

員工人格特質對顧客滿意度影響之研究

A Study of Employee Personality's Impact Toward Customer Satisfaction

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摘要

本研究目的旨在調查員工人格對於顧客滿意之影響，以及如何直接或間接影響顧客滿意。運用五因素模型(FFM)與服務品質模型(SERVQUAL)概念性模型進行探討。本研究發現：(1)員工人格會影響員工行為進而影響顧客滿意；(2)員工人格會影響員工態度進而影響顧客滿意；(3)員工人格會透過員工績效直接影響顧客滿意，以及透過員工行為或態度間接影響顧客滿意。

關鍵詞：五因素模型、服務品質模型、人格、顧客滿意

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the employee personality's impact toward customer satisfaction and how employee personality directly or indirectly influenced the customer satisfaction. Two conceptual mechanisms were employed according to the statements of Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality and Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL). In addition, three elements of impact were found as following:(1) employee personality would have an influence upon employee behavior in turn to customer satisfaction;(2) employee personality would influence employee attitude in turn to customer satisfaction;(3) employee personality has an effect directly on employee performance or indirectly on employee performance via employee behavior or attitude in turn to customer satisfaction.

Key word : Five Factor Model, SERVQUAL, Personality, Customer satisfaction

1. Introduction

Within this high competition society, organizations are rapidly seeking new solutions to meet guests' expectation sp as to increase customer satisfaction. One of the successful examples is, Olive Garden Restaurants, Inc., a well-known casual dining Italian restaurant. In order to collect guests' questionnaires and analyze customers' satisfaction, Olive Garden

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employed a data warehouse to measure employee performance, investigate customer satisfaction so that they could generate information on service employees' guest flow, sales, earning, and cost breakdowns. This method allowed Olive garden to increase customer satisfaction and maintain the high market share in the America.

Employee performance measuring is essential to the service industry, while employees play important role in determining customer satisfaction and retention as well. No matter in which service sectors, employees are the key participants in service encounters. Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham (1996, p. 391) stated that the "personal interaction component of service is often a primary determinant of the customer's overall satisfaction." Therefore, customer satisfaction measuring would be an indispensable element of enhancing service quality.

However, many customer satisfaction investigations simply put an eye on half the picture. It is important to indicate not only how customers perceive a company, but also how the employees react with their guests. It is clear that service sector must consider employees as the direct link to deliver service quality and customer satisfaction. That is, emphasizing the employees' personality, behavior, performance, and attitude is a foundation step in promoting customer satisfaction. This will allow service organizations to recruit the right employee right from the beginning so that they could meet the needs of their guests.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of employee personality upon customer satisfaction. A measuring concept model was constructed (see figure1) and three paths of impact were indicated as the followings:

Path #1: Employee personality has an effect upon employee behavior in turn to customer satisfaction as well.

Path #2: Employee personality would influence employee attitude and customer satisfaction.

Path #3: Employee personality would directly affect employee performance or indirectly affect employee performance via employee behavior or attitude in turn to influence customer satisfaction.



1.2 Conceptual Model

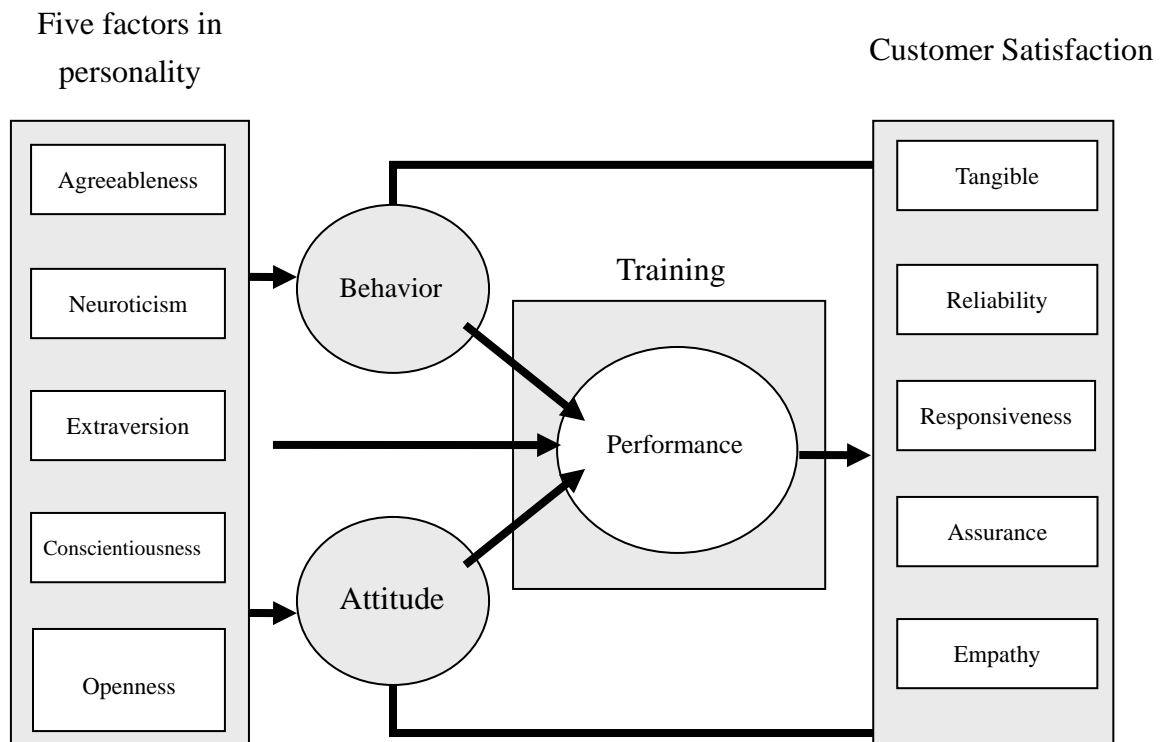


Figure1-Model of Employee Personality and Customer satisfaction

1.3 Definition of Terms

The following definitions of the key terms are showed as below:

Personality: The complex of all the attributes, which include behavior, temperamental, emotional and mental, characterize a unique individual.

Agreeableness: A temperamental disposition to be agreeable.

Neuroticism: A mental or personality disturbance not attributable to any known neurological or organic dysfunction.

Extraversion: The directing of one's interest outward.

Conscientiousness: The trait of being painstaking and careful.

Openness to experience: The proactive seeking and the appreciation of new experience.

Behavior: The way a person reacts toward other people. In this paper, author defines it as the reaction regardless of training or company requirement.

Attitude: A complex mental state involving beliefs and feeling and values and dispositions to act in certain ways.

Performance: The act of performing or doing something successfully by following the guide of training.

Customer satisfaction: The act of fulfilling customer desire or need.

Tangible: Capable of being perceived or touched by the senses.

Reliability: The trait of being dependable or reliable.

Responsiveness: The quality of being responsive, reacting quickly. As a quality of people, it involves responding with emotion to people and events.

Empathy: Understanding and entering into another's feelings.

2. Literatures Review

Investigating whether are relationships among employee personality, employee behavior, employee attitude, employee performance and customer satisfaction could offer a better understanding of how employee personality influence customer satisfaction.

The author stated that there is inadequate research to examine the direct relationship between employee personality and customer satisfaction (Dormann & Kaiser, 2002). Dormann and Kaiser employed a research among teachers and parents found that, a strong positive effect of extraversion on customer satisfaction rating, a negative effect of conscientiousness, and no effect for the remaining three personality factors.

Dormann and Kaiser (2002) pointed out that parents may perceived highly conscientious teachers as inadequate spontaneity, too rigid, and inflexible enough for teaching little children. Moreover, although they couldn't provide any good explanation for the negative effect of conscientiousness on customer satisfaction rating, they doubted that the negative effect of conscientiousness could be applied to other tasks such as insurance agents or physicians because it is too risky for customers if employees are not conscientiousness.

The present study of employee personality and customer satisfaction introduced an overview of personality and big five model, and customer satisfaction and SERVQUAL, and then reviewed the literatures relating the relationships among personality, behavior, attitude, performance, and customer satisfaction. The relationships were showed by three paths: Employee Personality→ Employee Behavior→ Customer satisfaction, Employee Personality→ Employee Attitude→Customer Satisfaction, and Employee Personality→ Employee Performance→Customer Satisfaction. An integrated review of literature indicated potential personality characteristics as related to customer satisfaction can subsequently have many implications for the selection of service employees.

2.1 How to Define Personality

Many researchers defined the term of personality as following: Johnson (1999) defined personality as individual's clear interpersonal characteristics that try to remain consistent across situation and context; Hogan (1999) stated personality as person's social reputation and his or her inner nature that may influence the response to a wide variety of outside circumstance.

How many components are associated with personality? Migram (1999) used personality along with other concepts such as traits, motives, states, goals, attitudes, interests, determining tendencies, and generalized disposition of the individual (as sited in Livingstone, S. S. H. &



Nadjiwon- Foster, M., 2002). Moreover, some researchers such as Goldberg (1992) and Saucier (1994) supported the existence of five basic dimensions of personality. Similarly, other empirical evidence indicated that the personality traits consist of five basic dimensions and are identified as well-known Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality (e.g., Barick & Mount, 1991; Tett, Rothstein, Reddon & Jackson, 1991; Hogans & Roberts, 1996).

2.2 The Five-Factor Model of Personality

Many studies applied Five Factor Model (FFM) or Big Five personality characteristics as their mechanism to evaluate personality (Goldberg, 1993). Through Meta-analysis techniques, five-factor taxonomy of personality were identified included agreeableness, neuroticism (i.e., emotional stability), extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991). Agreeable according to evolutionary personality psychology, individuals must not only discern hierarchical positions, but also from reciprocal social alliance to preserve one's social position (Buss, 1991). Neuroticism, or emotional stability, refers to a universal adaptive mechanism enabling humans to cope with stress in the environment (Buss, 1991). Extraversion, Buss (1991) made a suggestion that human who can discern hierarchical positions within their social environment through their extraversion, would achieve a greater reproductive success and preservation of life. Conscientiousness refers to the amount of persistence, organization, and motivation in goal directed behaviors (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Piedmont & Weinstein, 1994). Openness to experience refers to perceiving, attending, and acting upon differences in others (Buss, 1991).

The extension of personality characteristics as predictors of employee behavior, attitude, and performance can be theoretically justified through evolutionary personality psychology, which indicated that Big Five personality characteristics are universal adaptive tools for humans to do for two things: reproduce and preserve life (Buss, 1991; MacDonald, 1998). That is, an employee who is agreeable, extraverted, conscientious, emotionally stable, and open may have the ability to achieve better relationship with customer in turn to promote customer satisfaction. This was supported and showed in the literature on burnout in Maslach and Jackson's research in 1981.

2.3 What Is Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction played an important role for many researches from a great variety of business-related fields (e.g., Bitner, 1990; Oliver, 1997; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1989; 1996). It related to the customers' evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met guests' needs and expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). An organization has high customer satisfaction can survive and prosper even when deal with a tough economy or a difficult challenge; for example, Southwest Airlines, continually rated number one among airlines in customer satisfaction. However, after the September 11 terrorist



attacks, which pushed many airline companies to the edge of demise, Southwest finally made a profit in the end of 2001, and kept progress in the future development.

Nevertheless, an organization which offered bad service may encounter the trouble hanging on its customers all the times, and consequently may be step to replace lost account via its original frustration. It was estimated that the cost of attracting new customer is five times more than the expense of maintaining existing ones (Kiger, 2002).

2.4 SERVQUAL

Many researches have indicated to employ the dimensions of service quality (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1990). SERVQUAL would be a popular mechanism to evaluate customer satisfaction which comprising of five major dimensions as tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In order to measure what the customers emphasize, many service organizations often focus on improving their service which related to these aspects. Therefore, in order to point out personality-related factors that influence the customer satisfaction, these five major dimensions must be examined.

Tangible factor refers to appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personal, and communication material (Zeithaml et al., 1990). For the reason that all the physical facilities and communication materials are usually provided by the service organization, it is often that terrible design of tangibility will come to customer dissatisfaction. Reliability factor refers to the ability to implement the promised service dependably and accurately (Zeithaml et al., 1990). For example, fixing a problem at the beginning time it occurs, keeping appointments on schedule, providing accurate diagnose of problems, providing information on needs, and delivering within time and budget (Zethaml & Bitner, 2003). Responsiveness refers to the willingness to assist customers and offer quick service (Zeithaml et al., 1990), such as being willing to listen and adapt to change instead of being bureaucratic, or respond promptly rather than having customers wait too long.

Assurance refers to as the knowledge and courtesy of employees and ability to express trust and confidence (Zeithaml et al., 1990). This relates with creating customers' image that service is worth the money and the service will be reliable in the future. Empathy was indicated as the caring and individualized attention the service organization offers to its customers (Zeithaml et al., 1990). This could be thought as the emotional relationship between employees and customers.

Path One: Employee Personality→ Employee Behavior→ Customer satisfaction

Employee Personality & Employee Behavior

Many companies would rather to select employee via personality as a measurement of employee behavior (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991). Bowen, Ledford and Nathan (1991) point out that most service organizations understood that probability of more training expense if the hired employees who have inadequate company-favored personality or without



required skills.

Other research stated that the employee behavior as organization citizenship behavior (OCB). Dennis Organ, who indicated this concept in 1998, defined it as the individual behavior that is not an enforceable requirement of job description, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of organization (Organ, 1998). Besides that, in Brown et al. (2002) research, they claimed that high agreeableness may allow employees to use more time to interact with other employees or with customers on matters that are not related to the job. Therefore, Brown et al. (2002) pointed out that managers should emphasize the positive effects of agreeableness on customer orientation and spend more training to generate the positive aspects and lower down the negative aspects of high agreeableness.

2.5 Employee Behavior and Customer Satisfaction

OCB behavior is essential to service industry, giving unpredictability of customers' demands. Employees who are equipped with ability of meeting or exceeding customers' expectations often have to adapt their work behavior to meet with the highly individualized nature of guest needs. They have to choose whether to exhibit discretionary work-related behavior to promote customer satisfaction. Two certain dimension of citizenship behavior, helping and voice, have been indicated in Stamper and Dyne's research (2003). Helping occurs when one employee assist others with their work or work-related activities. Through helping co-workers, they help to promote high levels of customer satisfaction. Restaurant employees generate voice to solicit menu items all the time. This voice behavior which leads to positively to the organization could acquire new customers and retain current ones, a proof of customer satisfaction.

Path Two: Employee Personality→ Employee Attitude→ Customer Satisfaction **Employee Personality & Employee Attitude**

Many companies though that personality can be used as a measurement of employee attitude (Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991). Even though employee attitude generated great attention among service organizations, there is still inadequate researches discussed in this related field. In Adsit et al. 's research (1996), they reported that there is positive relationship between one of personality traits and attitude. Conscientiousness, as indicated in the study, will come to employee influence employee responsibility, which includes such as "Commitment to helping my business unit succeed" and "I protect the company's property and business information as if it were my own". Moreover, Argyris (1996) reported that a lack of openness in communications lower down employee commitment to organizational plans. This research highlighted that it is essential to study the issue of sharing customer information, and the type of communication sharing is necessary if employees are committed to the company and the achievement of its organizational goals.



2.6 Employee Attitude & Customer Satisfaction

Organizations' human resource practices always pay attention on promoting customer satisfaction by improving employees' attitude. Interesting finding pointed out by Kiger (2002) revealed that for every 5 percent improvement in employee attitudes, customer satisfaction increased about 1.3 percent and corporate revenue rose a half-percentage point. Besides that, many researches have found the linkage between employee attitudes and customer satisfaction. Schneider, Parkington and Buxton (1980); Schneider and Bowen (1985) all found that employees attitude has a significant correlation to customers' perceptions of service quality in the banks' researches. Schneider and Allscheid (1995) developed a theoretical model of the employee attitude-customer satisfaction step, which was originally from Bagozzi's (1992) model of attitudes, intention, and behavior. Gatewood and Miordan (1997) indicted that employee attitudes directly influence customer satisfaction in one life insurance company. Wiley (1990) investigated data from over 200 retail stores and identified that those stores most favorably described by employee were those most favorably described by customers.

In addition, employee satisfaction has been thought as a kind of attitudes, the predictor of employee satisfaction as well as customer satisfaction is now critical to major quality oriented companies' strategies (Jamieson & Richards, 1996). This is obviously related to service industry for organizations that have satisfied employees which will have satisfied customers (Rust et al., 1996).

Path Three: Employee Personality→ Employee Performance→ Customer Satisfaction **Employee Personality and Employee Performance**

Personality evaluation is largely utilized in employee recruitment and as the predictor of behavior and attitude, specially job-related performance. The most important empirical research in measuring the relationship between employee personality and employee performance was employed via Tett, Jackson and Rothstein (1991). They used Meta-analysis to measure the overall validity of personality measures as predictors of job performance, examine the moderating effects of several study characteristics on personality scale validity, and evaluate the predictability of job performance as a function of eight distinct categories of personality content, included the Big Five personality factors. Their finding of these studies revealed that validities means for agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness, except neuroticisms as a whole.

2.7 Employee Behavior and Employee Performance

As mentioned above in former statement, OCB comprised discretionary behavior that facilitate interpersonal relationships among employees, coworkers, and customers and enables the smooth functioning of the organization. That is simply an proof why OCB should have a positive effect on organization performance.



The other points of relating relationship of employee behavior and employee performance has demonstrated in the efficiency of training. Most employees can be trained to develop knowledge and skills to improve their performance; thus, most organizations would considered that the existence of poor long-term success relations (Cran, 1994). Cran stated that at the last stage of a training course or program, employees will significantly demonstrate the overt training objectives but following-up procedures after a reasonable internal frequently reveal that employee behavior has regressed to pre-training levels.

2.8 Employee Attitude and Employee Performance

In many studies, the effectiveness of above program is not good due to inadequate appreciation or understanding of attitude change processes. In Cran's study (1994), the researcher reported that employee may think that parts of their jobs are not necessary or are impediments to implement their tasks; if so, they thought that some duties should be implemented only when under supervision.

In addition, Deming (1986) indicated that positive attitudes regarding control over operations, autonomy, support from management, and satisfaction with work result to better performance (as cited in Gatewood & Riordan, 1997). Moreover, Adsit et al. (1996) reported that relatively small change in attitudes resulted to significant and important changes in job performance. They concluded that investing on improving employee attitudes of their work could generate important and measurable improvement in performance.

2.9 Employee Performance & Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction and service quality resulted from how well service employee perform on their jobs (Norman,1984). Therefore, in service industry, customer satisfaction is a essential performance indicator along with measures of unit productivity and administrative effectiveness. In Adsit et al. research (1996), they claimed that there is a positive correlated relationship between employee performance and customer satisfaction.

3. Conclusion

Customer satisfaction played an essential role in the growing service industry. Besides measuring of customer satisfaction, organizations should pay much more attention on recruiting appropriate employee so as to meet the expectation of customer in turn to promote customer satisfaction. This was due to quality employees are simply the key factors in determining customer satisfaction and retention.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of employee personality on customer satisfaction. The discussion of the three paths identified in proposed conceptual model is significant that employee personality would have an influence employee behavior, attitude, and performance in turn to influence customer satisfaction.



This finding would provide an useful information for management in the service industry. It is not only to point out the pictures of indicator of customer satisfaction by adopting personality characteristics, but also suggest those employers to recruit the right person for their organizations. Based on these points, it is recommended that of using personality as predictor of customer satisfaction in service industry.



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