

# Employee versus supervisor ratings of performance in the retail customer service sector: Differences in predictive validity for customer outcomes

Richard G. Netemeyer\*, James G. Maxham III<sup>1</sup>

*McIntire School of Commerce, University of Virginia, 222 Monroe Hall, Charlottesville, VA 22904, United States*

## Abstract

Based on data from Maxham and Netemeyer [Maxham, J. G. and R. G. Netemeyer (2003). “Firms Reap What They Sow: The Effects of Employee Shared Values and Perceived Organizational Justice on Customer Evaluations of Complaint Handling,” *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 46–62], the authors present two field samples to examine predictive validity differences of service employee ratings of their performance versus supervisor ratings of employee performance with respect to customer satisfaction and customer likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth (WOM) after a service recovery attempt. The results generally show that supervisor ratings are more strongly positively related to customer satisfaction and WOM than are employee ratings of their own performances. The results also show that both supervisor ratings and employee ratings are related to customer satisfaction and WOM in a curvilinear fashion (as well as linear fashion). Employee extra-role performances (toward customers and the firm) show increasing returns at the higher levels of performance, and employee in-role customer performance generally shows a decreasing return at the higher level of customer in-role performance.

These results suggest two managerial implications. First, supervisor ratings of customer service employee performances may be the preferred form of measurement for predicting customer outcomes. Second, maximizing in-role performance inputs may have decreasing returns for customer evaluations in the service recovery context; but maximizing extra-role performance inputs may actually “delight” customers, i.e., increasing returns for customer evaluations.

© 2006 Published by Elsevier Inc on behalf of New York University.

*Keywords:* Customer satisfaction; Supervisor ratings; Employee ratings

Frontline service employees are often the primary contact customers have with retail firms, and as such, service employee performance can play a key role in affecting customer outcomes (Heskett et al. 2003; Schneider and Bowen 1995). This contact between service employees and customers may have even stronger implications in a service recovery context as customers seeking redress after a service failure may require service employees to perform “extra” behaviors to enhance customer evaluations (de Jong and de Ruyter 2004; Morrison and Phelps 1999). As such, the construct of service employee job performance remains a critical area of study for retail managers and scholars.

Still, there is little evidence as how to best gauge service employee performances, particularly in a service recovery context. Should supervisors act as the primary source of service employee performance ratings? Should employees rate themselves? Should some combination of the two be used? Further, should just in-role performance (i.e., that formerly prescribed in an employee’s job description) be assessed and rewarded, or should performance beyond in-role requirements (i.e., extra-role) be assessed and rewarded as well?

Though studies have focused on the convergence of employee self-ratings of performance with supervisor ratings (Conway and Huffcutt 1997; Harris and Schaubroeck 1988), research has yet to investigate the issue of predictive validity of self- versus supervisor ratings for customer outcomes. Further, we are not aware of any studies examining extra-role performances with respect to this issue. Given the customer complaint/service recovery setting of our samples, the focus on extra-role performances is an important one, as it has been

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 434 924 3388; fax: +1 434 924 7074.

E-mail addresses: rgn3p@virginia.edu (R.G. Netemeyer), maxham@virginia.edu (J.G. Maxham III).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1 434 924 6962; fax: +1 434 924 7074.

suggested that extra-role performance (toward customers and fellow employees) may have pronounced effects on customer evaluations in addition to the effects of in-role performance (Bettencourt et al. 2001; de Jong and de Ruyter 2004).

As currently stands then, little is known if employee self- or supervisor ratings of in-role or extra-role performances are more predictive of customer outcomes. Some research suggests that service employees are in the best position to gauge the relationships between their in-role performances and customer outcomes (Schneider et al. 1996), while other research suggests that supervisor ratings of employee performance are more predictive of outcomes than employee ratings of their own performance (Atkins and Wood 2002). Further, how employees vis-à-vis their supervisors view the in-role/extra-role distinction, particularly in customer service jobs, is not well understood (Borman and Motowidlo 1993).

Based on the preceding discussion, our study investigates the following question: do the relationships of employee- and supervisor-rated measures of performance differ with respect to the key outcomes of customer-rated satisfaction and customer-rated favorable word-of-mouth (WOM)? Given the importance of customer satisfaction in retaining current customers and favorable WOM in generating new customers, this question has implications for what source of ratings has the stronger predictive validity to customer outcomes.

## Study background

### *Customer service employee in-role and extra-role performances*

#### *In-role performance*

Various typologies of in-role performance have been offered, and it is likely that the construct is job context-specific. In a customer service setting, in-role performance has been conceptualized along productivity and quality dimensions (Singh 2000). Productivity reflects quantifiable output in terms of customer contacts (e.g., number of calls handled) and backroom functions (e.g., completing paperwork), and quality encompasses formally mandated behaviors during the employee–customer interface. Akin to Singh's (2000) quality in-role performance dimension are the “scripted rules” that customer service employees must perform when dealing with customer complaints, i.e., in a courteous manner, perform those customer-directed behaviors prescribed in the job description (Humphrey and Ashforth 1994). Given the customer complaint/service recovery setting of our study, we adopt a conceptualization of customer in-role performance based on Singh's (2000) quality dimension and the “scripted rules” component of Humphrey and Ashforth (1994). The formal job descriptions of the service employees of both our samples specified guidelines and behaviors required when dealing with customer complaints. Thus, customer in-role performance is viewed as those behav-

iors required (specified in the job description) in handling customer complaints during the service employee–customer interface.

#### *Extra-role performance*

Though there is considerable debate as to the conceptual domain and categories of extra-role performances/organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) (Podsakoff et al. (2000)), we focus on customer- and employee-directed extra-role performances. As per customer-directed extra-role performance, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) suggest that favorably representing the organization to customers is part of contextual performance that goes beyond prescribed job requirements. Bettencourt et al. (2001) delineate two customer-directed extra-role behaviors—participation and service delivery. Participation is defined as efforts to take initiatives that improve service when communicating with customers and service delivery reflects conscientious efforts to effectively respond to customer concerns/complaints. Thus, we define customer-directed extra-role performance as the degree to which the service employee “goes the extra mile” and “helps customers beyond job requirements” in servicing customers during the complaint-handling interface.

It is important to note that, though customer in-role and customer-directed extra-role performances are distinct constructs, the distinction is likely one of degree. The in-role/extra-role customer performance classification is likely to be less pronounced in customer service jobs vis-à-vis other jobs because of the difficulty in precisely specifying what is in- versus extra-role behaviors when employees interface with customers (Bettencourt and Brown 2003; Singh 2000). Thus, the in-role/extra-role customer-directed performance distinction is more appropriately viewed on a continuum of entirely prescribed (in-role customer) to entirely discretionary (extra-role customer) performances (Bettencourt and Brown 2003).

As per employee-directed extra-role performance, MacKenzie et al. (1998) posit that altruism consists of voluntary actions that help fellow employees with work-related problems. Williams and Anderson (1991) define OCBI (organizational citizenship toward individuals) as voluntary behaviors that immediately benefit specific individuals, and indirectly through this means, contribute to the organization. Voluntarily helping coworkers has been viewed as contextual performance toward others and interpersonal facilitation encompasses cooperative and helpful acts that assist coworkers' performance (Borman and Motowidlo 1993). Bettencourt and Brown (2003) suggest an *internal influence* component of extra-role performance toward employees, i.e., taking initiative with coworkers to improve service delivery to customers, and de Jong and de Ruyter (2004) suggest that an internal service orientation among employees voluntarily assisting each other is a crucial determinant of service recovery outcomes. We therefore define employee-directed extra-role performance as voluntary helpful behaviors toward coworkers in the service-recovery context.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات