

CHAPTER 1

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Peter. F. Drucker, the legendary management expert, in the mid 20th Century, had emphatically stressed that customer orientation was the single reason which determined the success of a business in the long run. While commenting on the customer oriented marketing, he also stressed that continuous innovation and delivering customer contentment were the two important concern that the marketer must pay attention, in order to sustain in the competitive, turbulent and volatile business environment. Kotler, in 1967, coined the new marketing concept which stated that it was the corporate profit that comes out of satisfying customer needs through integrated marketing activities. However, based on the old marketing concept it was believed that profit did not come out of sales volume alone. Towards the end of the 1970s Grönroos had presented the service marketing concept (Grönroos, 1979), which also pointed out differences from the traditional product marketing concept. Furthermore, a group of Scandinavian marketing researchers during the 1980s started realising that the service marketing concept remained valid and relevant for business-to-business marketing, especially when studying buyer and seller relationships. As understood and defined by the Nordic School of Thought, the relationship marketing was fundamentally different from the traditional 4Ps marketing hypothesis (Grönroos, 1989, 1994, 1996, 1997, Gummesson, 1987, Storbacka, et al, 1994, Holmlund, 1996, Brännback, 1999). This rationale was thus emerged as a new paradigm within marketing and firms started to believe that customer orientation as an important dimension which called for special attention to sustain in the competitive environment.

The brief descriptions of development in marketing, stated above in many respects was greatly over-simplified (Grönroos, 1989, 1994, 1996, 1997, Gummesson, 1987 Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992, Webster, 1992, Storbacka, et al, 1994, Holmlund, 1996, Brännback, 1997a, b, 1999). However, it provided the purpose of paving the road into similar issues of concern, i.e.

customer-orientation. Common to the above mentioned 'milestones' there was a criticism towards the existing mindset of the marketers which failed to endorse the requirement of customer-orientation, i.e. by identifying the current and future customer needs and thereby satisfying those needs (Brännback, 1999).

The above mentioned perspective of Drucker still considered to be valid and would also equally applicable in today's cut-throat aggressive environment (Moore, 1995; Tapscott, 1995; Moore, 1996; Shapiro and Varian, 1999; Hagel III and Singer, 1999a, b; Brännback, 1999). Peter. F. Drucker's point of view contained two issues: customer corporate focus and innovation, both of which are considered to be the foundation of accomplishment of corporate goals.

1.1.1 The Concept of Customer-Orientation

The evolution stated above could be possible to plot on a time scale as depicted in Fig. 1.1. However, the borders between a "production-oriented era" and a "customer-oriented" era were not very clear which was pointed out by a number of authors (Day 1998, Dalgic, 1998, Brännback, 1999), and in reality they tended to glide over each other.

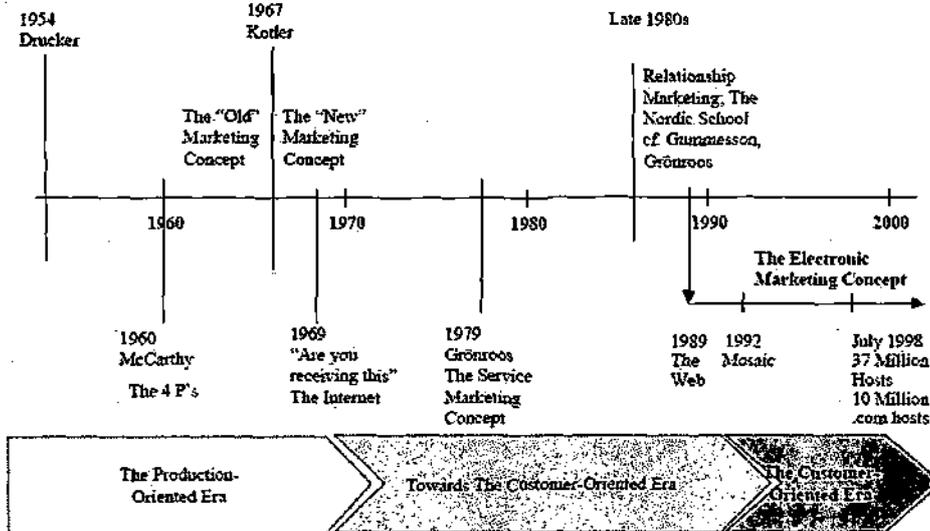


Figure 1.1: From production-oriented to customer-oriented views (reproduced from Brännback, 1999)

It was found by McCarthy in 1960 that marketing concept is essentially a new philosophy in contrast to the old production-oriented philosophy. The new philosophy as had been stated by McCarthy in 1960 was labelled as market orientation. On the other hand, Felton (1959) had described the marketing concept a "corporate state of mind". In the marketing concept stated by McCarthy's, the objective was directed towards the firms to focus all its efforts on satisfying its customers, at a profit. According to McCarthy's marketing concept it held three basic elements: (i) a customer orientation, (ii) an integrated company effort, and (iii) a profit-goal rather than just a sales-goal. In the process of implementing the marketing concept it was considered most likely that it may require changes in managerial attitudes as well as in methods and procedures, and organisational structures (Brännback, 1999). McCarthy argued that changes were necessary in all of these areas. According to Brännback, who stated in 1999 that it took almost four decades for managers to understand that customer-orientation was not a simple departmental activity but a philosophy, which had to be disseminated through-out the company and it should be a part of the corporate culture. However, McCarthy had introduced marketing-mix as a tool for achieving the marketing-oriented philosophy in practice and it was regarded to be an important hypothesis to become successful.

In the year 1967, Kotler also followed the same line of thought and initiated a concept what he defined as the new marketing concept. Kotler had acknowledged that in reality marketing might officially stand at the end of the assembly lines, and therefore he stated in 1967 that "but unofficially its influence must be felt on the drawing boards." According to Kotler, the "old" marketing concept was in fact a sales concept paying very little, if any, consideration in satisfying customer requirements (Brännback, 1999). Moreover, the fact was that, this required the co-ordination of several activities, which at that time was considered to be a propensity to reside in departmental organisations to which they belong and functioned (advertising, marketing research, personal selling, etc.). Unfortunately they failed to realise that integration between all the

departments was a prerequisite for the practice of marketing orientation. In other words Kotler pointed at what McCarthy some years earlier termed a lack of amalgamated focus (McCarthy, 1960; Brännback, 1999).

Kotler's "new" marketing concept, in fact, had reversed the logic of the old one to some degree. This was because in the "old" marketing concept the company began from its own existing products and found techniques to increase the quantum of sales volume. However, in the "new" marketing concept the company started with the customer (existing and potential) and worked its way back into the company asking what augmented products and what solutions are necessary for satisfying the needs of the customers (Brännback, 1999). After thirty years Sterne (1996, 1998) in the context of Internet business had stated that there was the need for the organisations to put on their "customer glasses" and try to imagine what the customer glimpsed and perceived.

In Fig. 1.2, two concepts had been depicted together with a third concept, the electronic marketing concept, referring to the quite different rules of the game in Internet business (Rayport and Sviokla, 1994; Moore, 1995; Tapscott, 1995; Moore, 1996; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Sterne, 1996, 1998; Brännback, 1997a; b, Brännback and Puhakainen, 1998; Brännback, 1999; Hagel and Singer, 1999a, b; Shapiro and Varian, 1999). The electronic marketing concept was seen as a measure of customer perceived value which went beyond the needs and started from the ever changing expectations and profits (Brännback and Puhakainen, 1998). The difficulty here lied to find a way of measuring customer perceived values, which as we know, can be determined in a countless combination of ways (Rayport and Sviokla, 1994; Storbacka, et al, 1994; Grönroos, 1996; Holmlund, 1997; Brännback, 1999).

The marketing field initially experienced the formal introduction of the service marketing concept and then the relationship marketing concept, beforehand the concept of the electronic marketing came into being. However, informally the

service marketing concept originated from the relationship marketing concept and was first used for studying buyer-seller relationships within industrial markets. These two concepts could be seen as additional steps towards the refinement of marketing-orientation and customer-orientation (Brännback, 1999). It was indeed strange, that the essence of customer-orientation seemed realised by the marketers after the path breaking comment made by Nestlé's CEO (Day, 1998).

The service marketing concept (Grönroos, 1979, 1989, 1996, Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996) emerged as a result of criticism of the traditional marketing-mix paradigm, but also from realising that services diverge from products in many respects which should not require elaborate explanation at this juncture. In brief services cannot be stored, they are produced and consumed simultaneously, they are generally intangible, and they are heterogeneous. Based on the last characteristics referred, it would not be improper to argue that the quality of the service would dependent on employee satisfaction (Alajoutsjärvi, 1996; Brännback, 1999). It could not be guaranteed that there was a match between what had been promoted and the actual outcome achieved (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996; Brännback, 1999).

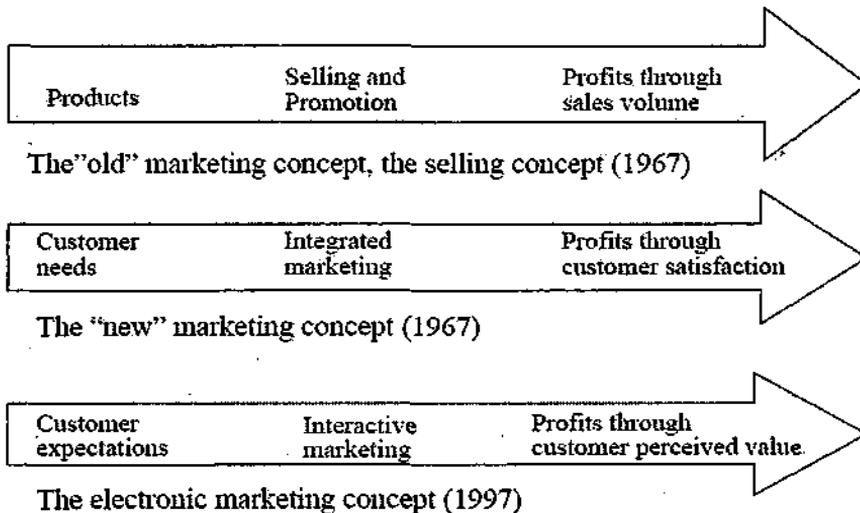


Figure 1.2: Three different marketing concepts (reproduced from Brännback, 1999)

The primary interest in the buyer-seller relationship lied whether the customer perceived value was seen as a result of interaction between personnel and customers. The relationship marketing concept essentially derived out of it (Alajoutsjärvi, 1996). However, a group of researchers realised that the service marketing concept was also applicable in industrial marketing context for studying business relationships (Grönroos, 1996; Brännback, 1999). The traditional marketing-mix directed critical attention away from the most essential factor, the customers for whom the company survives. The relationship marketing concept distanced itself from the traditional marketing-mix theory in an attempt to be closer to the customers (Grönroos, 1994, 1996). According to Brännback, Day's statement given in 1998 it truly hits the bull's eye with the following argument:

"Even firms with first-class technologies and business systems have only the necessary conditions for success; unless they have superior skills in *understanding, satisfying and retaining* customers they will not realize their full potential."

If we look at business practice we can again make the same conclusion as Day (1998) had experienced "it is in vogue to become market-driven". This was well familiar basically in all the annual reports and thereby the employees of the organisation readily stated that their organisation is customer oriented.

However, most of the time organisations failed to put the customer up front, they failed to comprehend that each time they were confronting a customer it was the moment of truth that could not be denied. Throughout the world, most of the organisations and its personnel failed to realise that customer-orientation was the concern of everyone in the organisation, be it the CEO, a line manager, a lathe operator, a switchboard operator or for the people in the marketing department. Interesting visualised facts that were observed in this field seemed to be the greatest paradoxes in business practice where people, who held the positions as,

for example, market researchers or marketing managers, or in other words the full-time marketers, appeared to be those who interacted least with the customers. Fascinatingly, on the other hand, those people who worked in production or R&D, i.e. persons who by their job level were far away from the front desk, were found themselves interacting with end-customers quite often and sometimes even on a daily basis. It was found that since these people were not trained to interact with customers it was done naturally, which sometimes worked and sometimes did not. The customer care was considered to be a synonym for customer-orientation, which was very much decisive to the companies because they had to train their service personnel in these essences. On the otherhand, if the arguments from service marketing and relationship marketing were taken into consideration, where the quality of the performance (service or customer relationship) was dependent on how satisfied employees were, it was concluded that these were not the 'feel good' exercises but a necessary condition for business success (Brännback, 1999).

The interaction between external customers (traditional customers) and internal customers (employees) was in fact considered as the customer integration. This feature had its root in service marketing and since then, it became a common knowledge within marketers. However, it appeared as if the views of employees as internal customers elsewhere were fairly a novel realisation. The argument mainly concentrated in the understanding of customer integration, which bounded competence development tightly to the concept of customer-orientation.

In marketing, customer orientation was being considered as a taken-for-granted fundamental principle among the marketers. The marketing managers always gave emphasis to "stay close to the customer" and to "put the customer at the top of the organizational chart" and consequently defined the purpose of a business as the creation and retention of satisfied customers. However, still many firms failed to direct their businesses toward their customers. For the marketing

managers, in any type of businesses, developing a customer-oriented organization had always been a big challenge (Kosuge, 2006).

It was well established among marketing theorists that firms which focussed their activities on the needs of their customers, i.e. behave in a customer-oriented way, performed better than those companies who did not (Donavan et al., 2004). The studies by Narver and Slater (1990), Jaworski and Kohli (1993) empirically substantiated the economic potential of a firm's customer orientation. At the same time, research works looked into the concept of overall firm customer orientation and had analyzed the meaning of customer orientation, in terms of processes, policies, and employees. It was because of the intangible nature of services, their high level of customer interaction and integration, the customer orientation was expected to play a crucial role in terms of economic success for service companies. In addition to this, the researchers who analyzed the role of service employees as a dimension of service quality studies (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Dabholkar et al., 2000), which explicitly addressed the concept of customer orientation of service employees (Kelley, 1992; Brown et al. 2002; Donavan et al. 2004; Hennig-Thurau and Thurau 2003; Hennig-Thurau, 2004).

It was already known that the behaviour of service employees affected the customers' perception of the service which was been demonstrated in the context of service quality research (Bitner et al., 1990). More specifically, the researchers had identified employee related aspects of the service as the dimensions of the customer service quality assessment. For example, three out of five service quality dimensions of Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) SERVQUAL evaluated directly or indirectly for addressing the behaviour of the service employees (i.e. responsiveness, assurance, and empathy). Similarly, Dabholkar et al. (2000) had identified personal attention and comfort as provided by a service provider's employees as components of service quality. However, as the service quality construct represented a customer-sided view, it was a natural consequence that, none of these authors used a company perspective while

modelling the different facets of employee behaviour that impacted service quality. Therefore, a service provider gained only limited information on the managerial action that was needed to select and train their service employees (Hennig-Thurau, 2004) for formulating service marketing strategies.

If managers of the organisation could establish a high level of customer orientation in their employees' attitudes, this would generate a higher level of stability in behaviour as compared to only training employees to behave in a customer oriented way. As Peccei and Rosenthal in the year 2000 noted, "it is critical to instil or to strengthen proactive service *attitudes or values* among front line workers as an important route to the desired customer-oriented behaviours". While directly influencing the attitudes of the employees, it was not as easy for the managers as influencing their behaviours. There were certainly a number of managerial approaches that could influence employees' attitudes. Managers could either screen the potential employees in terms of their orientation toward customers or they should attempt to instil positive customer oriented attitudes into the employees very early in their training and employing procedure (Stock & Hoyer, 2005).

On the other hand, the measuring of customer orientation had created more confusion rather than definitive answers. The difficulty of measuring customer orientation stemmed from the ongoing debate within the industrial/organisational psychology literature on the use of broad versus narrow measures of personality. Some researchers argued that the measurement of broad personality traits was preferable to narrow personality traits because they were more predictive of overall job performances (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1996). Advocates for the broad perspective, favour summing many different behavioural indicators across situations, building broad, "basic" personality constructs, such as the Big Five personality traits (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

Though we did not include the personality traits in this research directly however, the argument for a more narrow approach suggested that a construct-oriented approach of personality research provided a better measure of job performance, because it required the specification of the relationship of the personality traits with multiple dimensions of job performance. Schneider, Hough, and Dunnette (1996) suggested that the use of narrower traits on both the predictor and the criterion side helped to ensure that: a) as much of the variance in the predictors as possible was valid for the criteria to be predicted, and b) the criteria to be predicted were the criteria that mattered most for the job. As a result for most of the theorists a narrow approach to customer orientation was preferred over the broad approach since these traits were better able to retain specific variance that could enhance criterion-related validity (Alge, Gresham, Heneman, Fox, & McMasters, 2002).

Overall, what we observed that in various attempts many companies designated themselves as customer-oriented but in various instances they failed to do so. It was definitely true that the customer orientation and 'total customer care' would definitely provide superior value to customers and that this was certainly a key success factor in global competition. However, customer orientation on the level of artefacts would yield nothing; at the worst it would have a negative effect (Brännback, 1999). Customer-orientation had to become a fundamental organisational value which the employees start learning immediately after joining the organisation and learning the culture prevailed in the organisation. Looking at the business, today we found that many firms, indeed, were in the process of learning to perceive customers differently than they used to do earlier. In today's cut-throat competitive situation the customers could not be treated as mere objects, rather they should be considered as subjects having adequate knowledge.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Hackman and Oldham's (1975, 1976, 1980) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) was one of the most influential theories ever presented in the field of organizational psychology. It had served as the basis for scores of studies and job redesign interventions over the past two decades, and this research had been extensively reviewed (Fried & Ferris 1987; Loher, Noe, Moeller & Fitzgerald, 1985; Taber & Taylor, 1990). The vast majority of research supported the validity of the JCM, although criticisms and modifications had been labelled against it (Roberts & Glick, 1981; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Hackman and Oldham had developed the model by identifying psychological states important for job satisfaction and motivation. After that they went backwards to identify job characteristics that could elicit psychological states of the employees. Thus, the model was centred on the critical psychological states, and "the core job characteristics were identified to serve the critical psychological states" (Johns, et al., 1992).

The argument of JCM was that the motivation to work is actually 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. Furthermore, according to the JCM these three critical psychological states, in turn, were determined by five job characteristics—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Renn and Vandenberg, 1995). Later on, a thorough empirical testing of the full model (i.e. JCM) had confirmed that the experienced meaningfulness was the key mediator of all the five core job characteristics of motivation (Johns et al., 1992), thereby making it a potent driver of motivation. It was already been observed that job-related effects had been examined not so extensively in prior customer orientation research and given the importance of experienced meaningfulness in

JCM, we focussed on the effect of this affective evaluation of the job on customer orientation. In the discussion below, the relationship between experienced meaningfulness, customer orientation is referred to as the focal main effect. In addition to establishing that job-induced psychological states (or affective evaluations of the job) affected the employee work behaviour. The JCM argues that this effect would be moderated by employee affective evaluations of the work context. We focus upon various other aspects of the work context like pay satisfaction, job stress, job autonomy, job variety as well as job supervision—and then examine the moderating effects of salesperson affective evaluations on all of these aspects on the focal main effect. Here in the study the organizational identification construct represents the salesperson's affective evaluation with organizational values, and the pay satisfaction construct represents the salesperson's affective evaluation of their pay.

1.2.1 Customer orientation

Helping the customers to make the right purchase decisions that would satisfy their preferences was an important part of the salesperson's/serviceperson's function (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Spiro and Weitz, 1990; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). In marketing, there was two selling strategies; 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 those objectives. Customers had preferences both in the immediate as well in the long term modes. Typically, short-term preferences (or wants) were felt and clearly articulated whereas long-term preferences (or needs) tended to remain latent (Thakor and Joshi, 2005). A customer-oriented salesperson aimed to uncover and satisfy these latent needs. Indeed, as Saxe and Weitz (1982) stated, "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, was to satisfy articulated customer preferences. As the item in the widely used SOCO scale clarified (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Thakor and Joshi, 2005), the two selling

orientations that also differed with respect to means. Whereas, customer orientation placed 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 encouraged opportunistic (John, 1984) means (e.g., I paint too rosy a picture of my products to make them sound as good as possible). Thus in this research, we focus on customer orientation as a key characteristics to measure for the purpose of focussing on uncovering and satisfying the customer's long-term needs by listening to and working with customers.

1.2.2 Experienced meaningfulness

If the sales personnel/service personnel believe that they would experience a feeling of accomplishment from this activity they would be motivated to expend the additional effort that was required by customer-oriented selling. In order to develop this belief, salespeople had to perceive customer-oriented selling as being an important activity (Hall, 1976; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). By making the work "count" in the salesperson's "own system of values", the experienced meaningfulness of the salesperson would enhance the activity importance (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Thus, by fostering the perception of activity importance, experienced meaningfulness generated sales personnel/ service personnel belief that they would experience a feeling of accomplishment from having successfully engaged in customer-oriented selling. Consistent with this argument, prior research works had found experienced meaningfulness to be positively related to intrinsic motivation (Eby et al., 1999). Thus in this research, we focus on experienced meaningfulness as another key job characteristics along with the prior customer orientation in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

1.2.3 Organizational identification

We found that the experienced meaningfulness as one of the key determinants of activity importance; however, it was not the only determinant. Activities take

place within organizational contexts and as such, the values of this context could shape employee perceptions of activity importance (Thakor and Joshi, 2005). However, the extent to which the organisational employees accept the organisational values, the effect of organizational values on employee perceptions was in fact conditional (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). We define organizational identification as a state of psychological congruence between salesperson and organizational values (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). There is a commonly held belief that organizational values across the industrial landscape would fulfil the long-term needs and wants of customers (Langerak, 2001; Reicheld and Sasser, 1990; Thakor and Joshi, 2005). As a matter of fact, we disagree that when organizational identification is high among the salespeople / service-people, they are likely to regard customer-oriented selling as an important activity, which in turn shape their belief that they will experience the feeling of accomplishment upon successful completion of this activity. Furthermore, we also expect that organizational identification would also intrinsically motivate salespeople / servicepeople to engage in customer orientation. Since our conceptual framework is predicted upon JCM (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), we establish organizational identification as the moderator of the focal main effect. Thus in this research, we focus on organizational identification as another key job characteristics along with the prior customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

1.2.4 Pay satisfaction

The positive affective evaluation of the magnitude of the reward that is received in exchange for the investment of effort is known to be 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 / serviceperson's ability to obtain valued outcomes. Thus, we can postulate that on one hand, the experienced meaningfulness and organizational identification motivate salesperson effort by enhancing the feeling of accomplishment.

Similarly, on the other hand, pay satisfaction may likely to motivate salesperson's effort by enabling the salesperson to pursue valued outcomes (Lawler, 1971, 1973). Accordingly, we expect a positive effect of pay satisfaction on customer orientation (Chebat et al., 2002). Based on the JCM (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), we argue that when pay satisfaction is high, the positive relationship between experienced meaningfulness and salesperson motivation to expend the effort that is required by customer orientation would be enhanced. Thereby, in this research, we focus on pay satisfaction as other key job characteristics along with the prior customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness, and organisational identification in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

1.2.5 Job Stress

We have observed in various literatures 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 had explored the causes of job stress and its impact (Cushman, Evans, Namerow 1995; Gibson, McGrath & Reid 1989; Himle, Jayaratne & Thyness 1989; Siefert, Jayaratne & Chess 1991), far less research had examined the impact of job stress on job satisfaction of service personnel. Gellis (2001) observed that job stress was negatively correlated with job satisfaction among service personnel in hospitals. According to Saxe and Weitz (1982), salespeople/servicepeople are likely to engage in customer-oriented selling when the benefits outweigh the costs. In order to satisfy customer expectations, the sales persons require a lot of energy and enhance identification to job, however we found that there are little studies available that were establishing links between customer orientation and drain of emotional resources and/or cynicism (Hollet and Fournier, 2007). By considering the above facts, in this research, we focus on job stress as another key job characteristic along with the prior customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness, organisational

identification, pay satisfaction in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

1.2.6 Job Autonomy

According to previous literatures, we found that job autonomy was generally defined as the degree of freedom that employees have in making job related decisions (Agho, Mueller, Price 1993). It was also been defined as "independence in thought, goal-setting, and determination of work methods" (Buffum, Ritvo 1984). It is different from input into decision-making, which deals with issues at the organizational or policy level and not everyday job issues (Allen, Lambert, Pasupuleti, Tolar and Ventura, 2004).

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 was typically demanding because of the challenging marketplace and the performance-based compensation system. Salespeople needed 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 / serviceperson learning and self-efficacy. This is because, the perception of job autonomy reflected two of the efficacy enhancing information sources specified by Bandura (1986): enactive mastery and persuasion. Henceforth, in this research, we focus on job autonomy as another key job characteristic along with the prior customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness, organisational identification, pay satisfaction, job stress in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

1.2.7 Job Variety

Job variety is the degree of variation in the job (Price & Mueller 1986). Some jobs require role performance that is highly repetitive, while other jobs have significant

degree of variety in the required tasks and how they are performed (Mueller, Boyer, Price & Iverson 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". Thus, in this research, we focus on job variety as another key job 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.

1.2.8 Job Supervision

It was found that most employees had a direct supervisor, a person who guides and directs them. Supervision could drastically vary not only from organization to organization, but also within the same organisation. On one hand, it was observed that there were supervisors who provided quality, open, motivation, and supportive supervision; on the other hand, there were supervisors who were inconsistent, did not motivate employees to meet high standards, had poor communication styles and were unfriendly and unfair (Allen, Lambert, Pasupuleti, Tolar and Ventura, 2004).

The supervisor's initiation of customer orientation appeared a strong impact on customer-oriented attitudes. Thus, by serving as a role model, supervisors could help develop positive customer oriented attitudes in their salespeople / servicepeople. In addition, by showing consideration and developing positive relationships with salespeople / service-people, supervisor might have a further positive impact on customer-oriented attitudes (Stock and Hoyer, 2002).

Poor supervision was found to be linked to burnout (Cherniss 1980a; Itzhaaky and Aviad-Hiebloom 1998) and job dissatisfaction (Cherniss and Egnatios 1978) among social and human service workers. Supportive supervision was found to be associated with increased job satisfaction (Poulin 1994). Thus, in this research, we focus on job supervision also as another key job characteristic



along with the prior customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness, organisational identification, pay satisfaction, job stress, and job variety in finding the impact of job characteristics in motivating customer orientation of service personnel.

1.3 MARKETING AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

Marketing is the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return (Kotler et al., 2008). It had been seen that despite the growing interest in the topic of marketing, there had been insufficient discussions as well as attempt on issues which were concerning with the successful implementation of the marketing concept. None-the-less, the market practitioners were simply expected to accept the concept as the core of marketing (Turner & Spencer, 1997; Alhakimi & Baharun, 2009). A plethora of marketing literatures, clarified the implementation issue, a new outlook for viewing the marketing concept from a different perspective. For implementing the marketing concept the term "market orientation" is now used in the literatures (e.g. Narver & Slater, 1990; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Shapiro, 1998). However, it can be said that whenever an organisation is said to be market oriented, it is obvious that the organization had to suit its actions to be consistent with the marketing concept (Alhakimi and Baharun, 2009). Customer value is a theory emphasising the implementation of customer-centric thinking in marketing, and customer value is regarded as the premise to achieve a positive business performance, these are the two arguments which had already been emerged while establishing the link between marketing orientation and customer value (Chen and Quester, 2009). Market orientation had been assigned as the top priority status in terms of research needs over the last decade, by the Marketing Science Institute. Thus, the marketing literature had acknowledged the role of market orientation as a major source of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Castro et al., 2005; Alhakimi and Baharun, 2009). In their research, it is Deshpande and Webster

(1989); made an attempt to link the idea of market orientation to the organizational culture. Therefore, the market orientation was considered as the organizational culture that produced the necessary behaviours to create superior value for customers (Narver and Slater, 1990) and as a behavioural process through specific organizational activities (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). On the otherhand, Hurley and Hult (1998) suggested that within market orientation, a set of behaviours and an aspect of culture, both were essential components of market orientation. If we look the viewpoint of other authors, we would find that other authors viewed market orientation as an innovation (Rogers, 1983; Liu, 1995; Fritz, 1996). Analytically, what we found that one of the major issues the scholars agreed upon a lack of systematic effort to develop valid measures of market orientation (Kaynak and Kara, 2004; Alhakimi and Baharun, 2009).

According to the Kohli & Jaworski's (1990) definition of market orientation, they suggested that the measurement of market orientation needed to assess the degree to which a company was market oriented, viz. the measurement generated intelligence, disseminated it, and took actions based on it (Alhakimi and Baharun, 2009). Other researchers researching in this area had also suggested similar behavioural conceptualizing viewpoints related to the firm (Day, 1994; Deshpande and Farley, 1998; Alhakimi and Baharun, 2009). If we view closely we would find that, Narver and Slater (1990) offered a slightly different perspective by including competitor information and interfunctional coordination in the domain of their operationalisation of market orientation. According to their definition, what we found that, a firm which was termed market oriented would exhibit three behavioural components: a customer orientation, a competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination along with two decision criteria a long-term focus and profitability.

In general, various authors define market orientation as, "The set of cross-functional processes and activities directed at creating and satisfying customers through continuous needs-assessment". According to Narver and Slater (1998),

they also agreed with the authors that the continuous creation of superior value for customers was the heart of marketing and, hence, market orientation. It was also said that, creating value for customers should be the primary concern (Ohmae, 1988; Webster, 1994; Narver and Slater, 1998). An organization's total commitment to the continuous creation of superior value for customers was the core of market orientation. Thus, clearly, market orientation comprised a pervasive "customer value orientation" (Narver and Slater, 1998).

A marketer in an organization, who implemented the marketing concept always, believed that organizations could ultimately achieve the success by satisfying customer needs (Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 1993; Kotler 1997; Brown, Mowen, Donaven and Licata, 2002).

It was already established that customer oriented selling or customer orientation evolved from the marketing concept (Brown, Mowen, Donaven and Licata, 2002). According to Saxe and Weitz (1982), the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that would satisfy customer needs was referred to as customer oriented selling, which could be termed as a behavioural concept. According to Narver and Slater (1990) we found that, they had defined customer orientation as the sufficient understanding of one's target buyers to be able to create superior value for them in a continuous basis. Henceforth, it could be understood that, a seller had to recognize a buyer's entire value chain (Day and Wensley, 1988; Brown, Mowen, Donaven and Licata, 2002). As a matter of fact, this dimension of customer orientation had received a good deal of attention in the literature (Deng and Dart, 1994). While interviewing organisational managers Kohli and Jaworski (1990) we had found that the customer focus was one of the critical elements in determining market orientation.

It was discerned that in most types of service organizations the individual service workers were the direct participants in implementing the marketing concept

(Brown, Mowen, Donaven and Licata, 2002). According to (Rust, Anthony, Zahorik, and Keiningham 1996) they opined that the "personal interaction component of services is often a primary determinant of the customer's overall satisfaction."

So, we found that, despite the apparent importance of employees' customer orientation while implementation of the marketing concept in the market driven company, research works done on this particular construct was very limited. The first attempt what we found in directly measuring the customer orientation at the individual level was performed by Saxe and Weitz (1982). They primarily had developed a 24 item scale with two dimensions incorporated within it (i.e., 12 positively phrased customer orientation items and 12 negatively phrased selling orientation items) to measure the extent to which a salesperson / serviceperson sought to increase long term customer satisfaction. Although their research indicated that customer orientation was related to sales performance. However, after analyzing we found that neither Saxe & Weitz (1982) nor researchers had conducted follow up studies (i.e., Michaels and Day 1985; Tadepalli 1995) instead they had only investigated the possible determinants of customer orientation. Hereafter, in our study maximum emphasis was given to this aspect and the identification of determinants of customer orientation.

1.4 JOB CHARACTERISTICS MODEL AND ITS MODERATING EFFECTS

In the study of Hackman and Lawler (1971), they identified three "critical psychological states" that a job required to be upgraded if it was to be internally motivating. The foundation of the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) as developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980) was the reactions to job enrichment, changing the nature of the tasks employees perform (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) through job redesign. This model was developed for determining the employees' reactions towards job redesign. From the JCM the experienced meaningfulness of the work was being derived, which was considered as the

experienced responsibility for work outcomes, as well as the knowledge of results. Hackman and Oldham (1975) worked backwards to identify five job characteristics that were likely to increase the experience of the three psychological states. The proposed original JCM model appeared as under:

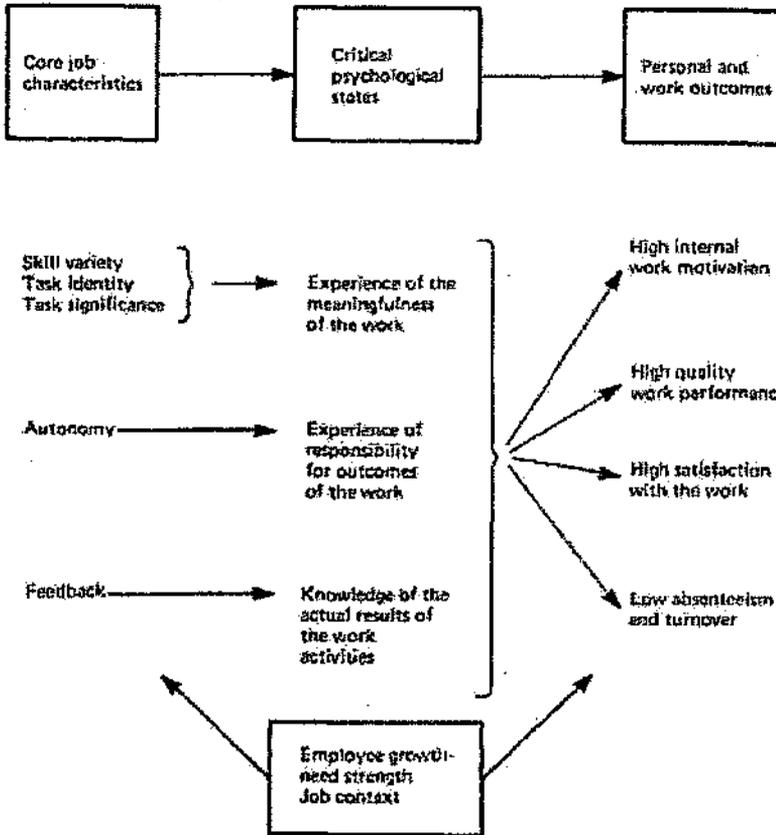


Figure 1.3: The Job Characteristics Model (reproduced from Hackman, 1976).

The Job Characteristics Model of Hackman and Oldham (1976) presented above, depicted the following dimensions:

- (1) Skill variety, which focused on the extent to which a job required a number of different skills and talents. The job of a personnel specialist would receive a high score on this dimension, whereas the job of an operator on a production assembly line would receive a low score.

(2) Task identity, which focused on the extent to which the job required the performance of a whole unit, which was identifiable with a visible outcome. The job of a carpenter, who constructed a piece of furniture from raw material, would receive a high score on this dimension, whereas an operator who soldered wires on to a piece of equipment would receive a low score.

(3) Task significance, which focused on the extent to which the job created a significant impact on the lives and work of other people inside and outside the organisation. The job of a surgeon in a hospital would receive a high score on this dimension, whereas the job of a filing clerk would receive a low score.

(4) Autonomy, which could be viewed as the degree of freedom, discretion, and independence that a job possessed at both the planning and execution stages. The job of a college or university lecturer would receive a high score on this dimension, whereas the job of an accounts clerk, being closely supervised, would receive a low score.

(5) Feedback from the job, which focused on the extent to which direct and unambiguous information about the effectiveness of the job holder's performance was available while s/he was engaged in carrying out the job activities. The airline pilot received information on the progress of the flight from the instrument panel on the cockpit and from ground control. The pilot's job would receive a high score on this dimension, whereas the job of a sales representative, who had to wait some time to establish the effectiveness of his or her performance, would receive a low score.

Hackman and Oldham (1976), proposed that an overall Motivating Potential Score (MPS) was more useful, while the effects of each characteristic could be examined individually. MPS score denoted the level of enrichment in a job caused by an individual's perceived presence of various levels of the five job characteristics in a job, as stipulated by the JCM. This score, or indicator, was

developed mathematically from a seven point (Likert scale) questionnaire called the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS). Therefore, a determination of the MPS using the JDS allowed for the measurement of an individual's perceived level of enrichment in one's job caused by the job characteristics in the JCM (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The model stipulated that a job would be perceived as enriched, if the MPS was high. The MPS was designed as a multiplication of the core job dimensions as depicted below.

$$\text{MPS} = [(\text{Skill variety} + \text{Task identity} + \text{Task significance})/3] \times [\text{Autonomy}] \times [\text{Feedback}]$$

Jobs high in MPS had been associated with positive outcomes, such as internal work motivation and performance (Oldham et al. 1976), and objectively manipulating the MPS in a field experiment which had led to higher levels of intrinsic satisfaction and job involvement (Orpen, 1979).

Furthermore, in the JCM, we found the individual differences varying with the Growth Need Strength (GNS) (Valliere, 1996). It was being said to moderate an employee's reaction to job redesign aimed at creating job enrichment (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The moderator GNS had been defined as a person's desire to experience higher order needs, "Strength of needs for personal growth and accomplishment at work." (Tiegs, Tetrick & Fried, 1992). Actualization, achievement, development, and accomplishment were being desired by an individual with high growth need strength (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Those employees with higher GNS were more likely to react positively to job enrichment and experience the psychological states when the job was enriched than those employees with low GNS, this was been proposed by the JCM model (Valliere, 1996).

So after analysing the complete Job Characteristics Model, we found that a job with high MPS, due to the perceived attributes of various levels of the job

characteristics belonging to one's job, developed motivating potential through the production of the psychological state that reacted with the employee's GNS level (Valliere, 1996). According to Hackman & Oldham (1980) if an employee was high on GNS and had a motivating job, the psychological states were predicted to cause the following work outcomes: high internal motivation, general satisfaction, growth satisfaction.

Here in this study of customer orientation of the service personnel, some of the dimensions of the JCM had been taken into consideration for relating with the outcome of the study because as we observe that measuring of the customer orientation required measuring the dimensions of the customer orientation of the service personnel like experienced meaningfulness, job variety, job autonomy etc. Here, in the JCM what we found that the measurements of those dimensions were very essential.

1.5 THE SOCO SCALE AND ITS DIMENSIONS

It was more than 77 years ago, Strong (1925) emphasized and suggested that personal selling strategies should be directed toward securing customer satisfaction as well as purchase orders. Despite numerous references directed towards the benefits of customer oriented sales behaviours during that time, little empirical research had hardly examined the effectiveness of customer oriented selling and the factors influencing the extent to which salespeople / service-people engaged in it (Saxe and Weitz, 1982).

According to Saxe and Weitz (1982) the customer oriented selling could be viewed as the practice of the marketing concept at the level of the individual salesperson / serviceperson and the customer. The marketing concept was a cornerstone of marketing thought for the last 55 years. It demanded for an integrated, companywide approach in which all of the firm's activities were to be directed towards providing customer satisfaction and establishing mutually

beneficial, long-term relationships with its market (Kotler 1980). Kurtz, Dodge, and Klompaker (1976) had explicitly related the marketing concept to the behaviour of salespeople.

The marketing concept required an organization or the marketer to determine the needs of a target market and adapt itself in satisfying those needs better than its/his competitors. The organization sought to generate customer satisfaction as the key to satisfying its goals. However, what we found under the selling concept was that, an organization tried to stimulate demand for products it produced, rather than producing products in response to customer needs (Saxe and Weitz, 1982).

In general the customer oriented selling was a way of doing business on the part of salespeople / servicepeople. The term referred to the degree to which salespeople / service people practiced the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that would satisfy those customer needs. According to Saxe and Weitz (1982), highly customer oriented salespeople engaged themselves in behaviours aimed at increasing long-term customer satisfaction. In addition, they avoided behaviours which might result in customer dissatisfaction. Thus, highly customer-oriented salespeople avoided actions which sacrificed customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale. The selling concept in a company corresponded to a low level of customer orientation in a salesperson/serviceperson.

Studies had indicated that research on individual level customer orientation was divided into two streams, they were personal selling literature (Brown, Widing, and Coulter 1991; Kennedy, Lassk, and Goolsby, 2002; Saxe and Weitz 1982; Singh and Koshy, 2008) and services marketing literature (Brady and Cronin 2001; Brown, Mowen, Donnavan, and Licata 2002; Singh and Koshy, 2008). If we considered the personal selling literature we would find that in personal selling, a salesperson's customer orientation had been defined as 'the degree to

which he or she practiced the marketing concept by trying to help his or her customers make purchase decisions that would satisfy customer needs' (Saxe and Weitz 1982). A customer-oriented salesperson aimed to uncover and satisfy these latent needs and, avoided actions which sacrificed customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Saxe and Weitz (1982) identified the following seven characteristics of customer orientation based on previous literature review and field interviews of 25 sales managers and thereby the SOCO scale was originally developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) to measure the self-assessed customer orientation of salespeople employed in a variety of consumer and industrial selling roles (Ryan, 2001):

The SOCO scale included questions to evaluate the following characteristics of the customer oriented sales process:

- (i) A desire to help customers make satisfactory purchase decisions.
- (ii) Helping customers assess their needs.
- (iii) Offering products that will satisfy customers' needs.
- (iv) Describing products (and services) adequately.
- (v) Avoiding deceptive or manipulative tactics.
- (vi) Avoiding the use of high pressure selling.

The original scale consisted of twenty-four statements that described ways in which a salesperson might act with a customer or prospect. Respondents were asked to indicate the proportion of time they acted in the manner described by each item, using a response scale ranging from one (never) to nine (always).

Saxe and Weitz (1982) found two sub-scales that related positively and negatively worded items and suggested that their scale had useful psychometric properties, including appropriate item content, content validity, convergent and discriminant validity and nomological validity. Not surprisingly, the SOCO scale found immediate acceptance and had been widely used.

As already mentioned earlier salesperson's / serviceperson's desire to assess customer needs, avoided high-pressure selling, avoided deception, described

products and services adequately, and helping customers make satisfactory purchase decisions, these were the characteristics that distinguished customer-oriented selling from other selling approaches (Thomas, Soutar, and Ryan, 2001). Brown et al. (2002) defined salesperson's customer orientation as an "employee's tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context".

1.5.1 Dimensions in the SOCO Scale

In the SOCO scale what we found that there were a total of 24 items based on which the selling orientation and customer orientation was measured. The dimensions are given below:

The items of SOCO Scale

1. I try to give customers an accurate expectation of what the product/service would do for them.
2. I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.
3. If I am not sure a product or service was right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him/her to buy.
4. I imply to a customer that something was beyond my control when it was not.
5. I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure.
6. I try to sell as much as I can rather than satisfy a customer.
7. I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his/her needs.
8. I try to help customers achieve their goals.
9. I answer a customer's questions about products or services as correctly as I can.
10. I pretend to agree with customers to please them.
11. I treat a customer as a rival.

12. I try to figure out what a customer's needs are.
13. A good salesperson had to have the customer's best interests in mind.
14. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product/service that helps him/her solve that problem.
15. I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him/ her make a better decision.
16. I offer the product/service of mine that was best suited to the customer's problem.
17. It was necessary to stretch the truth in describing my product / service to a customer.
18. I begin the sales talk for my product / service before exploring a customer's needs with him / her.
19. I try to sell a customer all I can convince him / her to buy, even if I think it was more than a wise customer would buy.
20. I paint too rosy a picture of my products / services to make them sound as good as possible
21. I try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers.
22. I decide what products / services to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.
23. I try to find out what kind of product / service would be most helpful to a customer.
24. I keep alert for weaknesses in a customer's personality so I can use them to put pressure on him / her to buy.

Based on those items of the SOCO Scale given above the selling orientation and customer orientation was actually being measured. Here in this study the customer orientation items are taken into consideration for measuring.

1.5.2 Applications of the SOCO Scale in Literature

We could find that there were enough applications of the SOCO scale in various types of researches conducted by various researchers over the time from the time the SOCO scale had been developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) based on marketing concept especially the customer orientation. Some of the major applications of SOCO scale in marketing are briefly depicted below:

1. Michaels and Day (1985) used a modified SOCO scale that reflected the views of buyers, rather than salespeople, while studying a large sample (n=997) of American industrial buyers. According to Michaels and Day (1985), their conclusions from the study was that the SOCO scale's measurement properties were retained in this form and that the scale worked as well with buyers as it did with salespeople. In the study there were modifications done. However, the modifications to the wording of the original scale were made only to the extent necessary so that it reflected the views of buyers rather than salespeople.
2. In the year 1988, there was a research carried out by Dunlap, Dotson and Chambers, on the real estate industry. Here in this study the SOCO scale was replicated in the real estate industry. The scale was administered to real estate brokers and real estate buyers, although there was no connection between individuals in the two respondent groups. Here also in this study the researchers made slight alterations to the wording of some scale items of the SOCO scale and used a five-point response format rather than the original nine-point scale. Coefficient alphas (Cronbach 1951) for the revised instrument were 0.88 and 0.91 for the brokers and the buyers respectively.
3. Leong, Busch and John (1989) researched upon the effects of SOCO on the organisational salesperson effectiveness. The researchers in this major study

used a two-dyadic dataset empirical approach for evaluating the effect of SOCO on the salesperson effectiveness.

4. In a study on the American retail consumers, Brown, Widing and Coulter (1991) interviewed a sample of American retail consumers using a scale (which was not the SOCO scale) however, that conformed closely to the original SOCO instrument, with only minor changes in wording to reflect a buyer, rather than salesperson's perspective. A six-point response format was used. Coefficient alpha for the SOCO instrument in the Brown et al (1991) study was 0.81.
5. In another study O'Hara, Boles and Johnston (1991) researched upon the customer orientation of advertising and industrial product salespeople. In this research also the researchers brought about some changes in the SOCO scale, and thus the scale was reduced to 18 items but no information was provided as to why or which items were deleted. However, it was said that it was for the first time that in a study the number of items was been reduced in a SOCO scale. Coefficient alpha estimates were 0.82 and 0.95 for the two respective sales representative groups.
6. In a research, Howe, Hoffman and Hardigree (1994) examined the relationship between the ethical behaviour, customer orientation and the performance of a sample of insurance sales agents using the original 24 item SOCO scale. However, in this study also the original SOCO items were modified to match the domain of insurance agents, and a seven-point response format was used. Coefficient alpha was 0.88.
7. In another research, carried out by Tadepalli (1995), a survey of industrial purchasing professionals were done where the researcher modified the SOCO scale by changing the frame of reference of the questions to a particular salesperson rather than to salespeople generally (by relating to

respondents' most recent buying situation). Similar, to that of the research carried out by O'Hara, Boles and Johnston (1991) the number of items was also reduced but unlike that of the former, the items in the SOCO scale was reduced to 21 as a result of prior interviews with industrial buyers and a 7-point scale was used. The verbal anchors were also changed in this study so that they ranged from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." He suggested that the scale was unidimensional and reliable. Indeed, coefficient alpha was higher than in most previous studies (0.94).

8. In the year 1995 Sigauw and Honeycutt used the original 24-item SOCO scale in a gender-focused study of 268 sales people in the Information and Image Management Industry. However, unlike that of the previous researches mentioned above there were no refinements or modifications made to the original Saxe and Weitz (1982) scale during the study.
9. Williams and Attaway (1996) used a modified 18-item SOCO scale in examining the relationships between organizational culture, salespeople's customer orientation and buyer-seller relationship development. Here, in the study the industrial buyers completed three surveys on individual and identifiable salespeople. It could be said that this form of the scale was also very reliable, with an alpha of 0.97. In the research, three "belief" items were omitted because it was felt that salespeople's behaviours were observable and experienced through interactions between the buyer and seller, however, it was again felt that the same was not true for belief statements. In the on going research, further three items were omitted because they required the buyer to have knowledge about the cognitive thought structure of a salesperson.
10. Pettijohn, Pettijohn and Parker (1997) in their research administered the original SOCO scale to a sample of real estate salespeople that linked customer orientation, sales productivity and sales training. In this research

scale reliability measured were not provided. These studies generally supported the dimensionality and reliability of the SOCO scale as a way of measuring the customer orientation of salespeople, from either a salesperson or a customer perspective.

These were some of the applications carried out with the help of the SOCO scale. As noted, some of the studies used modified versions of the SOCO scale to adapt to the buyer-seller market situation, but all were easily identified as variants of the original scale. Here in this study also we tried to utilise some of the items of the SOCO scale. However, care was being taken not to include all the items because the main objective of the study basically lies on the measuring the customer orientation of the service personnel and not the selling orientation.

1.6 THE MODIFIED SOCO SCALE

It was not always mandatory that the SOCO scale would have to be utilised just as it was. In various occasions, the SOCO scale was been modified just to suit the situation. In the previous discussions what we had found out that the SOCO scale was been modified to fit in the research requirements. We had seen that Michaels and Day (1985) used a modified SOCO scale that reflected the views of buyers, rather than salespeople. In other occasions Dunlap, Dotson and Chambers (1988) used the SOCO scale in a research on real estate industry, however, they had used a five-point response format rather than the original nine-point scale of the SOCO scale. O'Hara, Boles and Johnston (1991) had also altered the original SOCO scale in a research on a study on advertising and industrial sales people, where the researchers had 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 generally (by relating to respondents' most recent buying situation).

Overall we could found that the original SOCO scale in the purpose of researches carried on measuring customer orientation had been modified according to the requirements.

However, for Michaels and Day (1985) it also seemed appropriate, perhaps even more appropriate, to implement the SOCO scale with customers themselves assessing the degree of customer orientation of the salespeople who call upon them. For the researcher, while going through the research it seemed reasonable to assume that the assessment of the sellers' customer orientation by buyers might be more objective than self assessments by salespeople. Evidence of upward bias in individual self-ratings had been reported in various contexts (Grashof and Thomas 1976; Silk and Kalwani, 1982). Though curiosity about the degree of congruity of buyers' and sellers' assessments had some role in motivating the research of Michaels and Day (1985), a more general motivation was a desire to contribute to a replication tradition in marketing research.

Michaels and Day (1985) modified the SOCO scale only to the extent necessary to accommodate the differences between the situation in which buyers evaluated salespeople and that in which sellers evaluated themselves with respect to their interactions with buyers. Each item was rephrased to ask the buyers to judge the proportion of salespeople calling on them, who took each of the 24 actions reflected in the original SOCO items by retaining the original meaning of each SOCO item. Care was taken to ensure that the replication was complete and faithful to the objectives of the original study except for the nature of the respondents.

With a sample of industrial buyers a replication of the SOCO scale was conducted with a large probability sample. The 24-item scale was modified only to the extent necessary for it to reflect the views of buyers rather than salespeople, who were the subjects in the initial Saxe and Weitz (1982) study. The replication appeared to be successful. The results were similar to the

previous results of Saxe and Weitz; the factor structure was virtually identical to the original results and the internal consistency reliability of the scale in the replication study was higher than in the initial study. Therefore, Michaels and Day (1985) tentatively concluded that the SOCO scale worked as well with buyers as with salespeople. According to the researchers, they hoped that further testing of the SOCO construct in the future would lead to its refinement and that its use would contribute to improvements in the quality of research on salesperson-buyer interactions.

Given below is a depiction of the modified SOCO scale items developed by Michaels and Day (1985) in association to their research:

Table 1.1: The modified SOCO scale

THE MODIFIED SOCO SCALE ITEMS ADOPTED BY MICHAELS AND DAY (1985)	
Sl. No.	The Modified SOCO Scale Items
1.	Salespeople give accurate representations of what their product will do for me.
2.	Salespeople try to get me to discuss my product needs.
3. *	Salespeople apply selling pressure even though they know the product is not right for my company.
4. *	Salespeople imply that things are beyond their control when they really are not.
5.	Salespeople try to influence me through information rather than by pressure
6.	Salespeople that call on me are customer-oriented.
7. *	Salespeople spend more time trying to persuade than they do trying to discover my product needs.
8.	Salespeople try to help me achieve my purchasing objectives.
9.	Salespeople answer my questions about their products as honestly as possible.
10. *	Salespeople agree with me only to please me.
11. *	Salespeople treat me as an opponent.
12.	Salespeople try to figure out what my needs are.
13.	Salespeople have my best interest as a customer in mind.
14.	Salespeople take a problem-solving approach in selling to me.
15.	Salespeople will go as far as to disagree with me in order to help me make a better purchase decision.
16.	Salespeople recommend the product best suited to solve my problems.
17. *	Salespeople stretch the truth in their product representations.
18. *	Salespeople talk first and listen to my needs later.
19. *	Salespeople try to convince me to buy more than I need.
20. *	Salespeople paint rosy pictures of their products to make them sound as good as possible.
21.	Salespeople try to provide for my organization's satisfaction.
22. *	Salespeople make recommendations based on what they think they can sell, and not on the basis of my long-term satisfaction.
23.	Salespeople try to find out which products would be most helpful to me as a customer.
24. *	Salespeople are always looking for ways to apply pressure to make me buy.
*All negatively worded items are reverse-scored.	

1.7 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study had been inspired by a true interest to search answers relating to a topical business goal of developing organisations involving service personnel who would be having the commitment towards developing customer oriented behaviours, which does not seem to be highly emphasised yet in the marketing discourse. We were privileged to follow closely a change process of professional organisations that had started making transformations from being sales target oriented to being customer oriented, and specifically from the overall aspect of the employees' perspectives. This access for us led us take up the opportunity to develop further a theory of creating customer orientation.

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyse the customer orientation of service personnel in professional organisation dealing with services or we could call it as service organisations. The objective was pursued by investigating the customer orientation of the service personnel working for various organisations dealing with services operating in North Bengal with emphasis on districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. The period examined was approximately was around two and half years from September 2006 - November 2008. The main focus of the study was to gather information related to the thoughts of the service personnel belonging to the service organisations related to their customer handling behaviours and then to analyse those in accordance to the customer orientation definitions. None the less, in the study we had taken into consideration the job characteristics of the service personnel relating to the customer orientation of the service personnel. Furthermore, the study also had the objective of comparing with the customer thoughts with regards to the behaviour showed by the service personnel to them in the context of marketing.

1.7.1 Specific objectives of the study

The study would mainly concentrate on various issues concerning the level of pay satisfaction, customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness and other job related variables. As we have already pointed out earlier that it involved a greater service person's effort in customer-related interactions relative to sales orientation. In fact, customer orientation required the service person to be motivated to practice this mode of selling. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine relationship between experienced meaningfulness, organizational identification and pay satisfaction and the customer orientation. The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

- (i) To develop and adapt valid and reliable measures to capture relevant constructs.
- (ii) To examine relationship between experienced meaningfulness with service employee's customer orientation.
- (iii) To assess the relationship between service person's motivation to expend the effort and customer orientation.

To integrate the findings mentioned above and formulate effective marketing and human resource management strategies for the organisations, especially for the service organisations.

1.8 CONCLUSION

In this introductory chapter we have discussed in detail the evolution of marketing philosophy over the last century. Substantial changes have taken place in the field of marketing as well as other related areas in the organisations to practice customer orientation. As we have pointed out earlier that customer orientation is more difficult to practice the service industry due to unending demands of customers from the service providers. There are some obvious reasons for marketers to become customer oriented since the competition is increasing at a

phenomenal rate due to proliferation of a large variety of product or services the Indian market after the liberalization of the Indian economy. A plethora of insurance, banking, retail chains has been established to grab the substantial share of the market from the traditional Indian corporate. In view of this, the existing companies who have not faced competition till 1990's are now facing quiet aggressive marketing and promotional pressure from the multinational companies who have substantial fund at their disposal to pull customers towards their products and services.

In this background, this study is a modest attempt to study the customer orientation behaviour of companies of Indian origin. To our knowledge no serious efforts have been made in our country to relate the various job related variables with the practice of customer orientation.

The discussion in this chapter has been initiated by discussing the concept of customer orientation and the conceptual framework proposed by researchers working in this field. In our study we have taken most basic organisational behavioural variables that may have some impact on employees to practice customer oriented marketing. While measuring customer orientation, the modified SOCO scale has been used due to its robust application in the marketing literature. The details of this job related variable and their application on the customer oriented behaviour of the employees are presented in the subsequent chapters.

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