

# ANNEXURES

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

I, SUBRATA RAY, am pursuing my Ph.D. work in the Department of Commerce, University of North Bengal on Marketing of Services. Without your co-operation it is impossible to complete my research work. In view of this I would request to your good self to provide me a few information regarding some common job related questions/queries.

It is also to be noted that the data provided by you in the questionnaire will not bear any names or any other kind of identifying marks (both individual and organization wise) for the purpose of maintaining secrecy, uniformity and anonymity.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND CO-OPERATION**

**SECTION 1**

Please read the statements very **carefully** and choose the appropriate box next to the statements by giving a tick mark only in a single box, whichever is applicable according to you. (Only a single box should be chosen). Please do provide your own free response and please note that **there is no right or wrong answer.**

- I do not feel emotionally attached to my organization.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- I feel like a part of the family in my organization.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- I really care about the future of my organization.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- I don't praise my organization in front of my friends.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- My organization always inspires me to do my best job performance.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- My job is exciting and challenging.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

- I am very satisfied with my payments.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree	
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------	--

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE ANNEXURE I

• I get higher payments in comparison to others who are in the same position like me.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• My payment is appropriate according to my job responsibilities.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• It is very difficult to get another job with this kind of good payment structure like this organization.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I am usually under a lot of pressure when I am at work.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• When I am at work I often feel tense.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I am usually calm and feel easy when I am working.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I don't feel that my job is very stressful.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I try to help my customers to achieve their goals.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I try to find out what the customer's needs are.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him make a better decision.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I am always very frank in discussions with my customers.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I try to find out what kind of service would be most helpful to a customer.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I treat my customer as a rival.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

• I have much variety in my job.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My job requires that I need to be very creative.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- I rarely get chance to do different things on my job.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My job requires me to constantly learn new things.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My job is mainly concerned with routine works.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- I have the freedom to choose my way of doing my job.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- I have the freedom to use my full abilities in my job.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My job doesn't allow me to make my own decisions.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My supervisor doesn't make any efforts to make the work environment a better place.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My supervisor equally treats all the employees under him/her with an uniform performance standard.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My supervisor encourages me to do my best.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My supervisor is very friendly and is very approachable.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My supervisor takes care of the personal welfare of the employees.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

- My supervisor is capable enough to evaluate me and my job.

Fully Agree		Partially Agree		Can't Say		Partially Disagree		Fully Disagree
-------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------	--	--------------------	--	----------------

**SECTION 2****YOUR PROFILE (Please tick in the appropriate box)****• Please state your Sex :**Male Female **• Please check your age group:**Below 25 years  26yrs-35yrs  36yrs-45yrs  46yrs-55yrs  56yrs & above **• Your total experience in years :**Less than 1 year  1 – 5 years  6 – 10 years  11 – 15 years  15 years & more **• Your total experience in the present job :**Less than 1 year  1 – 5 years  6 – 10 years  11 – 15 years  15 years & more **• Your Educational Qualifications :**Under Graduate  Graduate  Post-Graduate  Professionally Qualified **• Please check your gross salary (Per Month) :**Less than 10,000  10,001 to 20,000  20,001 to 30,000  30,000 & more

# **EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORE JOB DIMENSIONS AND RETAIL SALES PERSONNEL CUSTOMER ORIENTATION**

**Dr. Debasis Bhattacharya**  
Reader, University of North Bengal, West Bengal

**Subrata Ray**  
Lecturer, University of North Bengal, West Bengal

**Article No: 179**

**ISSN 0974 – 9497**

**Year: November 2009**

**Volume 3, Issue 4/4**

**Abstract:** The work environment job characteristics are empirically tested by researchers to relate job satisfaction and commitment of various types of employees. These studies have addressed two issues: impact of these variables on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. To determine the customer orientation of retail sales person using the key JCM model variables have not been studied extensively in literature. Indian retail industry is growing at a phenomenal rate, employing around 8% workers and contributing 10% of the country's GDP. These investments are expected to increase by 25% yearly. Indian retail industry is expanding itself most aggressively as a result of the great demand for real estate is been created. In spite of this exponential growth, the human resource factor in retail management is still largely ignored who lack of formal retailing education. In view of this it is very optimistic to expect that inexperienced retail employees would build human relations in retail management. In this backdrop, an exploratory research is undertaken to analyse retail personnel customer orientation practices. Multiple regression analysis unfolds some interesting results that may be used to formulate pro-active HR strategies in retailing.

**Key words:** Job Characteristic Model; Customer Orientation; Retailing; SOCO scale

## **Introduction**

Researchers working in the field of marketing have already established that customer oriented selling (or customer orientation) generates greater long term performance benefits for the sales person relative to sales oriented selling (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). It is, however also believed that there exists considerable debate regarding the degree to which customer orientation is practiced by the sales personnel in spite of inherent benefits that accrue to them in the long term (Boles et al., 2001, Brown et al., 2002). In fact, one can hardly deny that customer orientation requires a greater effort on the part of the sales personnel because he has to spend a lot of time and energy in customer relationship development activities. This is a key reason for sales personnel persistence with sales orientation and reluctance to engage in customer orientation (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). Peter. F. Drucker, in the mid of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, has categorically stressed that customer orientation is the only factor which determines the success of a business in the long run. While commenting on this issue, he also stressed that continuous innovation and delivering customer orientation are the two pivotal issues that the marketers must consider seriously in order to sustain in the competitive and turbulent business environment.

The conceptualisation of customer orientation has evolved from the definitions of marketing concept (McKitterick, 1957; Levitt, 1960; King, 1965) and market orientation discourse (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). The marketing concept is essentially a business philosophy which suggests that the long term purpose of the firm is to satisfy the needs of the customers (Webster, 1992). The sales and service sector play a critical role in the growth of developing economics and both national and multinational firms are exploring various means in an attempt to improve their sales quality to create customer satisfaction and loyalty. Prior research unfolds that attitudes towards jobs of customer contact employees and customer oriented selling are related. As such managing the attitudes of sales force is critical to the success of sales firms (Heskett et. al, 1994; Schneider and Bowen, 1995).

The positive job attitude of the customer contact employees is a precondition for the practice of customer orientation. The strategy planners must keep in view the importance of the role of customer contact employees to enhance the performance of firms. In fact, after the emergence of market orientation in the late 1990's it has been widely accepted as a major strategy to improve the overall growth and profitability of business firms by developing a bandwagon of loyal customers (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Selnes et al., 1994). In sales and marketing journal it is perceived that the behaviour of employees towards the customer plays a critical role in augmenting customer satisfaction which ultimately leads to positive word-of-mouth communication among the customer peer groups (Bitner et. al, 1990; Sergent and Frenkel, 2000; Bowen and Schneider, 1985).

One can hardly deny that employees are a major source of resource in any business. This is particularly true in retail industry where the employees interact with its customers on a continuing basis. The Indian retail market, which is the fifth largest retail destination globally, has been designated as the most lucrative emerging market for investment. According to a study conducted at Kearney's eighth annual Global Retail Development Index (GRDI), in 2009, India has been ranked as the most attractive retail destination globally. The share of retail trade in the country's GDP was between 8-10 percent in 2007 which is currently around 12 percent. It is estimated that the share of retail trade in India is likely to reach 22 percent of the GDP by 2010! In view of this, it is imperative for the retail players to discern the importance of strategic human resource management to take advantage of phenomenal growth of retailing business in India.

## **Literature review**

It is generally theorised that the environment in which employers work influences their attitudinal states to a considerable extent and these attitudinal states in turn determine workers intentions and behaviours. It is believed that work environments are not just

tangible, physical structures. There also social and psychological structure that shapes the behaviour of workers (Allen et. al., 2004). Presence of an appropriate physical structure and psychological structure in an organisation only can motivate workers to practice customer orientation in a retail business environment.

It is well established among marketing theorists and practitioners that firms that focus their activities on the needs of their customers, i.e. behave in a customer oriented way, perform better than those companies that do not (Donovan et. al., 2004). Several studies in the field of customer orientation have empirically substantiated the economic potential of a firm's ability to serve the customers (Narver and Slater, 1990; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Because of the intangible nature of retail services and higher level of customer interaction with the workers, customer oriented service may be expected to play a crucial role in terms of economic success for service oriented companies. In addition to this, many researchers have analysed the role of service personnel as an important dimension of service quality (Parasuraman et. al., 1988, Dabholkar et. al., 2000): Many studies have explicitly addressed the concept of customer orientation of service employees in the recent past (Kelly, 1992, Donovan et. al., 2004, Henning and Thuraü, 2004, Thakor and Joshi, 2005).

The behaviour of service employees affects the customer's perception of the service which has been amply demonstrated in the context of service quality literature (Bitner et. al., 1990). Researchers have identified employee specific constructs of the service as dimensions as dimensions of the customer's service quality assessment. For instance three out of the five service quality dimensions of SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman et. al., 1988) measures the customer oriented behaviour of service employees in terms of reliability of service, responsiveness of service personnel and empathetic behaviour they exhibit while interacting with the customer. At this stage, it is safe to conclude based on the contributions of researchers that without dedicated customer oriented employees it is impossible for retailers to retain customers and succeed in its mission in the long run.

In this study we draw heavily from the Job Characteristics Model {hereafter JCM developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975)} and try to relate job characteristics dimensions as a set of predictor variables and retail employee's customer orientation as a dependent variable. Needless, to state that the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) is one of the most influential theories ever presented in the field of organisational psychology. The vast majority of empirical research has supported the reliability and validity of the JCM dimensions. Again, various modifications have also been offered by researchers depending on the purpose of the study (Roberts and Glick, 1981; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978).

Job characteristics pertain to the attributes associated with a specific job (Hackman and Lawler, 1971) and include areas such as job autonomy, job variety, job stress, task significance, task identity and job supervision (Hackman and Lawler, 1971). In our study, we have focussed our attention to a few important constructs viz., job autonomy, supervision, job related stress, job variety. In addition to this, following the suggestion of Thakor and Joshi (2005), we have incorporated satisfaction with pay as an explanatory

variable keeping in view that it may also affect sales force intentions to practice customer orientation.

### ***Job Stress***

We have observed in various literature that job stress is generally defined as an employee's feelings of job-related hardness tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion and distress (Cartwright and Cooper 1997). While there have been several studies that have explored the causes of job stress and its impact on employees performance (Cushman, Evans, Namerow 1995; Gibson, McGrath and Reid 1989; Himle, Jayaratne & Thyness 1989; Siefert, Jayaratne and Chess 1991), however, a few researchers have examined the impact of job stress on job satisfaction of service personnel. Gellis (2001) has observed that job stress is negatively correlated with job satisfaction among service personnel in hospitals. In a very recent research article Wen-Hai Chih et. al (2009) has observed that the job stress negatively influences customer orientation behaviours of frontline employees. Dee K. Knight et. al. (2007) also has observed that role stress affected customer orientation. He also has established that the impact of role conflict has a negative effect on customer orientation, but positive on selling orientation and job performance.

### ***Pay satisfaction***

The positive affective-evaluation of the magnitude of the reward that is received in exchange for the investment of effort is known as pay satisfaction (Churchill et al., 1974; Walker et al., 1977; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). The greater the magnitude of the reward that is received, the greater is the salesperson's ability to obtain valued outcomes. We expect a positive effect of pay satisfaction on customer orientation (Chebat et al., 2002). Based on JCM (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), we argue that when pay satisfaction is high, there is a likelihood of positive association between salesperson's motivation to expend the effort that is required by customer orientation. In this research, we include pay satisfaction as a key important variable to explain the sales person motivation to engage in customer oriented selling.

### ***Job Autonomy***

According to available literature, we find that job autonomy is generally defined as the degree of freedom that employees have in making job related decisions (Agho, Mueller, Price 1993). It has also been defined as "independence in thought, goal-setting, and determination of work methods" (Buffum, Ritvo 1984, 39). Salesperson job autonomy refers to the felt ability to determine the nature of the sales task or problem and to arrive at a course of action (Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). A sales/service job is typically demanding because of the challenging marketing environment and the performance-based compensation system. Salespeople need both the freedom (i.e., job autonomy) and the skills to meet the challenges (Karasek 1979). Among job related factors (skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback), job autonomy thus is probably the most relevant to the study of salesperson's learning and self-efficacy

(Bandura, 1986). As such, we include job autonomy as another key explanatory variable along with other job related variables included in this study in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of sales personnel.

### ***Job Variety***

Job variety is the degree of variation in the job as perceived by the worker (Price & Mueller 1986). In fact, some jobs require role performance that is extremely repetitive in nature while other jobs have significant degree of variety in the required task and how that is performed (Mueller, et al., 1994). According to Ross and Reskin (1992), "job autonomy and non routine work signal occupational self-direction, "which is a positive outcome for most employees. In our study, the job variety constructs is adopted from the study reporter by Curry et. al, (1994), Martin, Roman and Blum (1995) and Mueller et. al. (1994). Moreover, in this study, we focus on job variety as another key characteristic along with the prior customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness, organisational identification, pay satisfaction, job stress, job variety in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

### ***Job Supervision***

It has been found that most employees have a direct supervisor, a person who guides and directs them. The quality of supervision can drastically vary not only from organization to organization, but also within an agency. On one hand it has been observed that there are supervisors who provide quality, open, motivation, and supportive supervision, on the other hand there are supervisors who are inconsistent, do not motivate employees to meet high standards, have poor communication styles, are unfriendly and unfair (Allen, Lambert, Pasupuleti, Tolar and Ventura, 2004). The supervisor's initiation of customer orientation appears to have a strong impact on customer-oriented attitudes. Thus, by serving as a role model, supervisors can help develop positive customer oriented attitudes in their salespeople. In addition, by showing consideration and developing positive relationships with salespeople. The supervisor can instill a positive impact on customer-oriented attitudes among the sales personnel under his control (Stock and Hoyer, 2002). Poor supervision is found to be linked to burnout (Cherniss 1980a; Itzhaaky and Aviad-Hiebloom 1998) and job satisfaction (Cherniss and Egnatios 1978) among social and human service workers. Supportive supervision is associated with increased job satisfaction (Poulin 1994). Thus, in this research, we include job supervision as another key job characteristic in motivating customer orientation of sales personnel.

### ***Customer orientation***

Helping the customers to make the right purchase decisions that will satisfy their preferences is an important part of the salesperson's function (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Spiro and Weitz, 1990; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). In marketing, there are two selling strategies which are being widely discussed in various literature—customer-oriented selling (or customer orientation) and sales-oriented selling (or sales orientation). These two orientations in marketing differ both in terms of their objectives and the means used

to achieve the desired objectives. Customers have preferences both in the immediate as well in the long term. Typically, short-term preferences (or wants) are felt and clearly articulated whereas long-term preferences (or needs) tend to be latent (Thakor and Joshi, 2005). A customer-oriented salesperson aims to uncover and satisfy these latent needs. Indeed, as Saxe and Weitz (1982) state, "highly customer oriented salespeople avoid actions which sacrifice customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale." The objective of sales orientation, by contrast, is to satisfy articulated customer preferences. As the items in the widely used SOCO scale make clear (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Thakor and Joshi, 2005), the two selling orientations also differ with respect to means. Whereas customer orientation places an emphasis on listening to customers (e.g., I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer) and dialogue (e.g., I try to get customer to discuss their needs with me), sales orientation encourages opportunistic (John, 1984) means (e.g., I paint too rosy a picture of my products to make them sound as good as possible) if these are necessary to make the sale. Thus in this research, we incorporate customer orientation as a dependent variable which is likely to be influenced by the job characteristics dimensions discussed above.

### **Hypothesis development**

An important part of sales person's task is to help consumers make purchase decision that will suite the requirement of the customers (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Spiro and Weitz, 1990). To selling strategies are widely discussed in the literature, - customer oriented selling and sales oriented selling. In this empirical paper, in the context of retail business we concentrated our study by incorporating some job related variables and measuring its impact on customer orientation.

Job stress is generally defined in the literature as an employee's anxiety, worry, frustration etc. Studies have revealed that (Gliss, 2001) job stress is negatively related with job satisfaction. A dissatisfied employee is not likely to expend his energy for delivering customer oriented service. Hence we hypothesize that higher the perceived stress of an employee the lower will be the customer orientation.

Job autonomy is regarded as the degree of freedom that the employee have in marketing related decision. Variety on the other hand allows the worker to do various types of jobs as desired by the organisation. Both job autonomy and variety are expected to enhance employee's belongingness with the organisations. In view of this we may tentatively hypothesize that higher the job autonomy and job variety, higher would be the customer orientation.

Open, supportive and quality supervision is hypothesized to have a positive effect on the job satisfaction and organisational commitment of employees. Supervisors are expected to give direction and feedback necessary for employees to complete their task. Given the situation, the employees are expected to practice customer orientation instead of selling orientation due to pro-employee attitudes of supervisory tasks.

Pay satisfaction refers to the positive affective evaluation of the magnitude of the reward that is received in exchange (Churchill et. al., 1974; Walker et. al., 1977). When pay satisfaction is high, sales person motivation to engage in customer orientation will also likely to be enhance. Keeping this argument we propose higher the level of pay satisfaction, higher will be the practice of customer orientation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study will mainly concentrate on various issues concerning the level of pay satisfaction, customer orientation, job stress, job autonomy, job variety and its impact on the practice of customer orientation by the sales personnel of a retail chain store. In fact, customer orientation requires the sales person to be motivated to practice this mode of selling. The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

- (i) To adapt a reliable scale to measure various job dimensions of employees with respect to the retail sales personnel.
- (ii) To examine relationship between customer orientation of sales employee's and the job related dimensions under which they operate.
- (iii) To assess the relationship between various job related dimensions mentioned above and retail sales person's motivation to follow customer orientation marketing strategy.
- (iv) To integrate the findings mentioned above and formulate effective marketing and human resource management strategies.

### **Research Questions**

Keeping in view the above objectives of the study this study simply tries to answer to following questions:

- Is there any significant relationship between customer orientation and job stress?
- How customer orientation is influenced by the job variety and job autonomy?
- How job supervision affect the customer orientation in a retail chain shopping business?
- Is pay satisfaction persuading workers to practice customer orientation?
- How all these variables simultaneously affect the customer orientation concept for the long run survival of the business?

This study is expected to provide sufficient insight into the relationship between various perceptual variables incorporated in explaining the practice of customer orientation.

### **Methodology**

We have adopted in our study a very simple cross-sectional descriptive research design study where respondents are to provide response on different multi point responses which require a great deal of understanding and comprehension of the concept on which the responses are sought. The responses were collected with the help of questionnaires from the chain retail outlet located in Siliguri, a small city in the district of Darjeeling in the

state of West Bengal. However, convincing of the management staffs of the organization was regularly done for the purpose of making them to understand the importance of the study. Initially, it was visualised that the data collection will be done by us but at last it was decided not to interact directly with the employees. The reason that we perceived was that the responses were collected by us the respondents would not cooperate with us and might provide biased responses. So, it was decided that the questionnaires will be distributed in the weekly meeting of the retail staffs where the targeted respondents (retail outlet sales staffs) will be made aware of the study on behalf of the management. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed among the sales members of the retail outlet in 3 phases because not all the staff members were present in every weekly meetings of the outlet because of various kinds of leaves and day offs. A tentative due date of the returning of the filled up questionnaires was fixed by the management of the outlet in consultation with us by considering the factors like the understanding of the questionnaires and maintenance of the work schedule of the sales personnel of the retail outlet and work pressure. Among the 200 questionnaires 159 were returned within and after the due date had expired. From the returned questionnaires also it was found that 21 were unusable because of failure to follow instructions. Thus, the effective sample size was reduced to 138, representing a response rate of 69%. This response rate compares favourably to response rates reported by Yilmaz and Hunt (2001) and Siguaw et al. (1994) in recent studies using sales person samples. During the response collection it has been found that some of the response was collected prior to the date fixed as a due date of returning of the samples. There were some responses which were collected after the due date had actually expired. In order to test for non-response bias, we compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, tenure with the current employer and monthly and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The way we administered the questionnaires mitigates the threat of a non-response bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977).

### **Sample & study design**

The study was carried out involving the customer sales employees of the India's biggest retail chain. A total number of 138 respondents were taken into consideration. Respondents who are involved in the sales and customer handling activities were considered for this study. The respondents had the designation of frontline sales executives, team leaders, asst departmental managers, departmental managers etc. The data on demographic variables like age, sex, number of years of experience, qualification have been reported in table 1. The sample observations are skewed in many respects. There is a large proportion of male employees' compared to their counterpart who are female. Again more than 93 percent of the respondents are below the age group of less than thirty five which is not that uncommon due some obvious reasons that suit the HR requirement of the industry. However, the tables reported in the table I are self explanatory in nature and not much discussion on the demographic profiles of the respondents is not our the basic intention of the study.

**Table 1**

<b>SEX</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	103	75%
Female	37	25%

<b>AGE</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below 25 years	81	59%
26 yrs – 35 yrs	43	31%
36 yrs – 45 yrs	10	10%
46 yrs – 55 yrs	0	-
56 yrs -- above	0	-

<b>TOTAL JOB EXPERIENCE</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 1 year	67	48%
1 year to 5 years	53	38%
6 years to 10 years	10	0.07%
11 years to 15 years	4	.023%
15 years and above	4	.023%

<b>EXPERIENCE IN PREVIOUS JOBS</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 1 year	115	83%
1 year to 5 years	23	17%
6 years to 10 years	0	-
11 years to 15 years	0	-
15 years and above	0	-

<b>QUALIFICATION</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under Graduates	25	18.00%
Graduates	75	57.00%
Post Graduates	19	14.00%
Professionally Qualified	14	10.00%

<b>SALARY INCOME</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than Rs. 10,000	115	83.33%
Rs. 10,001 – Rs. 20,000	15	10.86%
Rs. 20,001 – Rs. 30,000	0	-
Rs. 30,001 – above	2	03.62%

The responses were collected with the help of questionnaires from the chain retail outlet located in Siliguri, a small city in the district of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal. However, convincing of the management staffs of the organization was regularly done for the purpose of making them to understand the importance of the study. Initially, it was visualised that the data collection will be done by us but at last it was decided not to interact directly with the employees. The reason that we perceived was that the responses were collected by us the respondents would not cooperate with us and might provide biased responses. So, it was decided that the questionnaires will be distributed in the weekly meeting of the retail staffs where the targeted respondents (retail outlet sales staffs) will be made aware of the study on behalf of the management. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed among the sales members of the retail outlet in 3 phases because not all the staff members were present in every weekly meetings of the outlet because of various kinds of leaves and day offs. A tentative due date of the returning of the filled up questionnaires was fixed by the management of the outlet in consultation with us by considering the factors like the understanding of the questionnaires and maintenance of the work schedule of the sales personnel of the retail outlet and work pressure. Among the 200 questionnaires 159 were returned within and after the due date had expired. From the returned questionnaires also it was found that 21 were unusable because of failure to follow instructions. Thus, the effective sample size was reduced to 138, representing a response rate of 69%. This response rate compares favourably to response rates reported by Yilmaz and Hunt (2001) and Sigauw et al. (1994) in recent studies using sales person samples. During the response collection it has been found that some of the response was collected prior to the date fixed as a due date of returning of the samples. There were some responses which were collected after the due date had actually expired. In order to test for non-response bias, we compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, tenure with the current employer and monthly and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The way we administered the questionnaires mitigates the threat of a non-response bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977).

### **Operationalisation of the constructs**

We start a discussion concern the SOCO scale which in expanded form is termed as sales orientation and customer orientation simply by a particular sales person practice customer orientation simply by summing and examining the items on which scores have been distributed. However, in our study we have used only the customer oriented selling methodology by slightly modifying the scale to suite the requirements of the consumers as well as the employees. In many researches, the SOCO scale has been modified by the researchers to suite the situations. While measuring the customer oriented feeling we kept seven items of the scale that measures customer orientation. The other objective was that we have tried to keep the questionnaire as simple as possible in an attempt to persuade the busy staffs to cooperate with us.

In this study customer orientation is measured using a seven point scale adapted by (Thakor and Joshi 2005). In view of large number of items the alpha value is found to be more than 0.709 for all the variables which is acceptable but not very high. Regarding

pay satisfaction that included 4 items generated an alpha value of 0.753. Similarly, job stress and job autonomy exhibited high degree of reliability. The reliability co-efficients in general show good degree of internal consistency.

**Table 2**

RELIABILITY STATISTICS		
Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Pay Satisfaction	.753	4
Job Stress	.827	4
Job Variety	.767	5
Job Autonomy	.864	3
Job Supervision	.709	6
Customer Orientation	.815	7

The results of descriptive measures have been presented in the following table

**Table 3: Statistics**

		Pay Satisfaction	Job Stress	Customer Orientation	Job Variety	Job Autonomy	Job Supervision
N	Valid	138	138	138	138	138	138
	Missing	12	12	12	12	12	12
Mean		10.3913	12.2319	25.6159	20.0725	10.7826	21.0290
Median		11.0000	12.0000	26.0000	21.0000	12.0000	24.0000
Mode		12.00	12.00	30.00	25.00	14.00	26.00
Std. Deviation		4.13536	6.26809	4.66439	4.71314	3.67818	6.14893
Percentiles	25	6.0000	9.0000	22.0000	19.0000	8.0000	17.0000
	50	11.0000	12.0000	26.0000	21.0000	12.0000	24.0000
	75	13.2500	16.0000	30.0000	23.0000	14.0000	26.0000

We have reported various measures of central tendencies along with corresponding standard deviation. With regard to job stress and job supervision the greatest diversity of responses have been observed. Otherwise, the interval data instruments generated data which are more or less normal which is evident from the various measures of central tendencies.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pay Satisfaction	138	4.00	19.00	10.3913	4.13536
Job Stress	138	6.00	70.00	12.2319	6.26809
Customer Orientation	138	15.00	34.00	25.6159	4.66439
Job Variety	138	6.00	25.00	20.0725	4.71314
Job Autonomy	138	3.00	15.00	10.7826	3.67818
Job Supervision	138	8.00	30.00	21.0290	6.14893
Valid N (listwise)	138				

In an attempt to measure the impact of above mentioned job dimension characteristics on customer orientation of sales personnel a multiple regression analysis technique was adopted. The over all goodness of the fit measured by  $R^2$  was found to be significant

beyond  $P < .000$  Pay satisfactions, job autonomy and job supervision are found to be positively influencing the practice of customer orientation by the sales personnel. As expected, the level of stress perceived and customer orientation variables are inversely related. Again, absence of less job variance is reflected in less amount of customer orientation. Job variety and customer orientation are found to be unrelated. Previous studies also reported similar findings in the literature.

Our findings are similar to the studies reported (Thakor and Joshi, 2005). In our study we did not observe a significant association between pay satisfactions. However, while studying the impact of job characteristics on employees' job satisfaction and commitment are found positive. It is established in our study the job autonomy and positive supervision affect employees' attitude to practice customer orientation. In tune with the finding of Allen et. al., (2004), job stress has a negative impact on job commitment. In line with his finding we would also conclude job stress affects customer commitment, which in turn might affect the customer orientation behaviour of the retail sales personnel.

**Table 5: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.581(a)	.338	.313	3.86722

a Predictors: (Constant), Job Supervision, Job Stress, Job variety, Pay Satisfaction, Job autonomy

**Table 6: ANOVA(b)**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1006.529	5	201.306	13.460	.000(a)
	Residual	1974.116	132	14.955		
	Total	2980.645	137			

a Predictors: (Constant), Job Supervision, Job Stress, Job variety, Pay Satisfaction, Job autonomy

b Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation

**Table 7: Coefficients(a)**

Mode 1		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	15.152	1.769		8.563	.000
	Pay satisfacti on	.321	.094	.284	3.423	.001
	Job Stress	-.014	.054	-.019	-.266	.790
	Job Variety	.080	.094	.081	.858	.392
	Job Autonom y	.256	.129	.202	1.983	.049
	Job Supervisi on	.140	.061	.184	2.275	.025

a Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation

### **Managerial implications**

Our finding though very modest suggest that managerial thinking and strategy formulation may benefit from studies conducted periodically including key job dimensions and employee willingness to practice customer orientation. Firms that are interested to raise employee's job satisfaction and work on specific aspects like skill variety, job autonomy. Again, retailing is a hard business and it requires lot of physical abilities to interact with a heterogeneous group of customers. Retailers are high visible employees and the supervisors monitor employees very closely. There is not need to state that the consumers operate in buyer's market and unless they are monitored in an empathetic manner, they may shift elsewhere or take part in negative word of mouth communication. As much in a competent retail organisation each group of employees should attend training to develop inter personal skill and proper way of communicating with the customers keeping in view the customer orientation aspect.

### **Limitations and future research**

The major limitations of this study should be acknowledged at this stage. The study was undertaken using a small sample that too from a single retail chain outlet which is biggest among the six district of North Bengal. In addition to this data relating to employees gathered using a self reporting technique, it would have been better if we could collect data from the consumers to assess the discrepancy between consumer's perception of

customer orientation and employee's perception of delivering customer orientation. Future research study should consider a cross section of sales people drawn from various service industries to compare the practice of customer orientation in different sections.

## References

- Agho, A., Mueller, C., & Price, J., (1993). Determinants of employee job satisfaction: An empirical test of a causal model., in: *Human Relations*. 46. pp. 1007-1027.
- Allen, R. I., Lambert, E. G., Pasupuleti, S., Tolar, T. C., Ventura, L. A., (2004). The Impact of Job Characteristics on Social and Human Service Workers, *Social Work and Society*, 2(2). pp. 173-188.
- Armstrong, J.S. & Overton, T., (1977). Estimating non-response bias in mail surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research* 14: pp. 396-402.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive View*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bitner, Mary Jo, Booms, Bernhard H., & Tetreault, Mary Stanfield, (1990). The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favorable and Unfavorable Incidents. *Journal of Marketing*, 54 (January), pp. 71-84.
- Boles JS, Babin BJ, Brashear TG, Brooks C. (2001). An examination of the relationship between retail work environments, salesperson selling orientation- customer orientation and job performance. *J Mark Theory Pract*; 9 (Summer); pp. 1-13.
- Bowen, David E & Schneider, Benjamin, (1985). Boundary-Spanning Employees and the Service Encounter: Some Guidelines for Future Management and Research. In John A. Czepiel, Michael R. Solomon, & Carol F. Suprenant (Eds.), *The Service Encounter*, (pp. 127-147). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Brady, M. K., & Cronin, J. J., (2001). Customer orientation: effects on customer service perceptions and outcome behaviours. *Journal of Services* 3(3), pp. 241-251.
- Brown T.J., J.C. Mowen, D.T. Donavan, and J.W. Licata, (2002). "The Customer Orientation of Service Workers: Personality Trait Effects on Self- and Supervisor Performance Ratings," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(February): pp. 110-119.
- Brown, T.J., Mowen, J.C., Donavan, D.T. and Licata, J.W. (2002), "The customer orientation of service workers: personality trait influences on self and supervisor performance ratings", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 110-19.
- Buffum, W., and Ritvo, R., (1984). Work autonomy and the community mental health professional: Guidelines for management, in: *Administration in Social Work*, 8(4). pp. 39-54.

Cartwright, S. and Cooper, C. (1997). *Managing workplace stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chebat J-C, Babin B, Kollias K. (2002). What makes contact employees perform? Reactions to employee perceptions of managerial practices. *Int J Bank Mark*; 20(7): pp. 325-332.

Cherniss, C. and Egnatios, E., (1978). Is there job satisfaction in community mental health?, in: *Community Mental Health Journal*. 14, pp. 309-318.

Cherniss, C., (1980a). *Staff burnout: Job stress in the human services*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Churchill G, Ford NM, Walker OC. (1974). Measuring the job satisfaction of industrial salesmen. *J Mark Res*; 11(August): pp. 254-260.

Cushman, L., Evans, P. and Namerow, P., (1995) Occupational stress among AIDS social service providers, in: *Social Work in Health Care*, 21(3), pp. 115-131.

Dabholkar, P.A., Sheperd, C.D. and Thorpe, D.I. (2000). "A comprehensive framework for service quality: an investigation of critical conceptual and measurement issues through a longitudinal study", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 76 No. 2, pp. 139-73.

Dee K. Knight, Hae-Jung Kim, Christy Crutsinger. (2007). Examining the effects of role stress on customer orientation and job performance of retail salespeople. *Int Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 35, Issue 5, pp. 381-392

Gellis, Z. D. (2001). Job stress among academic health center and community hospital social workers. in: *Administration in Social Work*: 25(3). pp. 17-33.

Gibson, F., McGrath, A., and Reid, N. (1989). Occupational stress in social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 19. pp. 1-18.

Hackman J.R. & Oldham, G.R. (1980). *Work Redesign*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company Inc.

Hackman, J. R., Oldham G. R., Janson R and Purdy K., (1975). "A New Strategy for Job Enrichment." *California Management Review*, 17 (4), pp. 57-72.

Hackman, J. R., & Lawler, E., III (1971). Employee reactions to job characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology Monograph*, 55, pp. 259-285.

Hennig-Thurau, T. (2004), "Customer orientation of service employees – its impact on customer satisfaction, commitment, and retention", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 15 No. 5, pp. 460-478.

- Heskett JL, Jones TO, Loveman G, Sasser Jr WE, Schlesinger LA., (1994). Putting the service-profit chain to work. *Harv Bus Rev* (Taipei); 72(2): pp. 164-74.
- Himle, D., Jayaratne, S. and Thyness, P. (1989). The buffering effects of four types of supervisory support on work stress., in: *Administration in Social Work*, 13(1), pp. 19-34.
- Itzhaky, H., and Aviad-Hiebloom, A., (1998). How supervision and role stress in social work affect burnout, in: *Arete*, 22(2), pp.29-43.
- John G. (1984). An empirical investigation of some antecedents of opportunism in a marketing channel. *J Mark Res*;21(August):278-89.
- Karasek, R. A. 1979. "Job Demands, Job Decision Latitude, and Mental Strain: Implications for Job Redesign." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24:285-309.
- Kelley, S.W. (1992). "Developing customer orientation among service employees", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 27-36.
- Kohli AK, Jaworski BJ, (1990). Market orientation: the construct, research proposition, and managerial implications. *J Mark*, 54, pp. 1-18.
- Mueller, C., Boyer, E., Price, J., and Iverson, R., (1994). Employee attachment and noncoercive conditions of work. in: *Work and Occupations*, 21, pp.179-212.
- Narver JC & Slater SF., (1990). The Effect of a market orientation on business profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, 54, pp. 20-35.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1988). "SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64, Spring, pp. 12-40.
- Poulin, J., (1994). Job task and organizational predictors of social worker job satisfaction change: A panel study, in: *Administration in Social Work*, 18(1), pp. 21-38.
- Price, J. and Mueller, C., (1986). Absenteeism and turnover among hospital employees. Greenwich. CT: JAI Press.
- Roberts, K.H. & Glick, W. (1981). The job characteristics approach to task design: A critical review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 66, pp. 193-217.
- Ross, C. and Reskin, B., (1992). Education, control at work, and job satisfaction, in: *Social Science Research*, 21, pp.. 134-148.
- Salancik, G.R. & Pfeffer, J. (1978). A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23, pp. 224-253.

Saxe, R., & Weitz, B. A., (1982). The SOCO scale: a measure of the customer orientation of salespeople, *Journal of Marketing Res.* 9, pp. 343-351.

Selnes F, Jaworski BJ, Kohli AK., (1996). Market orientation in United States and Scandinavian companies: a cross-cultural view. *Scand J Manage Stud*, 12(2), pp. 139-157.

Sergeant, Andrew & Frenkel, Stephen, (2000). When Do Customer Contact Employees Satisfy Customers? *Journal of Service Research*, 3(2), pp. 18-34.

Siguaw JA, Brown G, Widing R., (1994). The influence of the market orientation of the firm on sales force behavior and attitudes. *J Mark Res.* 31, pp. 106- 116.

Spiro RL, Weitz BA. (1990). Adaptive selling: conceptualization, measurement, and nomological validity. *J. Mark Res.*; 27(February). pp. 61- 69.

Thakor, M. V., & Joshi, A. W., (2005). Motivating salesperson customer orientation insights from job characteristics model. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, pp. 584-592.

Walker Jr OC, Churchill Jr GA, Ford NM. (1977). Motivation and performance in industrial selling: present knowledge and needed research. *J Mark Res*; 14(May): pp. 156-68.

Wang, G., and Netemeyer, R. G., (2002). The Effects of Job Autonomy, Customer Demandingness, and Trait Competitiveness on Salesperson Learning, Self-Efficacy, and Performance, *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(3). pp. 217-228.

Webster, F. E. (1992): *The Changing Role of Marketing in the Corporation*, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol 56 October, pp. 1-17.

Wen-Hai Chih, Tsung-Ju Yang, Ling-Chu Huang, and Che-Hao Hsu (2009). Customer Orientation Behaviors of Frontline Employees: Moderating Roles of Emotional Intelligence, *Computer Science and Information Technology - Spring Conference*, Volume , Issue , 17-20. pp. 249 - 253.

King, R. (1965). The marketing concept. In: *Science in marketing*. Ed by: Schwartz, G. pp. 70-97. New York: John Wiley Sons.

McKittrick, J. (1957). What is the marketing thought and acting? *American Marketing Association*, Chicago, IL, pp. 71-82.

Levitt, T. (1960). The industrialisation of service. *Harvard Business Review*. Vol. 38, No. 5, pp.41-52.

Yilmaz C, & Hunt SD, (2001). Salesperson cooperation: the influence of relational task, organizational, and personal factors. *Journal of Academic Marketing Science* 29(4), pp. 335-357.

# Indian Journal of Marketing



Visit: Indian Journal of Finance Visit: Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management

- About Us
- Our Team
- From the Editor's Desk

- Subscribe / Renew
- Request a Sample Copy
- Request for Missing Copies

- Request for Change of Address
- Advertise

- Guidelines for Authors
- Submit an Article Online

- Forthcoming Issues

- Status of Article
- Query/Feedback
- International Listings

Forthcoming Issues

Volume 41 • Number 8 • August 2011

**Relationship Building As A Marketing Strategy: A Conceptual Guide For African Exporters**

Catherine Phambuka-Nsimbi

**Consequences of Service Quality Linkage – An Insight From An Empirical Investigation In Higher Education**

Prof. Suniti K. Phadke

**Mandatory Nutritional Labeling and Implications For Indian Food Companies**

Vijay Intodia

**GCMFF: Preempting Competition With An Innovative Business Model**

Mohit Avinashkumar Parekh

**Consumer Attitude Towards FMCGs: A Comparative Study Of Private Labels And National Brands**

Nilesh Neelmani

**Nokia's Shrinking Market Share in India: Can Nokia Sustain Its First-mover Advantage?**

A. Shivakanth Shetty

**Marketing Of Titanium Dioxide By Kerala Minerals And Metals Limited – An Analysis**

P.J. Boniface

S. Bijukumar

A. Sakeer Husain

**Netnography: An Emerging Method of Marketing Research – A Conceptual Study**

Dr. Sapna Rakesh

Swati Singh

**Marketing In Global Economic Turbulence - Role of B-Schools in Grooming Management Graduates**

Prof. M. V. Rama Prasad

**Motivating Retail Sales Personnel Customer Orientations: An Empirical Study**

Dr. Debasis Bhattacharya

Subrata Ray

**An Empirical Study Of Online Social Influence Marketing With Reference To Customer's Product Purchase Decision and Product Recommendation**

Monika Sharma

Deepshika Kalra

**Marketing Strategies In Apple Industry – An Empirical Study In Himachal Pradesh And Jammu & Kashmir**

Abdul Rauf

Sajad A. Saraf

Site Search

GO

Visit: Indian Journal of Finance

Visit: Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management

# Motivating retail sales personnel customer orientations: an empirical study

Dr. Debasis Bhattacharya

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, University of North Bengal

Subrata Ray

Lecturer, Department of Management, University of North Bengal

---

## Abstract

Although customer orientation is a core element of the marketing concept so is very crucial in the concept of relationship marketing. However, no widely accepted conceptualization of the construct still exists. In sales organizations, the fulfilment of the customer needs and wishes by customer-contact employees can be seen as crucial for gaining a high degree of customer orientation. Customer Orientation of Retail Sales Personnel requires greater expenditure of efforts by the sales personnel to interact with a heterogeneous group of customers. The sales personnel should be motivated continuously to practice customer orientation for satisfying customers. In this research, we try to draw from the job characteristics model (JCM) to argue that retail sales personnel motivation to engage in customer orientation is impacted by the extent to which they experience their work as meaningful and affective evaluations of two aspects of their working environment: their identification with the values of their organization and their satisfaction with the pay they receive. Research results were derived from the responses of 120 sales personnel of a large retail outlet chain operating in the national market in India. The findings of the results revealed that customer orientation is influenced by experienced meaningfulness, job stress and other job related facets. Managerial implications and directions for future research and limitations of the study are also discussed.

*Keywords: Sales Personnel; Customer Orientation; Job Characteristics Model*

---

## 1. Introduction

It is observed from marketing literature that the impact of a firm's customer orientation on its long-term economic success is largely undisputed. As a sequel to this, the concept of customer orientation has assumed tremendous importance in marketing research. The idea behind customer orientation - which is closely related to the fundamental thinking behind marketing itself (Kotler, 1972) - is that a company has to address the needs and wishes of its customers adequately in order to ensure that they will buy the company's products, ensure sales of the company, exhibit a high degree of satisfaction with these goods and services and ultimately become loyal customers of that company. Although it is rarely made explicit in the literature, customer orientation can be seen as a main construct to the relationship marketing concept (Hennig-Thurau and Hansen, 2000).

However, there is a dearth of a widely accepted definition of sales person's customer orientation and also, there is disagreement among the researchers as to how to conceptualize the construct. The sales sector plays a more critical role in the growth of developing economies, and both multinational and local sales firms are exploring various ways and means in an attempt to improve their sales quality to create customer satisfaction and loyalty. Prior research revealed that the attitude towards job of customer contact sales employees and customer satisfaction and loyalty are directly related. As such managing the attitudes of salesforce towards their job is critical to the success of sales firms (Heskett et al. 1994; Schneider & Bowen, 1995). The positive job attitude of the customer contact employees is an integral part of the market orientation. Since the emergence of market orientation in the 1990s, it has been widely accepted as a major way to enhance the performance of the firm (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Narver and Slater, 1990) as well as the individual employees of the firm (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Selnes et al., 1996; Siguaw et al., 1994). At the individual employee's level, it has been found that market orientation, as a single construct, reduces the role stress of employees while increasing their job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Selnes et al., 1996; Siguaw et al., 1994). These studies on the effect of market orientation on employees' job attitudes, considered mostly for the male-dominant Western subjects (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Ruekert, 1992; Selnes et al., 1996; Siguaw et al., 1994).

In sales and marketing literature, it is documented that the behaviour of employees towards the customers plays a central role in generating customer satisfaction and sales quality (Bitner et al., 1990; Sergeant & Frenkel, 2000; Bowen & Schneider, 1985). This is especially true for the employees who interact personally with the customer as part of the sales interactions. As a result of which, the sales employee's customer orientation is expected to strongly influence a sales firm's business performance by developing a long lasting customer-employee relationship (Bove and Johnson, 2000). From prior studies it is evident that customer orientation creates greater long-term performance benefits for the salesperson relative to sales orientation (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Goff et al., 1997; Kelley, 1992; Langerak, 2001; Reicheld and Sasser, 1990; Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). However, there exists a significant difference in the extent to which customer orientation is practiced (Boles et al., 2002). It is believed that sales person persistence with sales orientation and their unwillingness to practice customer orientation is due to the reason that the latter requires greater salesperson's effort in customer relationship development activities (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). A salesperson's motivation to engage in customer orientation is a precondition for its practice since the effort of the salesperson is determined by motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985). In view of this, it is necessary to identify the determinants of salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation in a retail service contest since not many studies have been undertaken using retail sales personnel. In the service marketing literature, the quality of service has gained much research prominence in recent years. With greater choice of retail outlets and increasing awareness, Indian consumers have become more demanding of improved quality service. The key players of the Indian retail market no longer neglect customer service issues. The customer orientation of the retail sales personnel remains unexplored to a large extent in prior researches. If a retailer decides to strategically augment its sales in a long term basis, it is essential that the retailer should adopt changes systematically to introduce innovative customer interaction strategies with a long-term vision to retain customers. There are various literature based on customer orientation, however, important gaps associated with our understanding of the factors that motivate customer orientation also co-exists. After going through the previous literature we observe that despite considerable evidence associated with the motivating propensity of jobs (Eby et al., 1999; Hackman and Oldham, 1980), the effect of sales personnel's affective evaluation of their job on customer orientation has been examined in very few instances. Secondly, in prior researches on customer orientation the interrelated effects of the two different motivational drivers (sales person's affective evaluation on their job and their affective evaluation of the organisation they work for) on customer orientation is also very limited. Thirdly, we also observe that in prior literature the researches on customer orientation did not incorporate job related stress, which is an important job characteristic that might affect the motivation of the sales personnel.

To address these limitations in prior customer orientation research we tried to draw from the job characteristics model (JCM) (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). There are basically two reasons for which the JCM is especially appropriate for the purposes of this research. Firstly, the JCM clearly focuses on the motivation potential of jobs. Secondly, it identifies the affective evaluations of the organization context and the payments as the moderators of the relationship between the sales personnel's affective evaluation of their job and motivation.

We begin by going through the prior literature survey to discuss the conceptual framework. Following this, we will actually define our objective of the study. Subsequently, we will discuss the method used for the study. The results of our empirical tests will then be presented. Research results have been discussed in the next section followed by managerial implications, limitations and scope for further research.

## **2. Past Research**

The retail industry has developed into a full-fledged industry in America and Europe where more than three-fourths of the total retail trade is done by the organised retailers. Retailing was limited to commodities that fulfil their basic needs in the very early stage of human civilisation. With the economic liberalisation in 1991, retailing in India witnessed a wave of organisations entering the retailing business like Shopper's Stop, Subikaha, Nilgiris, Food World, Pantaloons etc. Today buyers are expecting more convenience, friendlier and less time consuming purchase situations. The retailers also are in a process of transforming the processes of customer interactions with an attitude to practice customer oriented selling. This requires that retailers more intensively focus their attention on services on a strategic level. A key gap in previous researches, however, is related to the dimensions that constitute a customer oriented business strategy. When a retailer adopts a customer oriented business strategy, several important strategic decisions must be made (Homburg, Hoyer, & Fassnacht, 2002). Therefore, we attempt

to clarify conceptually what these decisions are. Our study tries to conceptually and empirically address the issue of a customer oriented business strategy in the retail marketing context.

The primary objective of customer orientation is to fulfil individual customer expectations and needs. Bruhn (1999) distinguishes three forms of customer orientation, ranging from a very narrow to a broad, situation-based interpretation. The information based interpretation defines customer orientation in terms of the availability of customer information, i.e. the extent to which information on customer needs is collected and analyzed, and the extent to which this information is available in a company or public organization. The culture and philosophy-based interpretation goes beyond the first interpretation. It defines a company's customer orientation through the presence of certain elements in its general corporate philosophy, such as values, norms and convictions (Deshpande et al., 1993; Homburg and Pflesser, 2000). Thus, customer orientation is part of corporate culture and characterizes not only the company's opinions but also its employees' behaviour in dealing with customers. The third form of customer orientation is sales and interaction based customer orientation, which is mainly determined by the quality of the sales provided. This view diverges from the first two forms of customer orientation. While the first two conceptualizations address customer orientation from the standpoint of the organization, the sales and interaction based conceptualization considers the customer's perspective. On the basis of these differing interpretations, it is important to adopt a broad definition of customer orientation that takes into account all three interpretations introduced by Bruhn (1999). According to Bruhn (1999) Customer orientation is the comprehensive, continuous collection and analysis of customer expectations as well as their internal and external implementation in an organization's sales and interactions, with the objective of establishing stable and economically advantageous customer relationships on the long term. An important part of the sales personnel function is to help customer make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer preferences (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Spiro and Weitz 1990). Customers have preferences both in the immediate and long term. Typically, short-term preferences (or wants) are felt and clearly articulated whereas long-term preferences (or needs) tend to be latent. A customer oriented sales personnel aims to uncover and satisfy these latent needs. Indeed, as Saxe and Weitz (1982) stated, "highly customer oriented sales people avoid actions which sacrifice customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale." In this research we focus on customer orientation keeping the important job related characteristics of retail sales personnel viz., uncovering and satisfying customer's long term needs and listening to customer's specific needs by interacting with them. As already mentioned earlier, here the retail sales organisation set up is taken up into consideration because of the presence of huge scope of customer interaction with the customer contact employees. Furthermore, it is also felt that the long term perspective of developing the customer relationship is a precondition for success in the retail sector.

It has been observed that the organization's success depends on effective customer relations and the customer sales employees play a vital boundary spanning role for the organization. In consistent with such observations, the organisations are always in a constant process to build up their image among the customers by managing the types of behaviours employees' exhibit (Becherer & Maurer, 1999; Hipkin, 2000; Martin, 2000; O'Gorman & Doran, 1999). This is especially important in those organisations where nearly all employees have direct contact with the customers on a daily basis (O'Gorman & Doran, 1999; Parnell, Carraher, & Odom, 2000; Zinger, LeBrasseur, & Zanibbi, 2001). Wright, Pearce, and Busbin (1997) found that firms which emphasizes on customer service generate high on return on sales, return on investments, return on assets, and profit growth by the individual employee's outcomes than those firms which are less emphasizing on customer service, irrespective of the size of the firms.

According to the Job Characteristics model, the motivation to work is a function of three critical psychological states – experienced meaningfulness of the work (or experienced meaningfulness), experienced responsibility for outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the actual results of the work activities. On the otherhand, according to it five different job characteristics – skill variety, task identity, task significance autonomy, and feedback, are actually determine the above mentioned three critical psychological states in turn (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Renn and Vandenberg, 1995).

Empirical testing of the full model has shown that experienced meaningfulness is the key mediator of the core job characteristics on motivation (Johns et al., 1992), thereby making it an especially salient driver of motivation. Given that job-related effects have not been extensively examined in prior customer orientation research and given the salience of experienced meaningfulness in JCM, we focus upon the effect of this affective evaluation of the job on customer orientation.

In addition to establishing that job-induced psychological states (or affective evaluations of the job) affect employee work behaviour, JCM argues that this effect will be moderated by employee's affective evaluations of the work context. We focus upon some aspects of the work like organisational identification, experienced meaningfulness, pay satisfaction, job variety, job autonomy, job supervision, job stress and examine the moderating effects of salesperson affective evaluations on customer orientation.

The sales personnel have to be motivated to expend greater effort in customer-related interactions in order to be customer oriented (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). Motivation to expend effort is generated through rewards. The rewards may be either intrinsic to activity performance or may be extrinsic to the activity, whose procurement is enabled by activity performance (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The feeling of accomplishment is regarded as an intrinsic motivator that arises from successful activity performance. This is because it is a rewarding psychological state that is directly attained through successful activity performance (Brown et al., 1993; Hall, 1976). On the otherhand the compensation that is received in exchange for activity performance enables the individual to obtain outcomes of value and hence is regarded as an extrinsic motivator (Lawler, 1971, 1973). The experienced meaningfulness and organisational identification foster the feeling of accomplishment, thereby motivating the sales personnel to engage in customer orientation through intrinsic means, and pay satisfaction fosters sales personnel ability to procure valued outcomes, thereby fostering sales personnel motivation to engage in customer orientation through extrinsic means (Thakor & Joshi, 2005).

It is always necessary to distinguish between institutional and employee related constructs while measuring customer orientation. In the former case, one needs to analyze company documents and measure the extent to which the organization acts in a customer oriented manner. As far as the employee related customer orientation is concerned, it describes an employee's ability (or perceived ability) to act in a customer oriented manner and to meet customer expectations. The human factor perspective focuses on employee related customer orientation (Korunka, Schritzer, Caryon, Hoonakker, Sonnek, and Sainfort, 2007). The scale developed by Narver and Slater (1990) takes into account the cultural aspect into consideration. Here the customer orientation is described as a facet of corporate culture that increases customer benefits and thereby the success of the company. The so-called MKTOR scale (Market Orientation Scale) consists of 14 individual items on the dimensions of customer orientation, competitive orientation and interfunctional coordination. The SOCO scale (Selling Orientation and Customer Orientation) developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) is often used to measure the customer orientation by employees since it is an employee-related construct (Bennett et al., 1999; Boles et al., 2001; Brown et al., 2002; Hoffmann and Ingram, 1992). It consists of 24 items with two dimensions: 12 positive items on customer orientation and 12 negative items describing selling orientation. It is designed to measure the extent to which employees act in a customer-oriented manner and thus increase customer satisfaction in the long run (Brown et al., 2002). It provides a measure of customer orientation by the employee. Brady and Cronin (2001) adapted this scale to measure customer orientation from the customer's perspective. It is not always mandatory that the SOCO scale would have to be utilised in its original form. In various occasions, the SOCO scale was modified just to suit the situation. In the previous discussions what we have found that the SOCO scale was modified to fulfil the research requirements. We have seen that Michaels and Day (1985) used a modified SOCO scale that reflected the views of buyers, rather than salespeople. In other occasion Dunlap, Dotson and Chambers (1988) used the SOCO scale in a research on real estate industry, however, they have used a five-point response format rather than the original nine-point scale of the SOCO scale. O'Hara, Boles and Johnston (1991) have also altered the original SOCO scale of a research on advertising and industrial sales people, where the researchers have reduced the items of the SOCO scale to 18 instead of the original 24 items. In another research, Tadepalli (1995) modified the SOCO scale by changing the frame of reference of the questions to a particular salesperson rather than to salespeople in general (by relating to respondents' most recent buying situation). Overall we can find that the original SOCO scale for the purpose of researches carried on measuring customer orientation has been modified according to the requirements. Here, in this research also we have drawn items from the SOCO scale but have not used all the items used in the original scale nor we have drawn items from other popular scales. Attempts were made to incorporate items from various measures adopted in various researches which can explain the measure of customer orientation in a much more refined manner.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The study will mainly concentrate on various issues concerning the level of pay satisfaction, customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness and job related stress. In fact, customer orientation requires the sales person to be

motivated to practice this mode of selling. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine relationship between experienced meaningfulness, organisational identification, job stress, pay satisfaction and the customer orientation. The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

- (i) To adapt valid and reliable scales to measure relevant constructs with respect to the retail sales personnel.
- (ii) To examine relationship between experienced meaningfulness with sales employee's customer orientation in a retail organisational set up.
- (iii) To assess the relationship between retail sales person's motivation to expend the effort and customer orientation.
- (iv) To integrate the findings mentioned above and formulate effective marketing and human resource management strategies.

## 4. Research Questions

Keeping in view the above objectives of the study this study simply tries to answer to following questions:

- Is there any significant relation between customer orientation and organisational meaningfulness?
- How customer orientation is influenced by the perceived experience meaningfulness?
- How job stresses affect the customer orientation in a shopping mall business?
- How all these variables simultaneously affect the customer orientation concept for the long run survival of the business?

This study is expected to provide sufficient insight into the relationship between various perceptual variables incorporated in explaining the practice of customer orientation.

## 5. Methodology

We have adopted in our study a very simple cross-sectional descriptive research design study where respondents are to provide response on different multi point responses which require a great deal of understanding and comprehension of the concept on which the responses are sought. The responses were collected with the help of questionnaires from the chain retail outlet located in Siliguri, a small city in the district of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal. However, convincing of the management staffs of the organization was regularly done for the purpose of making them to understand the importance of the study. Initially, it was visualised that the data collection will be done by us but at last it was decided not to interact directly with the employees. The reason that we perceived was that the responses were collected by us the respondents would not cooperate with us and might provide biased responses. So, it was decided that the questionnaires will be distributed in the weekly meeting of the retail staffs where the targeted respondents (retail outlet sales staffs) will be made aware of the study on behalf of the management. A total of 175 questionnaires were distributed among the sales members of the retail outlet in 3 phases because not all the staff members were present in every weekly meetings of the outlet because of various kinds of leaves and day offs. A tentative due date of the returning of the filled up questionnaires was fixed by the management of the outlet in consultation with us by considering the factors like the understanding of the questionnaires and maintenance of the work schedule of the sales personnel of the retail outlet and work pressure. Among the 175 questionnaires 152 were returned within and after the due date had expired. From the returned questionnaires also it was found that 32 were unusable because of failure to follow instructions. Thus, the effective sample size was reduced to 120, representing a response rate of 68.57%. This response rate compares favourably to response rates reported by Yilmaz and Hunt (2001) and Siguaw et al. (1994) in recent studies using sales person samples. During the response collection it has been found that some of the response was collected prior to the date fixed as a due date of returning of the samples. There were some responses which were collected after the due date had actually expired. In order to test for non-response bias, we compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, tenure with the current employer and monthly and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The way we administered the questionnaires mitigates the threat of a non-response bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977).

### 5.1 Sample & Study Design

The study was carried out involving the customer sales employees of the India's biggest retail chain. A total number of 120 respondents were taken into consideration. Respondents who are involved in the sales and customer handling activities were considered for this study. The respondents had the designation of frontline sales executives, team leaders, asst departmental managers, departmental managers etc. The data on demographic variables like age, sex, number of years of experience, qualification have been reported in table 1. The sample observations are skewed in many respects. There is a large proportion of male employees' compared to their counterpart who are female. Again more than 93 percent of the respondents are below the age group of less than thirty five which is not that uncommon due some obvious reasons that suit the HR requirement of the industry. However, the data reported in the table 1 are self explanatory in nature and not much discussion of the demographic profiles of the respondents are discussed keeping in view the homogeneity of the sample.

**Table 1**

<b>SEX</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	94	78.33%
Female	26	21.66%

<b>AGE</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below 25 years	77	64.16%
26 yrs – 35 yrs	39	32.50%
36 yrs – 45 yrs	4	03.33%
46 yrs – 55 yrs	0	-
56 yrs – above	0	-

<b>TOTAL JOB EXPERIENCE</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 1 year	62	51.66%
1 year to 5 years	48	40.00%
6 years to 10 years	6	05.00%
11 years to 15 years	2	01.66%
15 years and above	2	01.66%

<b>EXPERIENCE IN PREVIOUS JOBS</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 1 year	106	88.33%
1 year to 5 years	14	11.66%
6 years to 10 years	0	-
11 years to 15 years	0	-
15 years and above	0	-

<b>QUALIFICATION</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under Graduates	18	15.00%
Graduates	70	58.33%
Post Graduates	16	13.33%
Professionally Qualified	16	13.33%

<b>SALARY INCOME</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than Rs. 10,000	108	90.00%
Rs. 10,001 – Rs. 20,000	10	08.33%
Rs. 20,001 – Rs. 30,000	0	-
Rs. 30,001 – above	2	01.66%

The responses were collected with the help of questionnaires from the chain retail outlet located in Siliguri, a small city in the district of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal. However, frequent convincing of the management staffs of the organization was done for the purpose of making them to understand the importance of the study. Initially, it was visualised that the data collection will be done by us but at last it was decided not to interact directly with the employees. The reason that we perceived was that if the responses were collected by us the respondents would not cooperate enthusiastically and might provide biased or random answers. So, it was decided that the questionnaires will be distributed in the weekly meeting of the retail staffs where the targeted respondents (retail outlet sales staffs) will be made aware of the study on behalf of the management. A total of 175 questionnaires were distributed among the sales members of the retail outlet in 3 phases because not all the staff members were present in every weekly meetings of the outlet due to different kinds of leaves and day offs. A tentative due date of the returning of the filled in questionnaires was fixed by the management of the outlet in consultation with us by considering the factors like the understanding of the questionnaire and without disrupting the work schedule of the sales personnel. Among the 175 questionnaires 152 were returned within and after the due date had expired. From the returned questionnaires it was found that 32 were unusable because of failure to follow the instructions properly. Thus, the effective sample size was reduced to 120, representing a response rate of 68.57%. This response rate compares favourably to response rates reported by Yilmaz and Hunt (2001) and Siguaw et al. (1994) in recent studies using sales person samples. During the response collection it has been found that some of the response was collected prior to the date fixed as a due date of returning of the samples. There were some responses which were collected after the due date had expired. In order to test for non-response bias, we compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, tenure and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The way we administered the questionnaires mitigates the threat of a non-response bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977).

## **5.2 Measures**

Scale items of the study were developed from reviewing prior literature and were refined through various insights and knowledge acquired from many exploratory interviews and interactions we did with many sales professionals. The scale items were derived from various studies done for the purpose of measuring various variables considered in prior researches like organisational identification (Porter et al. 1974), experienced meaningfulness (Williams, 1998), pay satisfaction (Comer et al. 1989), job stress (Crank, Regoli, Hewitt and Culbertson, 1995), customer orientation (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). All the theoretical construct in the model were measured using multiple item five point (5 = fully disagree to 1 = fully agree) scales since the scales that we employed in our study had already been applied under more or less similar conditions.

### **5.2.1 Organisational Identification**

Experienced meaningfulness is not only the important variable that positively influences productivity. Organisation identification, on the other hand, is the mismatch, if any, between the perception of organisational values and individual values does not create any problem for the organisation According to Thakor & Joshi (2005) organisational identification may be termed as a state of psychological congruence between the salesperson and the values of the organisation. We have used the scale in this study of organisational identification from Thakor & Joshi(2005) since organisational identification is commonly regarded as being at the core of the commitment construct (Allen and Meyer, 1990 p. 1; Mathiew and Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226).

### **5.2.2 Experienced Meaningfulness**

If the service personnel strongly believe that they would experience a feeling of accomplishment from their job they would be motivated to expend additional effort required by customer oriented selling. In this study we have used the intrinsic job cognition scale used by Thakor & Joshi (2005) to measure experienced meaningfulness. We have used this scale because of its strong face validity in relation to the definition of experienced meaningfulness.

### **5.2.3 Pay Satisfaction**

Pay satisfaction refers to the affective evaluation of the sales personnel to the pay that they receive over a period of time in exchange for their effort investment. Here in this study we adopted four items from a prevalidated scale that measure pay satisfaction (Thakor & Joshi (2005).

### **5.2.4 Job Stress**

Job stress is generally defined in the literature as an employee's feelings of job-related hardness, tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion and distress (Cartwright & Cooper 1997). In this study for measuring the job stress we had adopted a four item scale of job stress from Crank, Regoli, Hewitt and Culbertson (1995).

### 5.2.5 Customer Orientation

For this study we have used a seven item scale of customer orientation by adapting relevant items from the existing Thakor & Joshi (2005) scale. Adaptation of the customer orientation scale such as those proposed in our study is reported in prior published research (Brown et al., 2002; Cravens et al., 1993).

## 6. Results & Discussions

The results of descriptive measures have been presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

	OI	EM	PS	JST	CO	
Median	28.0000	14.0000	10.0000	10.0000	27.0000	
Mode	30.00(a)	14.00	10.00	9.00	30.00	
Mean	27.5083	13.0250	10.4667	12.1083	26.1250	
Percentiles	25	25.2500	13.0000	9.0000	9.0000	23.2500
	50	28.0000	14.0000	10.0000	10.0000	27.0000
	75	31.0000	14.0000	12.0000	16.0000	30.0000

a Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

OI=Organisational Identification, EM=Experienced Meaningfulness, PS=Pay Satisfaction, JST=Job Stress, CO=Customer Orientation

We report various measures of central tendencies along with percentile values. The interval scale instruments generated data which are more or less normal that can be evident from the various measures of central tendencies. The mean pay satisfaction score is quite low by any standard. Regarding job stress a large number of employees exhibited a high stress syndrome which is a bit alarming. One peculiar observation is evident from the Descriptive values reported in table 3. The mean as well as the median score on the organisational identification and experienced meaningfulness scores are quite healthy which are indicative of a sound organisational culture practised by the upper level of management. In this study organisational identification is measured using a seven point scale adapted by (Thakor and Joshi 2005). The alpha value is found to be 0.859 which is adequately high. In contrast the internal consistency of the experienced meaningfulness scale is found to be satisfactory despite a smaller number of scale items. Regarding pay satisfaction that included 4 items generated an alpha value of 0.899. Similarly, job stress and customer orientation exhibited high degree of reliability. The reliability coefficients, in general, show good degree of internal consistency. In order to establish scale dimensionality, we used a factor analysis method using principal component analysis as the starting point. There are two objectives of factor analysis: the first objective is to reduce the data set to a manageable level and the second objective is to establish the underlying dimensions in the data. In an attempt to analyse factor analysis, we preferred an oblique rotation instead of Varimax rotation which is an orthogonal rotation. The variables that we have used in our study are expected to have low to moderate degree of correlation with each other and for this application of Varimax rotation procedure would not be an appropriate rotational method. The results of the factor analysis amply demonstrate that the scales, which we have used in our study, have sufficient degree of construct validity. In analysing the structure matrix one would discern number of split loadings and mis-loadings. The summary results of factor analysis revealed that 71% variation in the original variables is explained by the 5 factors extracted. In this process both repeatability property of the instruments and construct validity were adequately established.

**Table 4**

RELIABILITY STATISTICS		
Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Organisational Identification	.859	7
Experienced Meaningfulness	.766	3
Pay Satisfaction	.899	4

Job Stress	.924	7
Customer Orientation	.933	7

**Table 5: Factor Structure Matrix**

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
oi1	.264	.085	-.056	<b>-.610</b>	-.044
oi2	.289	.068	.146	<b>-.746</b>	.173
oi3	<b>.360</b>	-.244	-.002	<b>-.631</b>	-.074
oi4	.219	-.083	-.136	<b>-.797</b>	.032
oi5	.280	.051	.040	<b>-.864</b>	.045
oi6	<b>.325</b>	.016	.015	<b>-.766</b>	.040
oi7	.236	.114	.033	<b>-.749</b>	.091
ps1	.121	-.031	<b>.780</b>	-.068	-.037
ps2	.067	-.207	<b>.923</b>	.012	-.172
ps3	-.015	-.062	<b>.859</b>	.075	-.086
ps4	.023	-.128	<b>.918</b>	-.020	-.102
em1	.242	.024	-.136	-.051	<b>.922</b>
em2	.189	-.048	-.099	.012	<b>.944</b>
em3	.270	-.103	-.047	-.103	<b>.527</b>
jst1	-.300	<b>.786</b>	-.058	.102	-.053
jst2	-.257	<b>.934</b>	-.175	-.031	-.029
jst3	-.247	<b>.930</b>	-.085	-.102	-.040
jst4	-.230	<b>.928</b>	-.111	-.039	-.061
co1	<b>.821</b>	-.400	-.096	-.294	.288
co2	<b>.888</b>	-.109	.129	-.402	.247
co3	<b>.773</b>	-.393	-.024	-.200	.259
co4	<b>.887</b>	-.388	-.030	-.252	<b>.320</b>
co5	<b>.887</b>	-.219	.024	-.244	.206
co6	<b>.889</b>	-.155	.107	<b>-.395</b>	.204
co7	<b>.828</b>	-.127	.133	<b>-.378</b>	.225

Note i) Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Note ii) Only loadings above 0.30 are reported in bold.

oi: organizational identification, ps: pay satisfaction, em: experienced meaningfulness, jst: job stress, co: customer orientation

**Table 6: Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.892	27.568	27.568
2	3.890	15.559	43.128
3	3.180	12.720	55.848
4	2.260	9.041	64.889
5	1.614	6.455	71.344

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

In an attempt to measure the impact of above mentioned job characteristics dimensions on customer orientation of sales personnel a multiple regression analysis technique was adopted. The overall goodness of the fit measured by  $R^2$  was found to be significant beyond  $P < .000$ . The organisational identification and experienced meaningfulness

variables are found to be positively influencing the practice of customer orientation by the sales personnel. As expected, the level of stress perceived and customer orientation variables are inversely related. The coefficient is significant beyond  $p < .001$  indicating that job related stress inversely affect the employees to be provide customer oriented service. Pay satisfaction and customer orientation are found to be positively related though the extent of association is very weak. Previous studies also reported similar findings in the literature. We did find any significant impact of sex measured by a dummy variable (male=1, female =0 ).However, the females are more likely to engage in customer oriented selling than their females who are males.

**Table 7: Model Summary (b)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.550(a)	.303	.272	3.74954

a Predictors: (Constant), Job Stress, Experienced Meaningfulness, Pay Satisfaction, Sex, Organisational Identification

b Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation

**Table 8: ANOVA (b)**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	696.391	5	139.278	9.907	.000(a)
	Residual	1602.734	114	14.059		
	Total	2299.125	119			

a Predictors: (Constant), Job Stress, Experienced Meaningfulness, Pay Satisfaction, Organisational Identification, Sex

b Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation

**Table 9: Coefficients (a)**

Model		Un-standardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.466	3.653		3.686	.000
	OI	.355	.079	.357	4.475	.000
	EM	.485	.145	.266	3.348	.001
	PS	.055	.128	.035	.429	.669
	JST	-.309	.086	-.284	-3.577	.001
	SEX	-.302	.864	-.028	-.350	.727

a Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation (CO)

OI=Organisational Identification, EM=Experienced Meaningfulness, PS=Pay Satisfaction, JST=Job Stress,

## 6.1 Managerial Implication

From the study we can say that the sales managers have to ensure that sales personnel in the retail sector should expend effort in developing and maintaining customer relationships over time. This research carried out on the retail sales personnel is very significant to the retail sales managers because it identifies various job characteristics which can enhance the sales personnel work motivation. From the research the key job characteristics like organisational identification, experienced meaningfulness, job stress requires to be taken care of by the organisational managers especially who are there in the retail sales. From our research it shows that organisational identification, experienced meaningfulness and job stress are the strongest determinants of customer orientation of the retail sales personnel. This result highlights the managerial importance of ensuring that retail sales personnel find their work more meaningful. Managers can ensure that experienced meaningfulness among retail sales personnel by reducing the job stress as well as providing with job autonomy. Further, our results highlight the importance of ensuring pay satisfaction among retail sales personnel as this may enhance the effect of experienced

meaningfulness of the job to the employees. Managers can foster pay satisfaction by providing a competitive level of pay and by ensuring fairness in pay management (Chebat et al., 2002; Lawler, 1973).

When worker creativity is unleashed, problems are solved, productivity is improved, and both firms and workers benefit. This perspective builds on the earlier work redesign literature that maintains that work with greater skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). By being more satisfying for workers, such jobs are seen to produce better outcomes for firms (here the retail organisations) (Hackman et al., 1975). Lowe and Schellenberg (2001) provide empirical evidence for the high performance work system model's arguments: workers in their study who enjoyed more intrinsically satisfying work were more productive and reported higher levels of job satisfaction. The present study also corroborate the fact that job induced stress affects the performance of worker to practice customer orientation. The job must be made meaningful to the workers to enhance their level of perceived meaningfulness of the task they perform.

### *6.3 Limitation and Future Research*

The study is limited by several factors that should be addressed in future research. Firstly, the major limitation of this empirical work is the use of a cross-section of sample to examine the relationship between the constructs, which may be dynamic in nature. Cross-sectional data do not reflect any ongoing transformations that may affect the relationships between these constructs. For example, a service firm like the retail organization could be moving toward a greater or lesser market orientation, but the effect of market orientation on job attitudes of its retail sales personnel may lag behind. A longitudinal study would better capture the dynamics of these constructs.

The implication of our research should be evaluated along with caveats pertaining to research design, data collection, and homogeneous subjects. In terms of research design, we used a descriptive research design and as such are unable to establish a causal relationship between experienced meaningfulness and customer orientation and other predictors. Secondly, with respect to data collection, the individual retail sales personnel provided data on both the independent and dependent variables. Such practice creates the potential for response bias. Finally our conceptual framework does not take into consideration other possible moderators such as sales personnel personality characteristics viz., extroversion (Stewart, 1996), self-esteem etc. (Sujan et al., 1994). Undoubtedly, more theoretical and empirical works are needed to understand the effects job related and other perceptual variables on customer orientation.

### **References**

- Allen NJ, Meyer JP., (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization. *J Occup Psychol*; 63:1-18.
- Armstrong, J.S. & Overton, T., (1977). Estimating non-response bias in mail surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research* 14: 396-402.
- Becherer, R. & Maurer, J., (1999). The proactive personality disposition and entrepreneurial behaviour among small company presidents. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 37 (1), pp. 28-36.
- Bitner, Mary Jo, Booms, Bernhard H., & Tetreault, Mary Stanfield, (1990). The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favorable and Unfavorable Incidents. *Journal of Marketing*, 54 (January), pp. 71-84.
- Bove, Liliانا L. & Johnson, Lester W., (2000). A Customer-Service Worker Relationship Model. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 11(5), pp. 491-511.
- Bowen, David E & Schneider, Benjamin, (1985). Boundary-Spanning Employees and the Service Encounter: Some Guidelines for Future Management and Research. In John A. Czepiel, Michael R. Solomon, & Carol F. Suprenant (Eds.), *The Service Encounter*, (pp. 127-147). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Brady, M. K., & Cronin, J. J., (2001). Customer orientation: effects on customer service perceptions and outcome behaviours. *Journal of Services* 3(3), pp. 241-251.

- Brown T.J., J.C. Mowen, D.T. Donovan, and J.W. Licata, (2002). "The Customer Orientation of Service Workers: Personality Trait Effects on Self- and Supervisor Performance Ratings," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(February): 110-9.
- Bruhn, M., (1999). *Kundenorientierung—Bausteine eines Exzellenten Unternehmens*. Beck, München.
- Cartwright, S. and Cooper, C. (1997). *Managing workplace stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chebat JC, Babin B, Kollias K. (2002). What makes contact employees perform? Reactions to employee perceptions of managerial practices. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*. 20(7): pp.325—32.
- Comer JM, Machleit KA, Lagace RR, (1989). Psychometric assessment of a reduced version of INDSALES. *Journal of Business Research*. 18, pp. 291—302.
- Crank J., Regoli, R., Hewitt J., and Culbertson R. (1995). Institutional and organisational antecedents of role stress, work alienation, and anomie among police executives, in: *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 22, pp. 152-171.
- Cravens DW, Ingram TN, LaFroge RW, Young CE., (1993). Behavior-based and outcome-based salesforce control systems. *J Mark*; 57 (October), pp. 47-59.
- Deci E. L. & Ryan R. M., (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- Dunlap, B.J., Michael J. Dotson and Terry M. Chambers, (1988). "Perceptions of Real-estate Brokers and Buyers: A Sales-Oriented, Customer-Oriented Approach," *Journal of Business Research*, 17.
- Eby LT, Freeman DM, Rush MC, Lance CE., (1999). Motivational bases of affective organisational commitment: a partial test of an integrative theoretical model. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 72 (4), pp. 463-83.
- Goff BG, Boles JS, Bellenger DN, Stojack C., (1997). The influence of salesperson selling behaviors on customer satisfaction with products. *J Retail*; 73(2), pp. 171- 83.
- Hackman J.R., and Oldham G. R., (1980). *Work redesign*. Reading, Mass: Assison-Wesley Publishing.
- Hackman, J. R. and Oldham G. R., (1976). "Motivation through the Design of Work: Test of a Theory." *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, 16 (2), pp. 250-279.
- Hackman, J. R. Oldham G. R., Janson R and Purdy K., (1975). "A New Strategy for Job Enrichment." *California Management Review*, 17 (4), pp. 57-72.
- Hall DT., (1976). *Careers in organizations*. Pacific Palisades (CA) Goodyear.
- Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten & Hansen, Ursula, (2000). Relationship Marketing – Some Reflections on the State-of-the-Art of the Relational Concept. In Thorsten Hennig- Thurau & Ursula Hansen (Eds.), *Relationship Marketing: Gaining Competitive Advantage Through Customer Satisfaction and Customer Retention* (pp. 3-27). Berlin: Springer.
- Heskett JL, Jones TO, Loveman G, Sasser Jr WE, Schlesinger LA., (1994). Putting the service- profit chain to work. *Harv Bus Rev* (Taipei); 72(2): pp. 164- 74.
- Hipkin, I., (2000). TQM: The paradox of empowerment and conformance in the service sector. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 31 (1), pp. 1-8.
- Hoffman, Douglas K., and Thomas N. Ingram, (1991). "Creating Customer-Oriented Employees: The Case in Home Health Care," *Journal of Human Capacity Management*, 11 (2), pp. 24-32.

Homburg C, Hoyer WD, and Fassnacht M, (2002). Service Orientation of a Retailer's Business strategy: Dimensions, antecedents and performance outcomes, *Journal of Marketing*, 66, pp. 86-101.

Homburg, C., & Werner, H., (1998). Messung und Management von Kundenzufriedenheit. *Marketing Manage.* 42(4), pp. 131-135.

Homburg, C., Pflesser, C., (2000). A multiple-layer model of market oriented organizational culture: measurement issues and performance outcomes. *J. Marketing Res.* 37, pp. 449-462.

Johns G, Xie, JL, Fang Y. (1992). Mediating and moderating effects in job design. *J Manage.* 18(4), pp. 657-76.

Kohli AK, Jaworski BJ, (1990). Market orientation: the construct, research proposition, and managerial implications. *J Mark;* 54, pp. 1-18.

Kounka C, Scharitzer D, Carayon P, Hoonakker P, Sonnek A, and Sainfort F., (2007). Customer orientation among employees in public administration: A transnational, longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Ergonomics;* 38, pp. 307-315.

Kotler, Philip (1972). A Generic Concept of Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 36 (April), pp. 46-54.

Langerak F., (2001). Effects of market orientation on the behavior of salespersons and purchasers, channel relationships, and performance of manufacturers. *International Journal of Marketing.* 182, pp. 21-34.

Lawler EE., (1971). Pay and organizational effectiveness: a psychological view. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lawler EE., (1973). Motivation in work organizations. Monterey (CA): Brooks Cole.

Lowe, G.S., and G. Schellenberg (2001). "What's a Good Job? The Importance of Employment Relationships." Canadian Policy Research Networks.

Martin, C., (2000). Acid tests of employees' customer service-orientation. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14 (2), pp. 90-91.

Mathiew JE, & Zajac DM, (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents correlates. And consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin.* 108, pp. 171-194.

Michaels, Ronald E. and Ralph L. Day (1985). "Measuring Customer Orientation of Salespeople: A Replication with Industrial Buyers," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22 (November), pp. 443-446.

Mowdy RT, Porter LW and Steers RM, (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior.* 14:224-7.

Narver JC & Slater SF., (1990). The Effect of a market orientation on business profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, 54, pp. 20-35.

O'Gorman, C. & Doran, R., (1999). Mission statements in small and medium-sized businesses. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 37 (4), pp. 59-67.

O'Hara B, Boles JS and Johnston MW. (1991). The influence of personal variables on salesperson selling orientation. *J Pers Sell Sales Manage.* 11(Winter).

Parnell, J., Carraher, S., & Odom, R., (2000). Strategy and performance in the entrepreneurial computer software industry. *Journal of Business & Entrepreneurship*, 12 (3), pp. 49-66.

Reicheld F.F. and Sasser W. E., (1990). Zero defections: quality comes to services. *Harvard Business Review.* 68 (September-October), pp. 105-11.

- Renn RW and Vandenberg RJ., (1995). The critical psychological states: an underrepresented component in job characteristics model research. *J Manage*; 21(2), pp. 279—303.
- Ruekert RW., (1992). Developing a market orientation: an organizational strategy perspective. *Int J Res Mark*, 9(3), pp. 225–245.
- Saxe, R., & Weitz, B. A., (1982). The SOCO scale: a measure of the customer orientation of salespeople, *Journal of Marketing Res.* 9, 343-351.
- Selnes F, Jaworski BJ, Kohli AK., (1996). Market orientation in United States and Scandinavian companies: a cross-cultural view. *Scand J Manage Stud*, 12(2), pp. 139– 157.
- Sergeant, Andrew & Frenkel, Stephen, (2000). When Do Customer Contact Employees Satisfy Customers? *Journal of Service Research*, 3(2), pp. 18-34.
- Siguaw JA, Brown G, Widing R., (1994). The influence of the market orientation of the firm on sales force behavior and attitudes. *J Mark Res.* 31, pp. 106– 16.
- Sujan H., Weitz BA. Kumar N. (1994). Learning orientati<sup>o</sup>n. Working smart, and effective selling, *Journal of Marketing*. 58(July), pp. 39—52.
- Tadepalli, Raghu, (1995). "Measuring Customer Orientation of a Salesperson: Modifications of the SOCO Scale," *Psychology and Marketing*, 12 (May), pp. 177-187.
- Thakor, M. V., & Joshi, A. W., (2005). Motivating salesperson customer orientation insights from job characteristics model. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, pp. 584-592.
- Williams LJ., (1988). Affective and nonaffective components of job satisfaction and organizational commitment as determinants of organizational citizenship and in role behaviors. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Indiana University.
- Wright, N., Pearce, J., & Busbin, J., (1997). Linking customer service-orientation to competitive performance: Does the marketing concept really work? *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 5 (4), pp. 23-33.
- Yilmaz C, & Hunt SD, (2001). Salesperson cooperation: the influence of relational task, organizational, and personal factors. *Journal of Academic Marketing Science* 29(4), pp. 335-57.
- Zeithaml, V.A. and Bitner, M., (2000). *Services Marketing. Integrating Customer Focus across the Firm*, 2. ed., McGraw-Hill, New York et al.
- Zinger, J., LeBrasseur, R., & Zanibbi, L., (2001). Factors influencing early stage performance in Canadian microenterprises. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 6 (2), pp. 129-150.