e., physical attractiveness, displayed positive emotion, appropriate of dress and helpfulness). All four service employee attributes are important drivers of customer satisfaction except of physical attractiveness. Moreover, the results show interactions among the four service of contact personnel attributes. Specifically, employee displayed positive emotion did not have a significant effect on customer satisfaction when the employee was physically less, rather than more, attractive. Further- more, service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion had a significant impact on customer satisfaction when the level of employee helpfulness was high, but not when it was low. Service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion did not have a significant impact on customer satisfaction when the level of service of contact personnel appropriate of dress was high, but not when it was low.

In this paper, service of contact personnel displayed positive emotion had a significant impact on customer satisfaction only when the level of employee helpfulness was high, but not when it was low. This suggests that although displayed positive emotion is mostly an asset, it does not reward for unhelpfulness.

The results also show that the four service of contact personnel attributes interact with each other to jointly influence customer satisfaction. These findings make a useful contribution to the employee–customer interaction. This study provide a more complete thoughtful of how these service of contact personnel attributes both individually and collectively drive customer satisfaction.

This subject can be test on another type of service. Second, It would also be useful to replicate the present study in non-Iranian cultures. Third, in this paper variables such as time each customer spent with the employee are not controlled for. Finally, negative emotional displayed is important but in this study tested positive emotional displayed.

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