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THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON SALESPERSON CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

Резюме

Известно, что организация может добиться успеха только при условии удовлетворения потребностей своих клиентов. Фактически, организационная работа в значительной степени зависит от понимания потребностей и требований клиента; необходимы исследования, демонстрирующие существование позитивной взаимосвязи между рыночной ориентацией (составляющей которой является ориентация на клиента) и работой организации в целом.

Особую важность для организаций представляет распространение собственной стратегии, ориентированной на клиента, среди своих сотрудников так, чтобы сотрудники разделяли эту стратегию и способствовали ее реализации.

В ходе исследований были выделены несколько важных результатов, относящихся к уровням ориентации на клиента сотрудников, работающих в сфере продаж. Такие сотрудники должны быть настроены на удовлетворение потребностей клиента, выполнение плана продаж и установление длительных отношений с клиентами.

В современных условиях наличие работников, ориентированных на удовлетворение потребностей клиента, важно для успешной деятельности любой организации; но для фирм, занимающихся предоставлением услуг – это основное условие успеха. Происходит реализация концепции маркетинга в организациях, оказывающих услуги. Ориентация на развитие и улучшение отношений с клиентами вызвала интерес к факторам, способствующим ориентированию продавца на потребности клиента (что до сих пор еще мало изучено). Поэтому целью статьи является дополнительное изучение рассмотренных определений и, в частности, изучение роли культуры организации.

В статье исследуются теоретические основы изучаемых вопросов, а также факторы воздействия концепции, ориентированной на клиента. Изучается роль организационной культуры на предприятии; удовлетворение от работы и обязательства работника по отношению к организации и выполнение продавцами их должностных обязанностей. Выдвигаются гипотезы, касающиеся связи организационной культуры и концепции, ориентированной на клиента. Рассматриваются данные тестирования выдвинутых гипотез на базе двух организаций, занимающихся предоставлением услуг; предлагаются результаты проведенного исследования.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that most organizations can only achieve success by satisfying their customers' needs. In fact, organisational performance is largely dependent upon the understanding of customer needs and requirements, with diverse studies demonstrating the existence of a positive relationship between market orientation, of which customer orientation is a component, and an organization's performance (e.g., Caruana, Ramasesham, and Ewing, 1997; Jaworski and Kohli, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Baker and Sinkula, 1999). Of particular importance for organizations is how to disseminate their customer-oriented strategy to their employees so that these share the customer-oriented values of the firm and are inspired to carry out such strategy (Hartline, Maxham, and McKee, 2000). Several studies have already empirically identified several important outcomes of the level of customer orientation of salespeople, which has been positively related with customer satisfaction, the sales performance of salespeople and the development of long-term relationships with customers (Boles et al, 2001; Keilor, Parker and Pettijohn, 2000; Martin and Bush, 2003; Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Williams and Attaway, 1996). Hence, developing a customer orientated workforce plays an important role in any organisation, but for service firms it is particularly key. In fact, contact employees have been considered crucial in the implementation of the marketing concept in service organizations. This acknowledgement, spurred by the trend to develop better relationships with customers (Webster, 1992) has promoted the interest in understanding the organizational drivers of salespeople's customer orientation, about which little is still known (Boles et al, 2001; Brown et al, 2002; Flaherty, Dahlstrom and Skiner, 1999; Kennedy, Lassk and Goolsby, 2002). Hence, the goal of this study is to shed additional light on these determinants considering, in particular, the role of an organization's cultural traits.

This paper is organised as follows. Firstly, we review prior theory and research concerning the factors affecting salespeople's customer orientation and, in addition, we review the role of organizational culture on organizational performance along with the impact of role stress and job satisfaction and organizational commitment on salespeople performance. Next, we develop a set of hypotheses relating the cultural traits of the organization with salespeople's customer orientation. Subsequently, the hypotheses are tested in the context of two service organizations, and the results are discussed.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Customer orientation at the individual level can be understood as "the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs" (Saxe and Weitz, 1982: 344). Similarly, Brown et al. (2002) suggest that customer orientation is the "employee's

tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context." In a customer oriented approach, salespeople help customers to make purchase decisions that are consistent with their long-term needs, therefore producing satisfied customers in the long-term (Michaels and Day, 1985; Saxe and Weitz, 1982). A customer oriented salesperson directs his efforts towards serving the interests of the customer, discovering his needs before developing or presenting the appropriate solution, avoiding the utilization of manipulative, deceptive, and pressure tactics.

However, it has been acknowledged that, to obtain a customer orientated workforce, the firm must put in place the appropriate values, structures, processes, and incentives (Hartline, Maxham, and McKee, 2000). Not surprisingly, it has been suggested that corporate culture can provide an important foundation for the transmission of the organisation's expectations and requirements to the employees, who are then responsible for implementing the organisation's policies and carrying out organisational strategies (Flaherty, Dahlstrom, and Skinner, 1999; Parasuraman, 1987).

In the marketing literature, culture has been defined as "the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them norms for behaviour in the organization" (Deshpande and Webster, 1989: 4). This is a layered construct, where values and assumptions represent a less conscious, inner layer, and behavioural norms and behavioural expectations representing an outer, more conscious layer, with these layers being highly interrelated (Shein, 1992). Evidence for the impact of cultural traits on organizational behaviour and performance is diverse. It has been found, for example, that cultural traits may promote or demote market oriented behaviours in organizations (Homburg and Pflesser, 2000), and that market oriented cultures are associated with company performance (Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster, 1993; Webster, 1988). At a more micro level, it has been found that the customer orientation of salespeople was positively influenced by the organizational climate for service (Kelley, 1992), supportive culture (Williams and Attaway, 1996), and market/customer oriented culture (Flaherty, Dahlstrom, and Skinner, 1999; Jones, Busch, and Dacin, 2003; Menguç, 1996; Siguaw, Brown, and Widing,1994).

However, prior research has shown that cultural traits affect employees through mediating variables (Glisson and James, 2002; Kopelman, Brief, and Guzzo, 1990), such as role stress, which has been observed to have some of its roots on organizational culture and structure (Flaherty, Dahlstrom and Skiner, 1999; Michaels et al, 1988). Role stress, which is intrinsic to salespeople's jobs (Nonis, Sager, and Kumar, 1996; Walker, Churchill, and Ford, 1975), concerns to boundary role perceptions by salespeople regarding tasks and the environment in which they work (Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, 1970). Role stress has been found to have a profound impact on organizational effectiveness. It has been obseerved that under role stress, employees exhibit higher dislike for their superiors (Phelen, 1969), lower job involvement (Bhagat, 1983), and it has also been suggested to negativelly affect performance (Yammarino and Dubinsky, 1990). Additionally, there are inconsistent results in the literature regarding the effects of role stress on customer orientation (see for example, Hoffman and Ingram, 1991; Shepherde and Fine, 1994). The two sources of role stress considered in this work are role conflict and role clarity, which House and Rizzo (1972) found acting as intervening variables between organizational practices and individual and organizational performance.

Role conflict occurs when a salesperson perceives incompatibility between expectations of two or more role set members, such as sales manager, customers, peers, and family (Ford, Walker, and Churchill, 1975; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, 1970). This might involve, for example, incompatibility between the person's values and the defined role, conflicting requests from others, and conflicting evaluation mechanisms. Role conflict has been found to affect negatively organizational commitment (Michaels et al, 1988), job performance (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986), and job satisfaction (Fry et al 1986; Hampton, Dubinsky, and Skinner, 1986).

Role clarity is the opposite of role ambiguity, which has been defined as an "evaluation about the lack of salient information needed to perform a role effectively" (Singh and Rhoads, 1991: 330-331). The lack of employee information may concern the standards by which job performance is judged to be adequate, responsibilities, the appropriate ways to fulfil his role and the expectations associated with his role (Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, 1970; Singh, 1993). It has been found, for example, that role ambiguity is negatively related with job satisfaction (Cummings, Jackson and Ostrom, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986; Fry et al, 1986; Teas, 1980), organizational commitment (Michaels et al, 1988), and job performance (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986).

Finally, we consider the impact of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which have been shown to mediate the impact of the two role stressors on employee behavior. Job satisfaction is a widely research topic in the salesforce literature, and its influence has been related with work outcomes such as performance and turnover. Brown and Peterson (1993), based on their meta analysis of job satisfaction suggest that job satisfaction mediates the impact of role stress on other work outcomes. Organizational commitment has also been widely studied in terms of its antecedents and consequences, and has been shown related with employee behavior (such as performance and turnover), job attitudes (including job satisfaction), and job characteristics (including role conflict and ambiguity) (Bateman and Strasser, 1984).

A MODEL OF THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL VALUES ON SALESPERSON CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

Organisational values are useful means firms can use to influence the orientation of their customer-contact employees. Different organisational value orientations can result in variations in perceived organisational priorities and in the perception of the organisation's treatment of customers (Flaherty, Dahlstrom, and Skinner, 1999). Figure 1 contains the conceptual model depicting how cultural orientations disseminate and impact on the customer orientation of salespeople. The proposed model adds to the customer orientation of the firm two other (and more innovative) cultural determinants: ethics and innovation. These cultural determinants are disseminated through the organizational structure, which in our model has two main components – role clarity and role ambiguity. Finally, the model considers that the impact of the two role stressors on customer orientation is mediated by organizational commitment and job satisfaction.
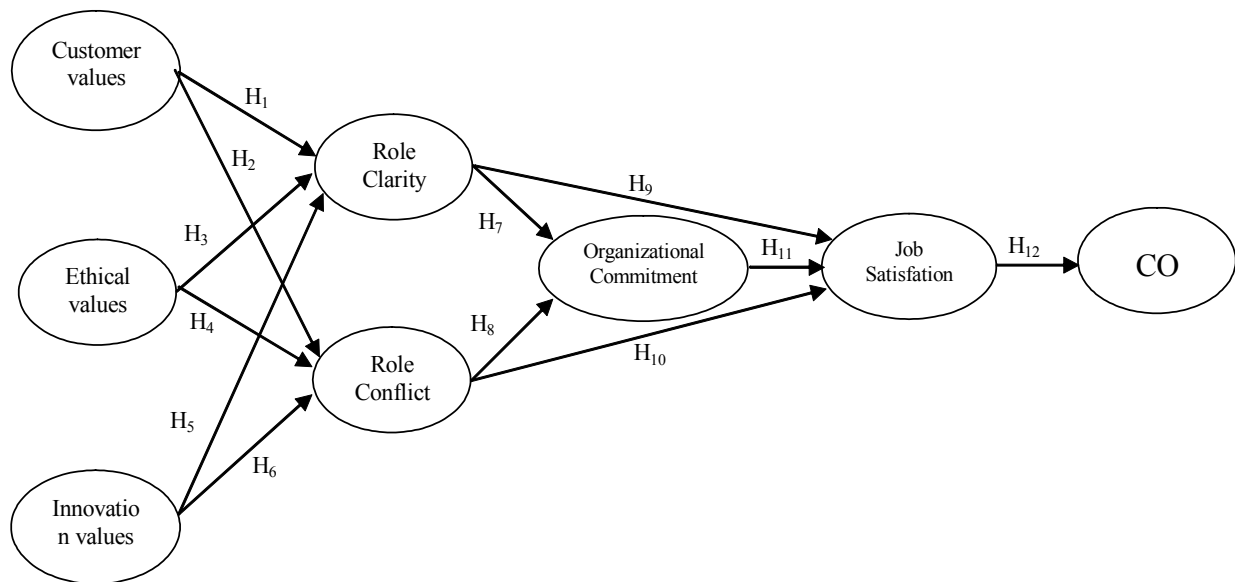
Figure 1: A model of the influence of cultural values on salesperson customer orientation

The impact of the cultural values of the organization

Customer values concern the customer orientation of the firm, which is a key element of the market orientation construct, defined by Narver and Slatter (1990) as "the organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business". These are values that show a commitment to a stable and proactive concern towards meeting customers' needs. If a firm is being perceived as being customer oriented, customer contact employees are more likely to practice customer oriented selling (Flaherty, Dahlstrom, and Skinner, 1999; Menguç, 1996; Siguaw, Brown, and Widing, 1994).

A strong customer orientation of the firm can influence employees to engage in more honest, competent and trust building behaviours, as well as become more responsive to customer interests. Therefore, customer orientation of the firm is likely to reduce role conflict, by making it clear that the relationship with the customer is to be governed by the long-term interests of the later, and not, for example, by what might seem the short term goals of the organization. Siguaw, Brown, and Widing (1994) found empirical evidence that a highly customer-oriented organisation reduces the contradictory demands placed on customer-oriented salespeople, thereby lowering their levels of role conflict. The negative relationship between customer orientation of the firm and role conflict was also empirically supported by Jones, Busch, and Dacin (2003), and Menguç (1996). Likewise, it is likely to contribute to role clarity, by clarifying the duties and tasks of the employee when interacting with the customer (Kelley, 1992). In particular, it emphasizes the continuous collection of information about customers, and the utilization of such information for the creation of a continuous superior value to customers (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Slater and Narver, 1995). Hence, a customer orientation provides a clear direction on the efforts employees should put into understand customer needs and to serve them (Boles et al, 2001), an effort that should be continuous because of the dynamic nature of customers' needs. Because of its reliance on the external collection of information, a customer oriented culture is well positioned to anticipate customers' needs and to satisfy them with innovative solutions (Slater and Narver, 1995). Evidence of the impact of market/customer orientation of the firm on salespeople role clarity is provided by Jones, Busch, and Dacin (2003), Menguç (1996), Siguaw, Brown, and Widing (1994). Hence, we offer the following hypotheses:

H1: The customer orientation of the firm is positively related with the role clarity perceived by the employee
H2: The customer orientation of the firm is negatively related with the role conflict perceived by the employee

Taylor (1975) has defined ethics as "inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality". Following Hunt, Wood and Chonko (1989), corporate ethics can be seen as mirroring employee's perceptions that managers act ethically in their organizations, are concerned with ethical issues in their organizations, and the degree to which ethical behavior is rewarded or punished in their organizations.

There are long-term benefits associated with customer oriented behaviors on the part of the salesperson, but some costs are also likely to occur (Saxe and Weitz, 1982: 348): a sacrifice of short term sales so as to satisfy customer needs and preserve their long-term patronage; and the time spent on discovering customer needs, on appropriately communicating product attributes, and educating the customer on product functioning, which could otherwise be spent, for example, on additional sales calls or 'forcing' the product to the customer. These costs are likely to be perceived as the result of conflicting interests between firm and customer. Hence, the firm-customer interaction is bound to create opportunities for employees to engage in unethical behavior such as the practice of hard selling, which may produce undesired consequences, as an ethical conduct is fundamental for building trustful relationships between buyer and seller. In fact, the degree of customers' trust on the salesperson is influenced by the extent to which they perceive the salesperson to engage in ethical behavior. Hence, the lack of an ethical conduct will curtail trust and the development of relational commitments (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The salesperson-customer interaction is likely to foster an ethical decision making process on the part of the employee, process which might contain the following stages (Srnka, 2004: 11; see also Hunt and Vitell, 1986): moral perception, characterised by the perception of an ethical problem, along with the identification of relevant alternatives and the respective consequences; moral reasoning, which involves the identification of relevant moral philosophies that will serve for the evaluation of the alternatives previously developed; moral judgement, which comprises the employee's judgement about whether a specific alternative is morally good or bad; moral intention, which translates the employee's choice over different alternatives; moral behaviour, which denotes action; and, finally, behavioural evaluation, which includes an evaluation of the action taken and of its consequences, and this in turn will contribute to the development of stable predispositions. Along this process, a salesperson will use rules derived from organizational values to assist his decision making process (Srnka, 2004) and in fact, the marketing literature acknowledges that organizational values impact the stages of the ethical decision making process (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985). The norms and values of an organization, for example, become embedded in employee's minds through the socialization process. The adoption of the desired behaviors is further promoted when compliance with existing values is rewarded and punishment is applied to violations of existing values (Ferrell, Gresham, and Fraedrich, 1989).

Being consumer oriented implies an ethical behavior on the part of the salesperson. An ethical behavior means the practice of a set of actions that may be perceived as just or morally correct by the customer (Lagace, Ingram, and Boorom, 1994: 119). Hence, an organizational culture with ethical values will help installing a customer oriented behavior, as it will help preventing hard selling behaviors, and will ensure appropriate product descriptions and the avoidance of deceptive or manipulative tactics. In summary, an ethical orientation reduces potential contradictory demands upon the employee, therefore mitigating role conflict. To some extent, such organizational values give an indication of behaviors that the salesperson should adopt for the attainment of organizational goals, and this is likely to increase role clarity. In this context, ethics may be regarded as a type of organizational control, specifying what the organization expects and values. Not surprisingly, it has been observed that when employees are required to behave unethically, the end result includes, for example, absenteeism and poor performance (Srnka, 2004).

H3: The ethical orientation of the organization is positively related with the role clarity perceived by the employee

H4: The ethical orientation of the organization is negatively related with the role conflict perceived by the employee

According to Menguç (1996: 279), a market orientated organization "is not dominated by reactive responses to customers. It is proactive and has a forecasting capability that can anticipate changes in customer needs, wants, perceptions and so forth." However, Han, Kim, and Srivastava (1998) noted that innovation, being strongly linked to organizational performance, is an increasingly important function of management, and stated that "a market orientation culture should be designed with the innovation strategy in mind, and vice versa. Being market oriented or market driven alone increasingly does not appear to be comprehensive enough to be used as a strategic beacon in achieving competitive advantage... formulating an innovation strategy to complement the firm's market orientation strategy should provide a more coherent and comprehensive road map for organizations to follow" (p. 41). In the same vein, Slater and Narver (1995), in a view that is seconded by Baker and Sinkula (1999), note that a market oriented culture, complemented with an entrepreneurial drive, where innovation and risk taking are valued, provides the cultural background for organizational learning and that "a market oriented culture can achieve maximum effectiveness only if it is complemented with a spirit of entrepreneurship" (p. 63). Baker and Sinkula (1999) add that market orientation promotes adaptive learning, whereas the satisfaction of latent needs requires discontinuous innovation and double-loop learning. The importance of continuous learning has also been pointed out by Day (1994).

Customer satisfaction is the focus of a market oriented culture. In many organizations, and particularly in service settings, employees are crucial in the process of creating satisfied and loyal customers, as the interaction provides them with direct information about the latter's needs, information which they interpret to develop solutions for customers. A customer oriented salesperson is not restricted to offer current solutions. He should rather seek innovative solutions to dynamic customer needs. Furthermore, he must not be limited by the needs expressed by customers, but also strive to understand his latent needs, in the quest for his long-term loyalty. These are behaviours that require an innovation oriented culture, as "a market orientation may not encourage a sufficient willingness to take risks" (Slater and Narver, 1995: 67).

Organisational cultures emphasising innovation create conditions for employees to better analyse customer needs, and to pursue risky, proactive efforts, to provide more innovative solutions to customer needs. A culture that prizes non-routine solutions creates an environment that promotes experimentation and creative problem solving abilities (Hamel and Prahalad, 1991; Naman and Slevin, 1993). Additionally, innovation oriented cultures promote the necessary unlearning because "many of our hard-earned nuggets of knowledge, institutions, and just plain opinions depend on assumptions about the world that are simply no longer true" (Brown, 1991: 192), therefore instilling a permanent challenge to current assumptions about customers. This orientation towards innovation is likely to be of the most importance in service organizations, where standardization is less feasible and customization more feasible, therefore creating a wider scope for innovative solutions. In summary, innovation oriented cultures provides directions on the duties and responsibilities of the employee, therefore reducing their perceived role ambiguity.

It is also likely that innovation values will reduce role conflict. The argument is that innovation oriented organizations allow more flexibility to their customer contact employees, so they can pursue risky activities and provide innovative solutions. This flexibility can be used by employees to avoid role conflict (Wetzels, Ruyter, and Bloemer, 2000). In particular, employees can use this extra flexibility to identify and choose the relevant expectations to comply with. Hence, the two following hypotheses are offered:

H5: The innovation orientation of the organization is positively related with the role clarity perceived by the employee.

H6: The innovation orientation of the organization is negatively related with the role conflict perceived by the employee.

The impact of role stress

Organizational commitment has been defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Steers 1977: 46). Similarly, Allen and Meyer (1990) defined affective commitment as an employee's degree of emotional attachment to an organization. This attachment is important for the effective dissemination of the cultural values throughout the organization because a committed employee strongly believes in the values of the organization, is willing to exert an extra effort for the fulfillment of the organization's values and objectives, and exhibits a desire to maintain organizational membership (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979: 226). Given that the salesperson derives a sense of positive self-worth from his relationship with the organization, the salesperson is motivated to engage in behaviors, including customer orientation, that enhance and sustain the organization (Joshi and Randall, 2001). Therefore, commitment generates pro-organizational behavior on the salesperson's part, i.e. drives employees to adopt behaviors promoting the goals of the organization.

Previous research has found that role ambiguity has a negative direct effect on organizational commitment (Johnston et al, 1990; Menguç, 1996; Siguaw, Brown, and Widing, 1994). The definition of clear expectations and guidelines for employees, in the form of behaviors that should be adopted for the accomplishment of organizational goals and of rewards associated with performance, provides employees with a direction for their efforts. The lack of clarity builds stress and anxiety, affecting employee's behavior and attitudes. Hence, role clarity contributes to the development of congruity between the values of the organization and those of the individual, thus promoting a sense of identification with the organization (Joshi and Randall, 2001). Previous research has also found that role conflict has a negative direct effect on organizational commitment (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Johnston et al, 1990; Menguç, 1996; Siguaw, Brown, and Widing, 1994). Conflicting demands upon salespeople also generates stress, alienation from work, and reduce the energy employees put into their job. The end result is a lower degree of attachment to the organization. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H7: The perceived level of role clarity is positively related with the organizational commitment of the employee.

H8: The perceived level of role conflict is positively related with the organizational commitment of the employee.

Locke (1976: 1300) defines *job satisfaction* as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." In the same vein, Hackman and Oldham (1975) consider it a global, overall measure of employee's feelings and happiness towards the job. Previous research has found that role conflict and role ambiguity have a negative direct effect on job satisfaction (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Brown and Peterson, 1994; Fry et al., 1986; Menguç, 1996; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, 1970; Siguaw, Brown, and Widing, 1994; Singh, 1993; Walker, Churchill, and Ford, 1977). As role conflict and ambiguity are a cause of stress and alienation from work, they are likely to reduce the positive emotional state arising from the components of the work setting. Notwithstanding, Dubinsky and Hartley (1986) did not find a significant relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction. Other researchers have also found that only one of these role stressors affected job satisfaction (Hoffman and Ingram, 1991; Johnston et al 1990; Teas, 1983). Brown and Peterson (1993), in their meta analysis of antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction, observed that both role conflict and ambiguity were consistently and negatively related with job satisfaction. Considering the evidence linking both sources of stress to job satisfaction, we define the following hypotheses:

H9: The perceived level of role clarity is positively related with job satisfaction.

H10: The perceived level of role conflict is negatively related with job satisfaction.

The impact of organizational commitment

The causal link between job satisfaction and commitment is still an issue of debate (Bateman and Strasser, 1984; Currivan, 1999; Vanderberg and Lance, 1992). Job satisfaction is often considered a cause of organizational commitment, a statement that is supported in several empirical studies. The assumption is that an employee's orientation towards a certain job precedes the orientation towards an entire organization and that, additionally, job satisfaction varies more frequently with changes in working conditions and is formed more rapidly than commitment (Bateman and Strasser, 1984; Currivan, 1999). However, the studies that have supported these assumptions have essentially a cross sectional nature, which curtails inferences over causation. Bateman and Strasser (1984), in a longitudinal study, concluded that satisfaction is not a cause of commitment, but rather the consequence, reasoning "that a cognitive outlook such as commitment is rationalized by subsequent attitudes of job satisfaction" (Bateman and Strasser, 1984: 97). Additionally, it has been argued that commitment can develop quite early (O'Reilly and Caldwell, 1981), namely as a function of socialization efforts, which aim to embed newly hired employees in the values of the organization, provide them with the ability to work in and to interact with others in the organization, and to define the expectations that the organization has upon employees' roles (Louis, 1980), driving the employees to adopt the behaviors prescribed by the organization (Hartline, Maxham, and McKee, 2000). Additionally, it has been argued that the socialization process builds employee confidence and also comfort in the work environment (Hartline, Maxham, and McKee, 2000). Steers and Porter (1983) also suggest that employees are satisfied when, for example, they believe they have been treated well by their organizations. Therefore, by providing for the appreciation of the cultural, role and socially-related skills required to perform effectively in the organization, these efforts can be essential for the formation of positive job attitudes.

H11: Organizational commitment is positively related with job satisfaction.

The impact of job satisfaction

Several authors have suggested that satisfied employees are more willing to adopt behaviours that assist customers and promote their satisfaction (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Jones, Busch, and Dacin, 2003; Lau and Huang, 1999). Job satisfaction has been linked with pro-social behaviour, which is more likely when people experience a positive affect originated by a good mood, with these positive feelings generalizing towards other objects, regardless of its cause. It has been observed, for example, that satisfied employees reveal altruistic and citizenship behaviors. Additionally, Hoffman and Ingram (1992) note that job satisfaction has been found to be associated with sensitivity and kindness in interpersonal relationships, including concern for the needs and feelings of others, and acceptance of criticisms (see Motowidlo, 1984). On the contrary, unsatisfied employees are likely to exhibit higher levels of alienation from work.

Hence, an employee satisfied with his job is more likely to have a better mood and to be emotionally predisposed to meet customers, listen to their requirements, and satisfy them (Lau and Huang, 1999). Previous research has identified that job satisfaction influences employee behaviour, namely performance (Bagozzi, 1978; Behrman and Perreault, 1984). Hartline and Ferrell (1996) also found evidence of a positive link between job satisfaction and customer perception of service quality. Additionally, the service profit chain of Heskett, Sasser, and Schlesinger (1997) posits a direct link between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, the argument being that more satisfied employees are also more loyal and productive. Finally, other studies (Hoffman and Ingram, 1992; Lau and Huang, 1999) indicate that job satisfaction is positively related to customer oriented selling, though Jones, Busch, and Dacin (2003) did not find any relationship between job satisfaction and customer perception of service quality. Based on the above evidence, we predict the following hypothesis:

H12: Job satisfaction is positively related with the customer orientation of salespeople.

METHODOLOGY

The current research is based on a quantitative study carried on two companies belonging to a major telecommunications group. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire directed towards customer contact employees. Two-hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed along with a covering letter reinforcing the purpose of the study and ensuring the confidentiality of the answers. One-hundred and seventy questionnaires successfully completed were returned, corresponding to a very favorable 65% response rate.

The measurement instrument was pilot-tested and the final version included a set of items related to each of the model constructs. Typically used scales were utilized in this study. To measure the *customer orientation of the firm,* we used some of the items in the customer orientation scale proposed by Narver and Slater (1990). The *ethical* items were derived from the scale put forward by Hunt, Chonko and Wilcox (1984). The *innovation* construct was based on the scale from Song and Parry (1993). *Role clarity* and *role conflict* items were based on the extensively used scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). *Organisational commitment* was measured using eight items related to the affective commitment facet of the scale developed by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). The items selected to measure *job satisfaction* were derived from the scale proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) and extensively validated afterwards. The construct *customer orientation of the employee* makes use of some of the items from the well-known scale developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982). Drawing upon these items, the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement, on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Data collected was subject to the usual data cleaning procedures in order to be statistically analysed with the AMOS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement model

All measures were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate their psychometric properties. Only minimal modifications to the original measurement instrument were suggested by the modification indexes. As recommended by the literature, any adjustments were always evaluated according to their theoretical justifications, rather than being statistically driven. The most common model fit indices of the measurement model are presented next. The relative chi-square statistic was 1.49, and the goodness of fit statistics were GFI=0.82, TLI=0.92, and the CFI=0.93. The RMSEA is 0.05. This measurement model performs very well by reference to the acceptable levels mentioned in key literature, thus indicating the unidimensionality of the utilised measures. Subsequently, the scales were examined for internal consistency. Once again, the quality of the scales employed in this study meets accepted standards. The Cronbach alphas are all above the 0.70 level. The internal consistency index, as proposed by Fornell and Lacker (1981) ranges from .71 for innovation to .93 for organizational commitment, thus all exceeding the required level of 0.7 (or even 0.6 for recently developed constructs). The variance extracted estimates reflects the amount of variance that is captured by an underling latent variable (construct) in relation to the amount of variance associated with measurement error of the indicators utilized. In our case, the variance extracted estimates range from .46 for innovation (the only variable below 0.50) to .72 for customer orientation of the firm. Fornell and Larker (1981) argue that it would be desirable that constructs produce estimates of .50 or higher, because below this level the variance due to measurement error is larger than the variance of indicators captured by the construct. However, other authors (eg. Hatcher, 1994) considers that minimum to be conservative.

Structural model and discussion of results

This model yielded the following statistics: $\chi2/df$ = 1.45, GFI=0.80, TLI=0.93, CFI=0.93, and RMSEA=0.05. Therefore, the model provides a very plausible account for the data collected. The structural parameter estimates associated with hypotheses testing are presented in Table 1. One can observe that the vast majority of the path estimates are statistically significant and have the anticipated sign. Only two hypotheses did not find support in our study: H6, which predicted a positive relationship between innovation and role conflict; and H7, which posited a negative relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction.

Table 1. Standardized parameter estimates and *t-values*

Path to	Path from	Hyp.	Standardized structural coefficients	*t-value*	R2
Role clarity	Customer orientation of the firm	H1(+)	.016	1.86*	.42
	Ethical climate	H3(+)	.47	4.95**	
	Innovation	H5(+)	.17	1.87*	
Role conflict	Customer orientation of the firm	H2(-)	-.57	-6.77**	.47
	Ethical climate	H4(-)	-.16	-1.74*	
	Innovation	H6(-)	-.07	-.76	
Organizational com-mitment	Role clarity	H7(+)	.32	4.25**	.48
	Role conflict	H8(-)	-.51	-6.69**	
Job satisfaction	Role clarity	H9(+)	.19	2.54**	.66
	Role conflict	H10(-)	.01	.12	
	Organizational commitment	H11(+)	.71	7.97**	
Customer orientation the employee	Job satisfaction	H12(+)	.21	2.49**	.04

Notes: ns = not significant; * = significant at the 5% level (one tail); ** = significant at the 1% level (one tail)

Overall, the results vindicate the study's proposition that cultural aspects are extremely important vehicles for the creation of an environment where customer contact employees are more predisposed to serve their customers' needs. In particular, this study has shown the importance of developing a customer, ethical, and innovation orientations. These orientations were shown to contribute positively to role clarity and negatively to role conflict, but the innovation orientation wasn't related with role conflict. Support is therefore obtained for H1 to H5, but not to H6. Innovation is likely to be associated with empowerment, so employees can use their discretion to pursue risky activities. In this context, it is worthwhile mentioning that Wetzels, Ruyter, and Bloemer (2000) did not find any relationship between empowerment and role conflict. As predicted, the two sources of role stress considered in this work, role clarity and role ambiguity, were found positively and negatively related with organizational commitment, respectively, thus supporting H7 and H8. Role clarity was also found to contribute positively to job satisfaction, supporting H9. Role conflict, however, was not related with job satisfaction and, therefore, support was not found to H10. In the vein, Singh, Verbeke, and Rhoads (1996) commented upon the smaller effects of role conflict compared to role ambiguity, suggesting that boundary-spanning personnel will find it easier to deal with conflicting expectations than with role ambiguity. Other authors such as Dubinsky and Hartley (1986) also did not find a significant relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction. As predicted by H11, organizational commitment was found strongly and positively related with job satisfaction. Finally, job satisfaction revealed a positive relationship with the customer orientation of salespeople, thus supporting H12.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued that the sharing of values among a firm's employees can promote to a great extent the implementation of an organization's marketing strategy and thus, the accomplishment the organization's perform-ance (Hartline, Maxham, and McKee, 2000). The results obtained in this study show very clearly that cultural traits, in particular the customer orientation of the firm, along with its ethical and innovation orientation, are important values affecting the behavior of customer contact personnel and, particularly, their customer orientation. These values seem to disseminate via their impact on role stressors, namely role clarity and role conflict, who then affect organizational commitment and job satisfaction and, ultimately, the customer orientation of employees. However, these results must be looked at with some caution, given that one of the limitations of this study is the sample, which is limited to two companies.

Ари Палениус

РЕГУЛИРОВАНИЕ ИНФОРМАЦИОННОГО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ОРГАНОВ С ГРАЖДАНАМИ И ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯМИ УКРАИНЫ

Abstract

The system of a uniform information support of authorities and local management units is the integral part of information society and "E-government" of Ukraine. Its main objective is to provide efficiency for collection of information, creation of information resources, access to the information of authorities and the citizens, rise of ef-ficiency of accepted solutions, support of information interactions of authorities; rendering real services from the state authorities to its citizens. Creation of such a system calls for enforcement issues inside the state bodies of the defined functions, development projects to define the rules in using interaction with citizens, implementations of the methods of process concepts and analysis of economic and social information.