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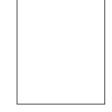
ARTÍCULOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Meta-analytic of the relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction

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Palabras clave
satisfacción laboral, satisfacción del cliente, contexto de servicio, clima de servicio.

Resumen

Un meta-análisis de la relación entre la satisfacción laboral de los empleados y la satisfacción de los clientes se llevó a cabo arrojando una correlación estadísticamente significativa para esta relación. Los resultados sugieren que el contexto de servicio es un moderador de la relación entre la satisfacción en el trabajo y la satisfacción de los clientes. Algunas implicaciones para el futuro se presentan investigación.

Keywords
employee job satisfaction, customer satisfaction, service context, service-profit chain, service climate.

Abstract

A meta-analysis of the relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction was conducted. This analysis produced statistically significant correlation for this relationship. Results suggest that the service context is a moderator of the employee job satisfaction – customer satisfaction relationship in a way that in personal services this correlation is stronger than in non-personal services. Some implications for future research are presented.

Introduction

Over the past decades, a growing body of literature (especially in the fields of applied psychology and management) indicates that managerial practices and a climate that focuses on service are crucial antecedents of positive customer perception of service quality (Borucki & Burke, 1999). High quality exchanges with sales employees often result in customer satisfaction regardless of problems with other aspects of service provision, whereas dissatisfying experiences with employees possibly can ruin other pleasant service encounters.

According to Magi (2003) and Schneider and Bowen (1995) sales employees or service providers often are the organization in customers' perception, and their attitudes may leave a lasting impression that affects satisfaction, repeat buying, and financial performance. Due to the relevance of these issues, researchers have dedicated huge effort on investigating the relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Previous research includes findings of a positive, negative, and non-significant relationship, which result in doubt the issues of its strength and substantive significance(Payne & Webber, 2006; Silvestro & Cross, 2000; Brown & Mitchell, 1993). Through this research we expect assess the strength of the relationships linking employee job satisfaction to customer satisfaction in a meta-analysis of previous studies that correlate employee job satisfaction with customer satisfaction.

Meta-analysis is particularly useful when empirical findings produce diverging results. At first place, by estimating the mean values and range of effects for relationships, meta-analysis provides empirical generalizations across multiple studies (Hunter &Schmidt, 2004). In this way, it allows scholars to estimate true relationships between variables in study. Besides, meta-analysis can be used to detect moderating effects (Ostroff & Harrison, 1999).

This analysis will also point out how the relationship between employees and customer differs across service context, emphasizing conditions in which customer responses are more susceptible to employee satisfaction. These findings should provide a support for managers in the creation of human resource policy and managing the sales employees in a way corresponding with customer relationship objectives in different business settings(Kumar & Shah, 2004).

The purpose of this study is, through a meta-analytic procedure (1) test the hypothesized relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction, and (2) explore the moderation effect of the service context in the employee satisfaction – customer satisfaction relationship. Through this study we will try to answer the following research questions: (1) It is possible to determine whether existing studies converge on a population parameter? (2) Is the service context a moderator of this relationship? (3) Which is the nature of this moderation?.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Employee job satisfaction – customer satisfaction relationship

Employee job satisfaction has been characterized as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences"(Locke, 1976, p. 1300). In other words, employee job satisfaction is an attitude that results from an evaluative process, where some comparison standard about the work environment is compared with the actually perceived work environment (Homburg & Stock, 2004, p. 146). Working on this concept, Hulin and Judge(2003)distinguished that job satisfaction comprises multidimensional psychological responses to one's job, and that such responses have cognitive (evaluative), affective (or emotional), and behavioral components.

Most researchers accept that job satisfaction is a universal concept that is comprised of, or indicated by, various facets. According to Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969)five facets of job satisfaction are considered: pay, promotions, coworkers, supervision, and the work itself. Locke(1976) adds other facets such as: recognition, working conditions, and company and management. For the purpose of this work, we will consider the following facets: supervision, characteristics of the work, and working conditions. Previous research has correlates job satisfaction with customer-perceived service quality or customer satisfaction(Chi & Gursoy, 2009; Homburg & Stock, 2004).

Customer-perceived service quality has been described theoretically as customers' perceptions of the difference between prior expectations and delivered service on different aspects of the service experience(Gronroos, 1982; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). By the other hand, customer satisfaction denotes a satisfaction response that involves a valuation that a product or service provides a "pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment" (Oliver, 1997). According to previous research, customer satisfaction represents an affective state that is the emotional response to an experience or a sequence of experiences with a supplier. It is produced by the customer's assessment of the degree to which a supplier's performance is perceived to have met or exceeded some comparison standard. (Cadotte, Woodruff, & Jenkins, 1987; Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996)

Customer-perceived service quality and customer satisfaction represent different but intimately related constructs, where customer-perceived service quality symbolize a cognitive representation of service delivered and customer satisfaction representing the resulting affective response(Brady, Knight, Cronin, Hult, & Keillor, 2005). The idea that employee satisfaction positively affects service quality and customer satisfaction is based on some conceptual models, among others: the service-profit chain, and service climate.

The service-profit chain framework considers that satisfied employees are more productive and provide better service quality and value than less satisfied employees, leading to higher customer satisfaction(Schlesinger & Zornitsky, 1991; Ulrich, 1992). The service climate framework holds that employee perceptions of management support and facilitation of service performance leads to favorable customer reactions. According to Towler, Lezotte, and Burke (2011) service climate is defined as shared employee perceptions of those practices, procedures, and behaviors that are expected, supported, and rewarded with regard to customer service and customer service quality. This point of view is similar to the service-profit chain,