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Miami, Florida

EFFECTS OF COMPUTER SELF EFFICACY AND POSITIVE MOOD
IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SERVICE ENCOUNTERS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

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in

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by

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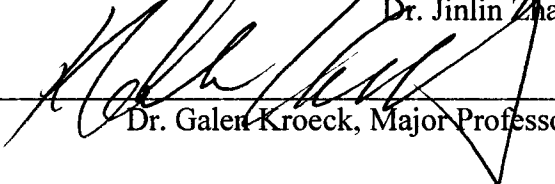
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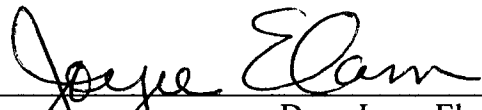
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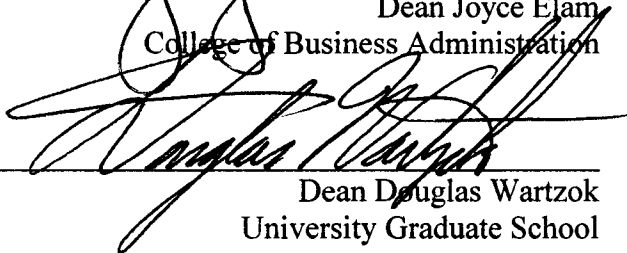
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. My perseverance to complete this work was largely due to their persistent encouragement and unconditional love.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
EFFECTS OF COMPUTER SELF EFFICACY AND POSITIVE MOOD
IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SERVICE ENCOUNTERS

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Attempts to improve the level of customer service delivered have resulted in an increased use of technology in the customer service environment. Customer-contact employees are expected to use computers to help them in providing better service encounters for customers. This research study done in a business-to-business environment explored the effects of customer-contact employees' computer self efficacy and positive mood on in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship. It also examined the relationship of customer service to customer satisfaction and customer delight.

Research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Results indicated that computer self efficacy had a greater impact on extra-role customer service than it did on in-role customer service. Positive mood had a positive moderating influence on extra-role customer service but not on in-role customer service.

There was a significant relationship between in-role customer service and customer satisfaction but not between extra-role customer service and customer

satisfaction. There was no significant relationship between in-role customer service and customer delight nor between extra-role customer service and customer delight. There was a statistically greater positive relationship between joy experienced by clients and customer delight than between pleasant surprise and customer delight.

This study demonstrated the importance of facilitating customer-contact employee positive mood on the job in order to improve the level of extra-role customer service delivered. It also showed that increasing the level of customer service does not necessarily lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a clear societal trend towards greater reliance on information technology in the delivery of customer service. Customer expectations are increasing, information technology is now integral to the various functional areas of many businesses, and there is increased reliance by companies on the technological knowledge and skills of their employees. In the expanding service sector, increased presence of advanced information technology has been effectively driving changes in the delivery of customer service (Bitner, Brown & Meuter, 2000; Domegan, 1996). It has a potentially significant impact on organizational effectiveness and productivity, therefore more companies have been utilizing information technology as the core of their customer service and support activities (Ellen, Bearden & Sharma, 1991). This trend is particularly important where aspects of the marketing environment are prone to change and data has to be constantly monitored in order to enable a company to adjust its offerings to match customer needs effectively and profitably (Domegan, 1996). There has also been a shift by many organizations toward a model of mass customization, where there is an emphasis on treating each customer uniquely based on individual characteristics (Pine, 1993).

Parasuraman (1996) highlighted the evolving role of technology in the delivery of services, by proposing a Services Marketing Pyramid that emphasized the dynamic relationship among technology, employees and customers in the corporate environment. Computers have been elevated from being just tools to accomplish a checklist of

administrative and accounting tasks to being fully integrated into the overall customer service strategies of companies. Advanced information technology in collaboration with employees' human insight and experience has increased access to timely and accurate information about customers and the market. This has facilitated mass customization and relationship marketing efforts to increase customer satisfaction, also enabling organizations to connect with their customers in extraordinary ways.

Over the years a number of research studies have addressed the importance of providing customer satisfaction. This concept has been defined as the aggregation of cognitive and affective responses of customers to products marketed to them (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1980; 1981; 1993; Tse & Wilton, 1988; Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Yi, 1990). In more recent times, the concept of customer delight has also increased in prominence, with customer-contact employees being encouraged to provide extra attention and spontaneous exceptional service during service encounters in order to enhance customer satisfaction and elicit highly positive emotional responses (Bitner, Booms & Tetreault, 1990; Price, Arnould & Deibler, 1995; Oliver, Rust & Varki, 1997). Customer delight has been defined as being distinct from customer satisfaction, and is an emotional state symbolized by a customer being in a state of pleasant surprise (Oliver et al., 1997). There is also another perspective on customer delight that is based on the existence of consistent joy without surprise (Kumar & Olshavsky, 2001).

Previous research has demonstrated that effectively implemented information technology enabled companies to increase consistency, adaptability and efficiency in customer service encounters (Domegan, 1996). This emphasis on the utilization of

advanced information technology has made it possible for many service-related companies to evolve from a traditional low-tech, high-touch customer service environment (use of low technology and high levels of interaction with the customer) to one that is based concurrently on high-tech (use of high technology) and high-touch (Bitner, Brown & Meuter, 2000; Parasuraman, 1996). Also, more convenient access to relevant information for decision-making has led to higher employee productivity. It is therefore evident that the proper application of modern information technology has increased in importance for marketing processes, and resulted in greater competitiveness and increased profitability for a number of organizations (Berry, 1995; Domegan, 1996; Furey, 1991).

Consistent with the rapid pace of technological developments and market competitiveness, many corporate firms have been reducing cycle time with respect to the upgrading of their information technology hardware and software in order to facilitate greater levels of connectivity and the use of newer multimedia applications to serve their customers better (Heygate, 1992; Price Waterhouse, 1997). Despite these technological developments, research studies have found that there is still widespread dissatisfaction with customer service in the United States. Customer satisfaction levels have remained relatively low and there are more complaints coming from customers, leading to much concern in the customer service arena (Koepp, 1987; Lovelock, 1988; Suprenant & Solomon, 1987). Research studies have revealed a steady decline in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) over the years, particularly because of decreasing satisfaction with the service sector (Fornell et al., 1996). This is interesting and unfortunate because the service sector now constitutes about 80% of the U.S. economy.

As companies strive to provide improved customer service in an environment where information technology is increasingly prominent, computer self efficacy (the belief that a person has in his or her ability to use a computer to perform required tasks) of customer-contact employees has become a more important issue (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Marakas, Yi & Johnson, 1998). Customer-contact employees are on the organization's front line and interact directly with customers, having much influence on the outcome of service encounters and customers' perceptions of the organization. They can enhance service excellence by delivering on an organization's promises, portraying a favorable image, promoting the organization's products, and going beyond the call of duty for customers (Bitner, 1995; Bowen & Schneider, 1985; Fisk, Brown & Bitner, 1993; Walsh, 2000). Considering the advanced information technology being used to perform these front line jobs, many customer-contact employees have found it imperative to modify their work methodologies as they endeavor to provide high quality service to customers.

The developments stated previously have triggered an increase in importance of the willingness and ability of customer-contact employees to use computers. Therefore the effect of computer self efficacy on pro-social behavior, that is helpful behavior directed toward customers, the organization or other stakeholders merits further investigation. A part of this research study will examine the relationship between computer self efficacy and customer service (in-role or extra-role) and also the relationship between computer self efficacy and organization citizenship. In-role customer service is defined as formally prescribed employee behaviors aimed at serving the firm's customers, while extra-role customer service refers to discretionary behaviors

that go beyond formal role requirements. The types of organization citizenship highlighted in this study are altruism, cooperation with co-workers, and overall helpful behavior of customer-contact employees to their supervisors, characteristics not usually formally prescribed. Customer-contact employees are not usually evaluated based on these cooperative behaviors (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Brief & Motowildo, 1986; George, 1991).

Another important variable that warrants attention in the customer service environment is customer-contact employee positive mood. This is a short run affective state that is distinct from the affective component of attitude that tends to be long term in nature (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Previous research studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between pro-social behavior and positive mood (Gardner, 1985; George, 1989; 1991). The focus of this research is limited to the influence of positive mood and does not address negative mood that is a distinct but not directly opposite dimension, as demonstrated in past factor analytic research studies on mood (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988; Watson & Tellegen, 1985).

As information technology has gained importance in the customer service environment, the interaction of positive mood with computer self efficacy deserves greater examination. It is crucial to determine the extent to which positive mood moderates the relationship between computer self efficacy and customer service (in-role and extra-role) and also positive mood's moderating influence on the relationship between computer self efficacy and organization citizenship behavior. Further it is important to determine the extent to which the antecedent variables in-role customer

service, extra-role customer service, and organization citizenship influence customer satisfaction and customer delight.

Overall a greater understanding of customer-contact employee computer self efficacy and positive mood is essential to more effective functioning in the modern information technology oriented workplace noted for its more demanding performance requirements, necessary to cope with increased customer demands. Marakas et al. (1998) and Stone (1994) contended in their research studies that the increased reliance on information technology in work settings (intended to improve productivity and decision making) made the relationship between computer self efficacy and performance of organizational tasks a more important subject for future research.

A number of researchers have conducted computer self efficacy studies in various situations, showing its importance in individuals' varied reactions to and use of computer technology (Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Chung, Schwager & Turner, 2002; Fagan, Neill & Wooldridge, 2004; Gist, Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989; Hill, Smith & Mann, 1987; Webster & Martocchio, 1993). Also previous research has been done demonstrating the antecedent role of positive mood on pro-social behavior (George, 1991). However, no previous research has simultaneously addressed the relative effects of customer-contact employee computer self efficacy and positive mood on behavior towards customers and organization citizenship. The indirect impact of these antecedents on customer satisfaction and customer delight in an information technology customer service environment has not been studied. Neither has any other research study examined these relationships in a business-to-business environment where there are numerous interactions between the customer-contact employees and their various clients.

Purpose of Study

This study goes beyond treating the relationships among these variables in isolation. It attempts to validate a comprehensive model of the relationships among computer self efficacy, positive mood, in-role customer service, extra-role customer service, organization citizenship, customer satisfaction and customer delight.

Given the dynamic technological environment, characterized by accelerated technological developments, the purpose of this study is to distinguish computer self efficacy as a critical antecedent of customer-contact employee behavior in an increasingly computerized customer service arena. It aims to present a more detailed analysis of the computer self efficacy/performance relationship in the sphere of customer service. This will be done in two stages. First, it will analyze the impact of the computer self efficacy of customer-contact employees on customer service (in-role and extra-role) and organization citizenship in a technologically oriented customer service environment. It will also investigate how computer self efficacy interacts with positive mood, and influences in-role customer service, extra-role customer service, and organization citizenship. Following this, it will proceed to examine the effect of customer service (in-role and extra-role) on customer satisfaction and customer delight.

Regarding the moderating effect of positive mood, the research study will demonstrate how the degree of positive mood influences the effect of computer self efficacy on customer service (in-role and extra-role) and organization citizenship. It will address the levels of additional customer service (in-role and extra-role) and organization citizenship that should be attributed to the interaction between computer self efficacy and positive mood. Of particular interest is which variable, computer self efficacy or positive

mood, better accounts for variances in customer service (in-role and extra-role) and organization citizenship. Also, the influence of organization citizenship as an important variable in creating the conditions for enhanced customer service (in-role and extra-role) will be investigated.

Further, given the overall low customer satisfaction ratings that exist for the service sector (Fornell et al., 1996), it is important to determine what customers view as a satisfying or delightful service encounter. The relative influence of customer-contact employee customer service on customer satisfaction in a high tech computerized environment will therefore be examined. The objectives are to determine how customers evaluate service encounters and what leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction and/or customer delight. That is, what customers would like service providers to do in order to ensure more fulfilling service encounters in a business-to-business environment.

In this study we investigated the relationships between customer-contact employee pro-social behavior and customer responses that are manifested in varying levels of customer satisfaction and customer delight. This research is done in a business-to-business environment where interactions between service providers and clients are frequent, so the ability to continuously surprise clients is somewhat limited. The perspective of delight as consistent joy without surprise as proposed by Kumar, Olshavsky and King (2001) is therefore more appropriate. Customer delight is treated as a moderator of the relationship between customer service and customer satisfaction. In this moderating role, customer delight is an antecedent variable that has the capacity to elicit the highest levels of customer satisfaction.

Procedural Overview

To facilitate this research, customer-contact employee behavior has been divided into in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship as done in previous studies (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Brief & Motowildo, 1986; George, 1991).

A literature review on customer-contact employees, computer self efficacy, positive mood, in-role customer service, in-role organization citizenship, extra-role customer service, organization citizenship, customer satisfaction and customer delight was done in order to provide a theoretical base for the research. Hypotheses were then developed to represent relationships among the constructs.

This study was done at a call center in which customer-contact employees are critically dependent on computers while handling a variety of client requests. Some important issues for customer-contact employees in call center operations include trying to satisfy the customers' unique requests versus keeping calls as short as possible, and limiting the following: length of time the average consumer is on hold, abandonment rate (lost calls), repeated calls from customers that were not handled well initially, and unhappy customers that spread unfavorable word of mouth. Customer-contact employees are periodically monitored for quality assurance to ensure that they are following the suggested script while addressing clients. This regular monitoring of call-center calls by supervisors can potentially add stress to the customer-contact employee job. Due to the demanding nature of job, there is noticeable variation in the customer-contact employees' levels of performance and fairly high levels of call center staff turnover.

There has been dramatic growth in the call center industry and projections are for continued rapid expansion. This can be attributed to technological advances in integrated telephone computer technology, consumer preference for the convenience of services delivered over the telephone, and cost savings for organizations achieved by telephone service delivery compared with over-the-counter service (Prendergast & Marr, 1994; Sergeant & Frenkel, 2000).

Over the course of a few weeks, self-report surveys were administered to customer-contact employees to determine their levels of computer self efficacy and positive mood. Feedback on customer-contact employee job performance (in-role customer service, extra-role customer service, organization citizenship) was obtained from supervisors. Customer satisfaction and customer delight responses were acquired from the call center's business-to-business clients. These data were analyzed using correlation and regression analysis techniques to determine the significance of the hypothesized relationships.

The next chapter features an extensive review of the pertinent literature related to the variables being studied. This is then followed by the development of hypotheses based on previous research and insight gleaned from the current research study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer-Contact Employees

Customer-contact employees are individuals on an organization's front line with whom customers interact directly. These employees enhance service excellence by delivering on an organization's promises, portraying a favorable image, promoting the organization's products, and going beyond the call of duty for customers (Bitner, 1995; Bowen & Schneider, 1985; Fisk, Brown & Bitner, 1993; Walsh, 2000). Research by Bitner (1990) showed that customer-contact employees' attitudinal and behavioral responses can affect customers' perceptions of the service encounter. Other studies have provided support for the role of customer-contact employees as the interface between the organization and its customers, influencing the customers' service quality perceptions, degree of satisfaction, and decisions regarding loyalty and switching (Barsky & Nash, 2003; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Hartline, Maxham & McKee, 2000; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985).

The general belief is that an organization is judged to a great extent by the consistency and quality of work customer-contact employees do during the service encounter. Suprenant and Solomon (1987) defined the service encounter as a dyadic interaction between the customer-contact employee and customer in which both parties have roles to perform. Other articles have emphasized the important role of customer-contact employees because the quality of customer service they provide influences the

company's ability to retain old customers and gain new ones (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Gronroos, 1983; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). Pfeffer (1994) claimed that customer-contact employees are a source of differentiation and competitive advantage for an organization in our very competitive environment. Other studies have shown that attentiveness, friendliness and enthusiasm of customer-contact employees have a positive effect on customers' perceptions of service quality (Bowen & Schneider, 1985; Rafaeli, 1993). The proximity of customer-contact employees to customers facilitates increased knowledge about customer needs and problems, potentially enhancing service encounter interactions. This access also improves the decision-making ability of the firm with regard to introduction of new services and modifications to existing services (Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994; Bitner et al., 1990; Schneider & Bowen, 1984).

Customer-contact employees are subject to the inherent productivity-quality tension found in frontline jobs. They are encouraged to practice customer orientation, putting the interests of customers first, while at the same time instructed to keep their interactions with each customer relatively short, so that they can handle more customers over time. The expectation is that this behavior will lead to better results for customers and the organization (Deshpande, Farley, & Webster, 1993). This makes their jobs potentially very stressful, as customer-contact employees have to deal with all types of customer requests while attempting to satisfy management by increasing productivity and efficiency. As a result of these potentially stressful conflicting requirements, customer-contact employee turnover rates are historically relatively high (Bateson, 1985; Henkoff, 1994; Singh, 2000; Stuller, 1999).

When discussing the role of customer-contact employees in the current services marketing environment, an updated view of the service encounter is necessary. Emphasis on the utilization of information technology demands that the mode of customer-contact employee-customer interaction be no longer limited to the typical low tech-high touch scenario (use of low technology and high levels of interaction with the customer), but be expanded into a high technology environment (Bitner et al., 2000; Chen, 2005; Meuter et al., 2000; Parasuraman, 1996). These advanced technological methods of customer-contact employee-customer interaction have had a positive impact on convenience for both customers and customer-contact employees. They have also provided increased opportunities for these customer-contact employees to demonstrate customer service behavior. Many customer service transactions are now conducted using modern information technology, for example, in call centers using computer-telephony integration and on the Internet. These developments have facilitated 24 hour/day, seven days per week communication. Concurrently, customers' expectations have increased and they are demanding more immediate responses to problems at any time convenient to them.

Overall, the use of advanced information technology by organizations and their clients for customer service transactions has increased rapidly and continues to grow. Information technology is a valuable resource that organizations can utilize to enhance operational efficiency by reengineering their business techniques, improving dissemination of pertinent information through better marketing analysis, facilitating enquiry handling, and for overall enhancement of customer service to achieve competitiveness (Bitner et al., 2000; Domegan, 1996; Parasuraman, 1996).

Self Efficacy

Self efficacy is a motivational construct that addresses how well an individual believes he or she is capable of organizing and executing courses of action to attain designated types of performances, in other words, an individual's perceived competence to perform specific job-related tasks (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). Self efficacy is a construct derived from social learning theory that posits a triadic reciprocal causation model in which behavior, cognition and the environment influence each other in a dynamic fashion. It has been proposed that competent functioning requires accuracy of perception and harmony between self efficacy, skills and knowledge (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Self efficacy plays a central role in the regulatory process through which an individual's motivation and performance attainment are governed (Wood & Bandura, 1989). This concept has more to do with a person's judgment of himself or herself rather than being a specific measure of skill, knowledge or actual performance. Self efficacy influences (1) decisions regarding choice of behavior, (2) the mastery of the behavior, (3) the effort, perseverance and resilience exerted in the face of obstacles, and (4) the degree of anxiety or confidence (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Self efficacy has the following three related dimensions: magnitude, strength, and generalizability. Self efficacy magnitude refers to the level of task difficulty that an individual believes is attainable. Research by Bandura (1986, 1997), Compeau and Higgins (1995), Gist and Mitchell (1992), and Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) showed that

individuals with a high magnitude of self efficacy believe in their capability to accomplish relatively more difficult tasks while persons with low self efficacy magnitude believe that they are capable of undertaking only easier tasks. Self efficacy strength signifies the level of confidence regarding capability of execution, a reflection of resistance to disconfirming information. It has been illustrated that individuals with strong self efficacy are not easily deterred by obstacles and are more persistent unlike their counterparts with a weak sense of self efficacy who are more easily frustrated in difficult situations (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Self efficacy generalizability indicates the extent to which self efficacy perceptions are limited to particular situations. Past research showed that as self efficacy generalizability increased, individuals felt that they were capable of executing a particular task or closely related tasks in a wider variety of domains (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Four major types of experience have been shown to influence level of self efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

These are listed in decreasing hierarchy of influence:

- Enactive mastery experience that provides the strongest, most direct information on self efficacy, based on prior experience performing the task. This refers to self- assessment of an individual's past accomplishments related to the specific task. Generally, previous successes raise self efficacy while repeated failures lower it.
- Vicarious experience (modeling) that occurs while observing other individuals perform specific tasks. Observers then feel that they can improve their own performance by learning from what they have observed.

- Verbal persuasion coming from someone that is trusted and viewed as competent in the particular task. People are led through suggestion (coaching) and evaluative feedback on performance to believe that they can successfully perform specific tasks.
- Emotional and physiological states that are affected while doing a particular task. For example, nervousness, anxiety or fatigue can lead to less self-confidence and negative judgments of one's ability to complete a specific task while happiness and relaxed circumstances can result in more self-confidence.

In the service sector, greater emphasis on relationship marketing and mass customization as techniques contributing to more satisfied customers has increased the importance of customer-contact employee adaptability. Research by Bitner et al. (1994), and Bitner et al. (1990) showed that customers viewed the service encounter more favorably when customer-contact employees were competent and willing to adapt to their diverse requests and perform under adverse circumstances. Bateson (1985) argued that customer-contact employees are better able to satisfy customers when they have more control over the service encounter. Employees with higher self efficacy have been shown to perform better, to be more persistent and to exert more effort in trying to get a task done. They have also been found to be better able to adjust behavior to the varying personal demands of the service encounter. On the other hand, their counterparts with lower self efficacy were more easily frustrated with challenging tasks, exerted less effort and tended to give up more easily (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996).

Perceptions of self efficacy have been shown to influence decisions about which behaviors to undertake (Betz & Hackett, 1981), the effort exerted and persistence in attempting those behaviors (Barling & Beattie, 1983), and the actual performance of the

individual with respect to the required behavior (Locke, Frederick, Lee & Bobko, 1984; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Staples, Hulland & Higgins, 1998; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Within the business setting, self efficacy has been found to be related to work attendance (Fraye & Latham, 1987; Latham & Fraye, 1989; McDonald & Siegall, 1992), career choice and development (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Jones, 1986; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1987), sales performance (Barling & Beattie, 1983), customer service (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996), adaptability to new technology (Chung et al., 2002; Hill et al., 1987), and job performance (McDonald & Siegall, 1992).

Computer Self Efficacy

Computer self efficacy is the belief one has in his or her capability to interact successfully with or operate computer equipment and perform effectively in a computerized environment (Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Chung et al., 2002; Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Gist et al., 1989; Hill et al., 1987; Marakas et al., 1998; Webster and Martocchio, 1993). It focuses on judgment of what the individual believes he or she can do in the future while using the computer to undertake a specific task. Compeau and Higgins (1995) and Marakas et al. (1998) stated that computer self efficacy represents a person's perceptions of his or her ability to use computers in the accomplishment of a complete task (e.g., using a software package for inventory control), rather than reflecting simple component skills (e.g., booting up a computer, changing report fonts). Considering the unavoidable orientation toward advanced technology in many work environments and the shorter cycle times for upgrades of computer hardware and software to facilitate better customer service, computer self efficacy has evolved as a very

important variable. In a number of studies, it has been demonstrated that computer self efficacy plays an important role in an individual's decision to use computer technology (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Fagan et al., 2004; Igarria & Iivari, 1995; Marakas et al., 1998).

Examining the components of computer self efficacy, Compeau and Higgins (1995) demonstrated that an individual with higher computer self efficacy magnitude believed that he or she was able to do more challenging computer tasks and required less assistance than someone with lower computer self efficacy. An individual with higher computer self efficacy strength exhibited greater confidence in his or her belief in the capability to undertake more difficult computer tasks compared to someone with lower computer self efficacy strength. Also, an individual with higher computer self efficacy generalizability was more competent in using a wider variety of software packages and computer hardware systems than a counterpart with lower computer self efficacy generalizability.

In a comprehensive study of the extant computer self efficacy literature, Marakas et al. (1998) emphatically showed that computer self efficacy is a multifaceted variable. They identified many antecedents of computer self efficacy, such as enactive mastery, task characteristics, perceived effort, situational support, degree or quality of feedback, emotional arousal, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and age. Their extensive research pinpointed consequents such as level of persistence, amount of effort, computer anxiety, predisposition to follow directions, and level of goal commitment. Also identified were moderating variables of the computer self efficacy/performance relationship such as gender, situational ambiguity, task ambiguity and time. In an

empirical study, Fagan et al. (2004) found that significant positive relationships existed between computer self efficacy and computer usage, also computer self efficacy and prior experience. Conversely computer self efficacy had a significant negative relationship with anxiety.

Other research has shown that persons with higher computer self efficacy were more willing to use advanced computer systems than individuals with lower computer self efficacy (Agarwal, Sambamurthy & Stair, 2000). This is evidenced by the enrollment level patterns in computer courses (Hill et al., 1987). This finding was further supported in studies concerning the adoption of high technology products and innovations (Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Fagan et al., 2004; McDonald & Siegall, 1992; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996), and performance in software training (Chung et al., 2002; Gist et al., 1989; Webster & Martocchio, 1993).

Positive Mood on the Job

The mood of customer-contact employees is conceptualized here as a short run affective state that can change over time (George, 1991). It is influenced by situational factors and provides the affective coloring for daily events (Gardner, 1985; Kelley, 1993). Individuals may experience various affective states depending on what they are doing at a particular time (Kelley & Hoffman, 1997). Past research has described customer-contact employee mood as a feeling state that is subjectively perceived by individuals and a critical factor in customer evaluations of customer-contact employees in service encounters (Bitner et al., 1990; Gardner, 1985; George & Brief, 1992; Hoffman &

Ingram, 1992; Kelley & Hoffman, 1997; Kelley, Hoffman & Davis, 1993; Knowles, Grove & Pickett, 1993; Manrai, 1993).

George (1991) showed that a person's mood state on the job could influence spontaneous pro-social behavior. The two primary distinct dimensions of mood are positive affect and negative affect, however it is important to note that these dimensions are not the direct opposite of each other. Positive mood manifests itself in enthusiasm, activity and alertness while negative mood is associated with disgust, anger, contempt, fear and nervousness (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). The focus of this research is on the impact of positive mood on customer service and organization citizenship in a technologically enhanced customer service environment.

Positive mood in this paper is conceptualized as the level of positive affect experienced by customer-contact employees while they use information technology to assist them in their service encounters at work. Kavanagh & Bower (1985) found that subjects in a more positive mood reported higher self efficacy. Other research has shown that positive mood influences people to have an enhanced social outlook and to perceive stimuli more positively, providing empirical support for positive mood fostering pro-social behavior (Carlson, Charlin & Miller, 1988; Forgas, Bower & Krantz, 1984; Isen, Shalker, Clark & Karp, 1978; Spinelli & Canavos, 2000). George (1991) stated that workers in a positive mood were more likely to look favorably on customers and co-workers as potential recipients of assistance. George (1991) and Hoffman and Kelley (1994) showed that higher positive mood states resulted in more in-role and extra-role pro-social behavior, as these employees endeavored to give more assistance to customers and their co-workers. Substantial research exists with results showing that positive mood

is significantly related to pro-social behavior in work contexts (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Motowildo, 1984; Smith, Organ & Near, 1983). Clark and Isen (1982) also implied that individuals in a positive mood were more supportive because helpfulness contributes to prolonging positive mood, and people in general usually attempt to maintain positive mood.

Pro-Social Behavior

Pro-social behavior comprises helpful behaviors of customer-contact employees directed towards their customers, the organization and other stakeholders. This behavior is intended to promote the welfare of the entities at which it is directed (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Brief & Motowildo, 1986; George 1991; Hoffman & Kelley, 1994). Pro-social behavior can be classified as either in-role or extra-role depending on its nature and the particular work context.

In the customer service arena, in-role pro-social behavior may be defined as customer service behavior that is formally prescribed (usually by management) in order to effectively serve customers. This usually involves providing goods and services to customers using methods prescribed by the organization (Brief & Motowildo, 1986). Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan (1993) defined in-role behavior as being governed by formal controls, and written, management-initiated mechanisms that strive to influence employee behavior and positively affect organizational objectives. This is evidenced in explicit obligations specified by job descriptions and performance evaluation forms or implicit norms of the organization (Brief & Motowildo, 1986; Puffer, 1987).

Extra-role pro-social service behavior directed toward the customer is somewhat spontaneous and manifests itself in doing more than following the job description, executing at levels above that required by formal role requirements, or going the extra mile for the customer. This type of behavior is neither mandatory nor contractually compensated by formal reward systems (Brief & Motowildo, 1986; George, 1991; George & Bettenhausen, 1990; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994; Puffer, 1987). This behavior has been described as informal controls, unwritten worker initiated directives that purposely attempt to influence customer-contact employees' behavior (Jaworski, 1988).

Extra role pro-social behavior directed to co-workers is evidenced in being cooperative with them and exhibiting above average organization citizenship. Extra-role pro-social behaviors are deemed important for organizational effectiveness because an organization cannot specifically identify all behaviors necessary in order for it to achieve its objectives (George, 1991). Organ (1988, 1990) defined organization citizenship as discretionary behavior by an employee that may enhance the effective functioning of an organization, independent of a person's objective productivity.

One of the more important ways in which organization citizenship can be manifested is in helping behavior. This has been defined as a composite of altruism, peacemaking, cheerleading and courtesy. It encompasses discretionary help to co-workers with work-related problems, helping those with heavy workloads, voluntarily helping to orient new customer-contact employees, taking action that helps to resolve, mitigate or prevent destructive interpersonal conflict, encouraging and reinforcing co-workers' accomplishments and professional development, and acting to avoid work-

related problems (Brief & Motowildo, 1986; Mackenzie, Podsakoff & Fetter, 1993; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Ahearne, 1998; Organ, 1988, 1990; Smith et al., 1983).

A number of other research studies have been done providing support for the proposal that the discretionary behaviors referred to have a positive impact in the work environment. These have resulted in more favorable customer evaluations, increased organizational performance and productivity (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Brief & Motowildo, 1986; George, 1991; George & Bettenhausen, 1990; MacKenzie et al., 1998; Organ, 1990; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Parasuraman et al., 1990; Poskadoff & MacKenzie, 1994, 1997; Zeithaml et al., 1988).

Customer Satisfaction

Over the years companies have been very concerned regarding the important need to satisfy their customers. This topic has also attracted much attention in academic circles giving rise to numerous publications addressing this issue. Two central perspectives on customer satisfaction have evolved. The first is one based mainly on cognitive evaluations where customers are characterized as thinking logically about the product or consumption experience (Oliver, 1980, 1981; Tse & Wilton, 1988; Yi, 1990). Using this approach, customer satisfaction is defined as the disconfirmation of expectations related to a consumption experience based on cognitive evaluations. A customer's response could be positive disconfirmation where the outcome is better than expected, negative disconfirmation where the outcome is worse than expected, or zero disconfirmation where the outcome matches expectation (Oliver, 1980, 1981; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). The other approach is based mainly on affective evaluations, where the

main focus is on the customers' emotions related to the consumption experience (Giese & Cote, 2000; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991).

More recent consumer satisfaction studies have defined this construct as a summary psychological state with both cognitive and affective components related to a particular product or consumption experience accounting for explained variance (Fournier & Mick, 1999; Oliver, 1993; Szymanski & Henard, 2001). This results in an aggregate instead of an attribute approach to the measurement of customer satisfaction, where a customer's summary response to a particular customer service encounter is sought. Customer satisfaction may vary in intensity, ranging on a continuum from low to high levels. In the area of services, customer satisfaction has been shown to be very influential with respect to a customer's decision regarding whether to use the service again, develop loyalty or switch to another service provider (Barsky & Nash, 2003; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Bitner et al., 1990; Bitner et al., 1994; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Chen, 2005; Gronroos, 1983; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Lam et al., 2004; Tse & Wilton, 1988; Winsted, 2000).

Customer Delight

The concept of customer delight has grown in importance over the years as companies have been encouraged to delight their customers rather than just merely satisfy them in order to achieve customer loyalty (Cohen, 1997; Reichheld, 1994). Customer delight is defined as an extremely positive emotional response on the part of the customer to the service encounter (Schlossberg, 1993). Schneider (1999) proposed that bolstering a customer's self-esteem will likely result in customer delight. This process entailed

acknowledging the customer's perspective, importance and rights, letting the customer feel in control of the situation, therefore making the customer "fall in love" with the organization.

Early research by Plutchik (1980) led to the definition of delight as being a combination of the basic emotions of joy and surprise. More recent research by Kumar et al (2001) separated these basic emotions into two independent perspectives that account for customer delight, one that is based on joy (intense happiness), the other based on pleasant surprise.

The joy perspective focuses on delight without surprise and the accompanying research study comparing participants that were very surprised to those that were hardly surprised, supported the perspective that services that evoke joy could lead to delight without the surprise factor. This delight is characterized by a pleasant relationship and a desire by stakeholders to maintain this relationship in the future. This perception of delight is possible without having to raise the bar each time in order to surprise customers (Kumar et al., 2001).

The pleasant surprise perspective is usually due to unexpected value, unanticipated performance, or surprise related to the level of customer service received. It addresses very positive emotional responses by customers to unexpected high levels of performance of customer-contact employees that pleasantly surprise them. According to the research, this pleasant surprise factor initiates high levels of arousal, which then leads to extreme positive affect and results in delight (Oliver et al., 1997). This viewpoint tends to obligate companies to raise the bar for each subsequent service encounter.

Other research studies have provided evidence of differences between clients' perceptions of customer satisfaction and customer delight, both in the amount of emotional arousal and in the quality of the emotion felt by respondents (Finn, 2005; Kumar & Olshavsky, 1997). Both studies showed that customer delight was associated with expectations being exceeded, elated feelings and surprise, while customer satisfaction was associated with expectations being met, a feeling of receiving fair value. Kumar and Olshavsky, 1997 found that clients' discernment of volition on the part of the firm or its employees was found to be a significant predictor of customer delight but not of customer satisfaction.

Customer delight usually leads to an enhanced level of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Overall, creating a customer-friendly environment in which customers feel competent, important and comfortable is important. A number of practitioners have been extolling the merits of delighting customers in order for them to develop greater product loyalty (Cohen, 1997; Schlossberg, 1993).

Moderator and Mediator Variables

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a moderator is a third variable that partitions the independent variable into subgroups that establish its domains of maximal effectiveness in regard to a given dependent variable. Moderators and predictors are at the same level in regard to their role as antecedent variables of the dependent variable.

A mediator variable on the other hand is an active organism that intervenes between the predictor and dependent variables. For mediation to occur, variation in the level of the independent variable will significantly account for variation in the mediator

variable and variation in the mediator will significantly account for variation in the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997).

Mediators explain how or why an effect occurs while moderators specify when certain effects will hold. Whereas a moderator can exist independent of a predictor variable, a mediator cannot exist without a predictor variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997).

In this study, positive mood is proposed as a moderator that interacts with computer self efficacy and influences in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship. Also, customer delight is proposed as a moderator of the relationship between customer service (in-role and extra-role) and customer satisfaction, potentially accounting for extremely high levels of customer satisfaction. Both proposed moderator variables are not integral to the existence of the proposed relationships that they affect, however they influence the relationships positively.

Hypotheses Development

Research done by Hartline and Ferrell (1996) showed that customer-contact employees with higher self efficacy performed better than their counterparts with lower self efficacy. This concurred with Bandura's (1986, 1997) general observations that higher levels of self efficacy led to more perseverance and desire to do a better job. More specifically, research has shown that individuals with higher levels of computer self efficacy exhibit greater ability and willingness to learn in order to adjust more readily to advanced information technology environments than their lower computer self efficacy counterparts (Agarwal et al., 2000; Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Compeau & Higgins, 1995;

Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Hill et al. (1987) and McDonald and Siegall (1992) found that employees with higher levels of technological self efficacy were more productive and efficient on the job compared to employees with lower technological self efficacy, implying willingness and ability of these employees to use information technology effectively in adapting to the needs of various customers.

Other studies have found that people with higher computer self efficacy were not easily frustrated while carrying out their jobs instead they were more persistent at their tasks (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). As information technology gains more prominence in the customer service arena, customer-contact employees who have higher levels of computer self efficacy will be able to perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently. This should enable them to be more attentive to their customers' and co-workers' needs. Therefore it is expected that higher computer self efficacy will lead to better performance of in-role customer service than lower computer self efficacy. In addition to carrying out their in-role requirements, they should have the capability to use information technology to more effectively accommodate diverse extra requests of their customers. Overall comparatively superior adjustment to job requirements will not only facilitate efficient performance of in-role tasks but should also lead to more involvement in extra-role customer service activities. This is integral to mass customization and relationship marketing efforts, aimed at attracting, developing and retaining customers over the long term by focusing on specific customer desires. Therefore, although many different customers are being served, each individual will be served with the most appropriate solution.

Due to increased effectiveness and efficiency at executing their jobs, customer-contact employees with higher computer self efficacy should also be better able than their counterparts with lower computer self efficacy to demonstrate organization citizenship by offering extra assistance to supervisors and advice to their fellow employees. An example could possibly be increased availability to help co-workers with special problems that they may encounter when handling customer requests.

Results from previous computer self efficacy studies already cited and the circumstances presented in the above paragraphs suggest the following hypotheses:

H1a: Computer self efficacy will be positively related to in-role customer service.

H1b: Computer self efficacy will be positively related to extra-role customer service.

H1c: Computer self efficacy will be positively related to organization citizenship.

George (1991) and Kelly and Hoffman (1997) in their research studies demonstrated that positive mood associated with the job had a positive impact on job performance. This trend should be evident in the information technology environment where individuals who have a more positive job-related feeling should perform better. Other research by Schneider and Bowen (1995) indicated that people who are happier at work yield more satisfied customers.

Enhanced positive mood should therefore increase these customer-contact employees' motivation to do more for their customers than they are required to, based on a formal job description. Customer-contact employees' positive mood state may therefore

have an enhancing effect on computer self efficacy that in turn fosters increased in-role and extra-role customer service, improving the overall customer service encounter.

Increased positive mood should also make the customer-contact employees more willing to assist their coworkers with challenges that they may encounter. Therefore it is likely that customer-contact employees in a higher positive mood state will engage in more organization citizenship behavior. This organization citizenship behavior would be evident in higher levels of cooperation and helpfulness in their relations with their supervisors and co-workers (George 1991).

The preceding arguments suggest that positive mood will have a moderating effect on computer self efficacy outcomes. This would lead to better performance of both in-role customer service and extra-role customer service. This moderating effect should however be greater for extra-role activities than for in-role activities since extra-role activities are not formally required by the job, but are up to the discretion of the customer-contact employees. This leads to the following hypotheses that aim to replicate the work of George (1991) and Kelley and Hoffman (1997), whose research studies found positive mood to be positively correlated with higher levels of customer service behavior. A point of departure in this study is that it is being done in a computerized environment where positive mood is being proposed as a moderator that indirectly influences customer service through its effect on computer self efficacy.

H2a: Positive mood will moderate the relationship between computer self efficacy and in-role customer service.

H2b: Positive mood will moderate the relationship between computer self efficacy and extra-role customer service.

H2c: Positive mood will moderate the relationship between computer self efficacy and organization citizenship.

Previous research has proposed that the environment in the workplace has a marked effect on the performance of customer-contact employees. Schneider and Bowen (1995) stated that people who are in a positive mood tend to be happier at work and as a result yield more satisfied customers. Organ and Konovsky (1989) suggested that organization citizenship aggregated over time and persons enhances organizational effectiveness. Organization citizenship has been recognized as vital for organizational survival, and it is felt that a supportive, cooperative environment may induce individuals to behave more pro-socially (Brief & Motowildo, 1986).

Other researchers have noted that organization citizenship lubricates the social machinery of an organization, providing the flexibility to endure many unexpected circumstances (Smith et al., 1983). George and Bettenhausen (1990) argued that organization citizenship enhances work group attractiveness and cohesiveness. The implication of these previous studies is that organization citizenship may be contagious and could likely lead to even more organization citizenship.

The customer service environment with its various demands has the tendency to be stressful and there is potential for burnout (Singh, 1992). Therefore an important issue will be the conduciveness of the work environment as a precursor of better job execution. An existence of increased levels of organization citizenship among the customer-contact

employees should lead to enhanced performance of in-role and extra-role customer service. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H3a: Organization citizenship will be positively related to in-role customer service.

H3b: Organization citizenship will be positively related to extra-role customer service.

The main goal of customer-contact employees is to satisfy the needs of their customers by executing a combination of in-role and extra-role customer service activities. Previous research studies have provided support for the role that quality and quantity of customer service plays in influencing the degree of customer satisfaction (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Hartline et al., 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Other research studies have also shown that individual differences in computer self efficacy (Chung et al, 2002; Compeau & Higgins, 1995) and positive mood (George, 1991) influence overall job performance. These individual differences should be manifested as variations in the level of in-role customer service and extra-role customer service delivered. From the perspective of proper response to clients, the nature of each client request will likely entail different types of in-role customer service tasks, extra-role customer service tasks or combinations of both. Replicating previous research studies, it is expected that higher levels of customer service (in-role or extra-role) should result in greater customer satisfaction while lower levels of customer service (in-role or extra-role) should lead to less customer satisfaction. A difference with this study is that it is being done in a business-to-business environment unlike most previous studies that have

focused on the business-to-consumer environment. Therefore the following relationships are hypothesized:

H4a: In-role customer service will be positively related to customer satisfaction.

H4b: Extra-role customer service will be positively related to customer satisfaction.

Previous research has suggested that simply satisfying customers will not result in them experiencing the highest levels of customer satisfaction. Therefore marketing practitioners are encouraged to delight customers in order to increase the likelihood of achieving the customer retention objective. In the current environment where customers are very demanding and according to the ACSI, customer service in the service sector is generally viewed as lower than desired (Fornell et al, 1996), the task of delighting customers is widely recognized as a challenging one (Finn, 2005; Kumar et al., 2001; Oliver et al., 1997; Rust & Oliver, 2000).

Two perspectives of customer delight have been presented in previous studies. One is the joy perspective that purports the existence of customer delight without the pleasant surprise factor. The basis of this argument is consistent good service over time that results in customers experiencing intense happiness (joy). It is characterized by the desire of relevant stakeholders to maintain existing pleasant relationships in the future, without customer-contact employees having to 'raise the bar' continuously (Kumar et al., 2001).

The other customer delight perspective is based on customer-contact employees executing actions that result in customers being pleasantly surprised. These episodes have

been characterized by extremely positive departure from expectations that usually result in an affirmative emotionally charged reaction (Oliver et al., 1997). Both the joy and pleasant surprise perspectives invoke positive emotional arousal as evidence of customer delight.

Those customer-contact employees that extend the effort to consistently take good care of their customers' needs may be able to get them into a state of delight. This is even more important when service encounters are frequent and repetitive in nature, as is the case in some circumstances such as this business-to-business environment. The implication is that the joy option to achieving customer delight may be more appropriate as opportunities to pleasantly surprise clients repeatedly would become limited as the number of interactions increase over time.

Given these parameters, one could propose that how well the customer-contact employees consistently perform in-role customer service tasks and extra-role customer service tasks will determine the level of customer delight experienced. Therefore:

- H5a: In-role customer service will be positively related to customer delight.
- H5b: Extra-role customer service will be positively related to customer delight.
- H5c: There will be a greater positive relationship between joy and customer delight than between pleasant surprise and customer delight.

Research studies by Kumar and Olshavsky (1997) and Finn (2005) have served to identify customer satisfaction and customer delight as two distinct variables. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the interaction between a customer-contact employee

and a client, either in-role customer service tasks, extra-role customer service tasks or a combination of both could lead to the customer experiencing delight. This state is likely achieved by carrying out in-role and extra-role customer service tasks at the highest level. Customers who may be delighted due to the intense joy experienced as a result of consistently very good service or due to episodes of pleasant surprise should also feel extremely satisfied. While it is possible that customers could be highly satisfied without necessarily experiencing delight, the positive emotional arousal that is consistent with delighting customers is likely to induce the highest level of customer satisfaction. Customer delight may therefore be viewed as a temporary affective state that is proposed to have a positive moderating influence on customer satisfaction.

H6: Customer delight will be positively related to the highest levels of customer satisfaction.

The relationships proposed in these six hypotheses have been incorporated into a model of customer-contact employee behavior and client behavior (See appendix 1). The first part of the model addresses issues dealing directly with the customer-contact employee positive mood and computer self efficacy. The second part specifies the in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship exhibited by the customer-contact employees. The third part of the model features the clients' resulting customer satisfaction and customer delight.

Next an overview is provided of the methodology employed in this research study. It provides a detailed description of the research subjects and data collection

techniques. The statistical analysis techniques utilized are also presented along with limitations related to the research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting

This research study was conducted in the high technology call center of a leading cruise line, where the use of information technology is indispensable to successful performance of customer service activities. The call center featured computer-telephony integration in which incoming telephone calls are routed to customer-contact employees' telephones. The customer-contact employees are then able to access relevant computer-based information using their workstations, while simultaneously conversing with the customers using telephone headsets. They are required to use their computer skills to quickly address a wide range of customer requests, such as checking on the availability of cruises, making adjustments to previous bookings, or inputting credit card payment for cruises. Such interaction facilitated immediate feedback from customers and increased opportunities to provide service to customers. There are about 250 customer-contact employees who are seated in an open-plan office divided by partitions. These customer-contact employees are divided into teams of about 15 persons each in the charge of a supervisor.

Apart from computer competency, social skills are important for proper job performance. The customer-contact employees should have the ability to be diplomatic and friendly without becoming personally engaged with the clients. In order to ensure that the customer-contact employees complied with the standards of the company

regarding calls, most of the conversations between clients and customer-contact employees are monitored. The customer-contact employees are evaluated primarily on the basis of their customer service behavior focusing on customer orientation, sociability and capacity to address customer requests in a timely manner rather than on the basis of the number of bookings made. Customer-contact employees are evaluated in this way because clients could make purchase decisions after one or any number of interactions with various customer-contact employees of the company.

The different groups of respondents: customer-contact employees, supervisors and clients participating in the study were briefed regarding aims and specific procedural techniques. Self-report surveys were administered to customer-contact employees in order to determine their relative positive mood state and computer self efficacy. Supervisors were asked to complete surveys regarding customer-contact employees' in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship. Clients of the customer-contact employees were also surveyed to get their feedback regarding customer satisfaction and customer delight.

The surveys have all been used in previous studies with slight adaptations of the test items for appropriateness in some cases (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Johnson & Marakas, 2000; Oliver, 1997; Oliver et al., 1997; Organ, 1988; Smith et al., 1983; Watson et al., 1988; Watson and Tellegen, 1985). All scales were tested for reliability using the Cronbach alpha criterion (Cook & Campbell, 1979). The relevance and clarity of the individual items in the scales were confirmed using the related literature and through information gathered during a series of informal discussions with representatives

of the different respondent groups and management personnel prior to administration of the actual surveys.

Description of Subjects

To facilitate collection of the required data, it was necessary that four groups of respondents differentiated by job function be involved in this study. The first group is the customer-contact employees who are titled reservations sales agents in this company. The second group consists of team supervisors who manage the customer-contact employees. The third group consists of quality assurance supervisors who monitor the telephone conversations of customer-contact employees with the clients. The fourth group is the clients (travel agents) who want to get information about and use the services being offered by the company. Each group based on its perspective, provided diverse feedback that was crucial in assessing the model's overall usefulness.

Customer-Contact Employees (Reservations Sales Agents)

About 250 customer-contact employees work in the department selling cruises to customers and generally servicing incoming calls. These calls came from travel agents acting on the behalf of their clients. The main job of the customer-contact employees is setting up new bookings and servicing existing ones. They also provide information on all related services offered by the company. They are initially trained during a six-week orientation program to assist clients in a professional, courteous and pleasant manner. This training involves among other things doing the following: proper acknowledgement of clients, positive and accurate presentation of all information, thanking clients for

calling, verifying data, inputting correct data, offering appropriate alternatives, providing insurance information, advising clients of upcoming promotions, minimizing time that clients are on hold and recapping booking information with clients to ensure accuracy. After the formal training period, any assistance required by the new customer-contact employees is provided by supervisors. This is especially important during the first few weeks of actual work.

Team Supervisors and Quality Assurance Supervisors

All supervisors are individuals who have been promoted after serving a number of years as reservations sales agents. Each team supervisor is responsible for on the job activities and for evaluating the overall performance of about 10 customer-contact employees within his or her team. The team supervisors organize and coordinate work schedules, while keeping a record of the number of hours worked by the customer-contact employees in their charge, facilitating proper compensation. This supervisory role ensures that an adequate number of personnel are available to handle incoming calls and keep customer service at an optimal level. There is a reasonable amount of interaction between each supervisor and his or her assigned customer-contact employees, facilitating their ability to provide more accurate descriptions of the behaviors of the customer-contact employees in their teams. On the other hand, the quality assurance supervisors randomly monitor most of the calls of the reservations sales agents, giving them feedback and advice on the calls that they have handled. The monitored calls are scored according to predetermined criteria and incentives awarded to outstanding reservations sales agents.

Clients (Travel Agents)

The call center handles thousands of incoming calls on a daily basis. Customers are divided into two categories: travel agents and direct guests. Travel agents who make up the vast majority act on the behalf of clients. These travel agents are in most cases more experienced in the cruise business than direct guests and therefore usually in a better position to act as intermediaries negotiating with the customer-contact employees in order to obtain the best packages for their clients. These are the persons that are the focus of this business-to-business study. Direct guests are clients that opt to deal directly with the cruise line rather than use the intermediary services of travel agents. Direct guests were not included in this study.

Data Collection Techniques

Surveys for Customer-Contact Employees

Self-report surveys were used to determine the computer self efficacy, positive mood level, and various demographic variables of customer-contact employees. In order to better fit the current study's environment, pertinent adaptations to fit the specific work environment were made to the computer self efficacy scale developed by Johnson and Marakas (2000). This scale is intent on determining the personal evaluations of customer-contact employees regarding belief in their ability to perform job-related tasks using the provided information technology. The scale consists of 10 items representing the job tasks of varying difficulty measured on a ten-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all confident" (10) to "totally confident" (100). See appendix 2.

The PANAS (Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale) consists of 10 adjectives assessing positive affect and 10 adjectives assessing negative affect developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988); Watson and Tellegen (1985). More specifically in this study, the positive component of the PANAS was used to determine the level of positive affect related to the use of information technology in the workplace. The PANAS uses a six-point Likert scale with anchors “not at all” (1) and “extremely” (6). The PANAS can be used with varying timeframes, for example: This moment, Today, Past Few Days, Week, or Past Few Weeks. For this study, the time frame used was ‘Past Few Weeks’ in order to provide a reasonable framework for self-assessment. See appendix 3.

Each customer-contact employee participating in the study was allowed to take a break from answering incoming calls in order to participate privately in the study. The customer-contact employees were told that the study was being done in order to improve customer service delivery. They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and told that the data would be handled in its totality with no individual being specifically identified. They were also told that there would be no negative impact on their employment as a result of their survey responses.

The customer-contact employees were then instructed to complete a two-part survey on their computer self efficacy and positive mood on the job without consulting with anyone else. In the first part, they were asked based on their perceptions about their computer skills to indicate whether or not they believed they were able to do particular tasks and if so, to express their level of confidence on a ten-point CSE scale. For the second part, using the positive affect items of the PANAS, customer-contact employees were asked to indicate on the six-point scale, the extent to which each adjective described

their feelings and emotions while completing computer-related tasks in the call center. Respondents read each item and then wrote the appropriate number in the space next to that word. The surveys were completed by 213 customer-contact employees.

Surveys for Team Supervisors and Quality Control Supervisors

In-role customer service and extra-role customer service were assessed by the quality control supervisors using the Customer Service scale adopted from the work of Bettencourt and Brown (1997); Organ (1988). There are five items representing in-role customer service and five items for extra-role customer service. This is a seven-point Likert scale that has anchors “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (7). See appendices 4 and 5.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was assessed by the team supervisors using 4 items from the OCB scale developed by Smith, Organ and Near (1983). It uses a seven-point scale with anchors “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (7). See appendix 6.

The two groups of supervisors were told that the study was being done in order to improve customer service delivery. Quality assurance supervisors were asked to privately complete surveys on the in-role customer service and extra-role customer service of the reservation sales agents whose incoming calls they had monitored. The quality assurance supervisors used the five-item for In-role Customer Service and five-item Extra-role Customer Service scales. A four-item scale for Organization Citizenship was used by the team supervisors to assess organization citizenship for each of the reservation sales agents in their teams during the ‘Past Few Weeks’. They were assured of the

confidentiality of their responses and told that the data would be handled in its totality with no individual customer-contact employee being specifically identified. They were also told that there would be no negative impact on the employment status of any of the customer-contact employees that they supervise or on their own employment as a result of their survey responses. Responses from supervisors were received for 184 customer-contact employees.

Surveys for Clients (Travel Agents)

Customer satisfaction and customer delight were measured using adaptations of the Customer Satisfaction/Customer Delight seven-point Likert scale developed by Oliver et al. 1997. The anchors are “much less satisfied” (1) and “much more satisfied” (7). In order to obtain a better measure of customer delight, the scale also included items such as happiness and pleasant surprise with anchors “never” (1) and “always” (5). See appendices 7 and 8.

A telephone interviewer called clients shortly after they had completed their interaction with a reservations sales agent. This was possible utilizing the call tracking facility that keeps a record of each incoming call from a client and the reservations sales agent that addressed the call. Clients were asked for feedback to determine the levels of Customer Satisfaction and Customer Delight regarding the way they were treated on each call. The clients were told that the aim of the study was to get feedback from customers in order to provide improved customer service. They were also told that their responses would not lead to any negative impacts on the employment status of the reservations sales

agents, and that no one would be subject to any negative repercussions as a result of the study. Responses for 140 cases were received from clients.

Statistical Analysis

H1a: Computer self efficacy (CSE) will be positively related to in-role customer service (IRCS).

Hypothesis H1a was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Significant correlation in a positive direction expected with significant beta weight for standardized measure of CSE predicting IRCS expected.

H1b: Computer self efficacy (CSE) will be positively related to extra-role customer service (ERCS).

Hypothesis H1b was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Significant correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of CSE predicting ERCS expected.

H1c: Computer self efficacy (CSE) will be positively related to better organization citizenship (ORGC).

Hypothesis H1c was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis. A

significant correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of CSE predicting ORGC expected.

H2a: Positive mood (POSMOOD) will moderate the relationship between computer self efficacy (CSE) and in-role customer service (IRCS).

Hypothesis H2a was tested using stepwise regression analysis. A significant increase is expected in IRCS as a result of the interaction between POSMOOD and CSE.

H2b: Positive mood (POSMOOD) will moderate the relationship between computer self efficacy (CSE) and extra-role customer service (ERCS).

Hypothesis H2b was tested using stepwise regression analysis. A significant increase is expected in ERCS as a result of the interaction between POSMOOD and CSE.

H2c: Positive mood (POSMOOD) will moderate the relationship between computer self efficacy (CSE) and organization citizenship (ORGC).

Hypothesis H2c was tested using stepwise regression analysis. A significant increase is expected in ORGC as a result of the interaction between POSMOOD and CSE.

H3a: Organization citizenship (ORGC) will be positively related to in-role customer service (IRCS).

Hypothesis H3a was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis. Correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of ORGC predicting IRCS expected.

H3b: Organization citizenship (ORGC) will be positively related to extra-role customer service (ERCS).

Hypothesis H3b was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis. Correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of ORGC predicting ERCS expected.

H4a: In-role customer service (IRCS) will be positively related to customer satisfaction (CSAT).

Hypothesis H4a was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of IRCS predicting CSAT expected.

H4b: Extra-role customer service (ERCS) will be positively related to customer satisfaction (CSAT).

Hypothesis H4b was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of ERCS predicting CSAT expected.

H5a: In-role customer service (IRCS) will be positively related to customer delight (CDEL).

Hypothesis H5a was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of IRCS predicting CDEL expected.

H5b: Extra-role customer service (ERCS) will be positively related to customer delight (CDEL).

Hypothesis H5b was tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis.

Correlation in a positive direction with significant beta weight for standardized measure of ERCS predicting CDEL expected.

H5c: There will be a greater positive relationship between joy and customer delight (CDEL) than between pleasant surprise and customer delight (CDEL).

Hypothesis H5c was tested using correlation analysis. The correlation between happiness and CDEL is expected to be higher than correlation between pleasant surprise and CDEL.

H6: Customer delight (CDEL) will be positively related to the highest levels of customer satisfaction (CSAT).

Hypothesis H6 was tested using correlation analysis. Correlation in a positive direction between CDEL and CSAT expected.

Limitations of the Study

This field study takes a micro view and does not focus on all variables that could have a predictive influence on the nature of the service encounter. Although this was purposely done to isolate computer self efficacy and positive mood, the fact that a number of antecedents were not considered may be viewed as a limitation, as this could confound the effects of some of the relationships being analyzed. Examples of excluded predictor variables that may have accounted for a percentage of the variance in the performance of the customer-contact employees include other factors such as customer-contact employee personality, job satisfaction and relationships with supervisors. As stated, the influence of personality in predicting behavior was not specifically addressed in this study. However a number of researchers have demonstrated that personality does play a role in determining the quality of service delivered (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hogan, Hogan & Busch, 1984; Kassarjian & Sheffet, 1991). Schneider and Bowen (1995) emphasized that choosing the right personality type is important, as service disposition is a predictor of service effectiveness. Hurley (1998) showed that superior

service providers tend to be higher in extroversion and agreeableness. Because such variables were not measured here, the results obtained must be considered with these limitations in mind.

Typical customer-contact employees are trained to follow closely the format of a standard script and they are commonly monitored by supervisors to ensure that there is limited divergence from the script. However, the clients and their requests were not standardized in this study, therefore the characteristics of customer service interactions should have been variable as customer-contact employees catered to diverse client needs. As with most other field studies, it was not possible to manipulate the activities of customer-contact employees or the types of calls in order to achieve the desired variance in customer responses.

Although the clients of the company in this study also do business with competing companies, the fact that this study was done with customer-contact employees and supervisors of the reservations department of only one company limits generalizability of the findings to some extent.

The self-report nature of parts of this study, in particular those dealing with measures of computer self efficacy and positive mood are unavoidable and present certain limitations. Both variables are extremely difficult to measure objectively therefore overall variances were less than desired. Despite this, there was more acceptable variance in the distribution of customer-contact employee positive mood states than for computer self efficacy. This may have been because the customer-contact employees did not think their job performance was evaluated based on positive mood as much as on their capabilities to use the computer to do the required tasks related to the job. One may

therefore assume less social desirability related to self-assessment of positive mood than computer self efficacy. Studies in organization research by Bandura (1986, 1997) and Podsakoff and Organ (1986) point out the weaknesses associated with the use of self-reports but concluded that in many situations self-reporting is unavoidable. In studies that require self-report methodology the door is opened to biased responses as individual respondents may give erroneous information in order to present a more favorable image.

Another potential weakness was the length of time during which the data from the three different groups of respondents was collected. The first step involved customer contact employees responding to self-report surveys of computer self efficacy and positive mood. The second step involved the supervisors assessing customer-contact employees' in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship. The third step involved clients being interviewed for customer satisfaction and customer delight feedback based on the customer-contact employee performance. It was a logistic challenge to limit the time for these tasks to within a few weeks. Shorter time periods may have improved the quality of the results.

Unlike the quasi-controlled situation in which data collection was done from the customer-contact employees and their supervisors, there was limited control when getting feedback from the clients who were interviewed on the phone. It was particularly challenging to interview some of the clients who were somewhat rushed at times due to the fact that they were busy doing research in order to get the best deals for their customers. That investigative exercise that the clients partake in can be a laborious process that involves checking as many competing options as possible, so time poverty is understandable. These clients did not wish to spend extra time on any issue that was not

considered necessary for a particular service encounter. This may have had an undesirable impact on their responses as they were more interested in getting back to their jobs.

The appropriate statistical tests were undertaken in order to test the hypothesized relationships. The detailed results of the correlation and regression analyses used to test each of the six hypotheses are presented next in tabular format with accompanying narrative explanations.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The six scales used in this study scored well on reliability as all had standardized alpha values greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1979). The customer-contact employee positive mood scale had a standardized alpha value = 0.88. The customer-contact employee computer self-efficacy scale had standardized alpha = 0.94. The customer-contact employee organization citizenship scale had a standardized alpha = 0.91. The customer-contact employee in-role customer service scale had a standardized alpha = 0.97. The customer-contact employee extra-role customer service scale had a standardized alpha = 0.98. The customer satisfaction/customer delight scale had a standardized alpha = 0.79.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1a proposed that customer-contact employees' computer self-efficacy would be positively related to their in-role customer service. The overall positive relationship was not significant (0.10), see Table 1. Regression analysis results were not significant for computer self-efficacy predicting in-role customer service: R square value = 0.01; F = 2.26, sig. 0.13, see Table 2. The standardized Beta value = 0.10; t = 1.51, see Table 3.

Table 1

Correlation Results for Computer Self Efficacy, Positive Mood, Organization Citizenship and Customer Service

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Computer Self-Efficacy	91.39	13.55	1.00				
2. Positive Mood	42.66	10.66	0.25**	1.00			
3. Organization Citizenship	3.91	1.79	0.00	-0.18**	1.00		
4. In-role Customer Service	5.54	1.23	0.10	0.13*	-0.16*	1.00	
5. Extra-role Customer Service	4.18	1.57	0.11*	0.22**	-0.27**	0.58**	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, one tailed.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, one tailed.

S.D. = standard deviation.

Hypothesis 1b proposed that customer-contact employees' computer self-
efficacy would be positively related to their extra-role customer service. The overall
positive relationship was significant (0.11*), see Table 1. Regression analysis results
were significant for computer self-efficacy predicting extra-role customer service: R
square = 0.01; F = 2.68, sig. 0.00, see Table 2. The standardized Beta value = 0.11; t
= 1.73, see Table 3.

Hypothesis 1c proposed that customer-contact employees' computer self-
efficacy would be positively related to their organization citizenship. There was a
non-significant negative correlation between computer self-efficacy items and
organizational citizenship (0.00), see Table 1. Regression analysis results were not
significant for computer self-efficacy predicting organization citizenship: R square =
0.00; F = 0.00, sig. 0.97, see Table 2. The standardized Beta value = 0.00; t = -0.04,
see Table 3.

Table 2

Regression Results for Computer Self-Efficacy predicting In-role Customer Service, Extra-role Customer Service and Organization Citizenship

In-role Customer Service					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	3.38	1	3.38	2.26	0.13
Residual	337.60	226	1.49		
Total	340.98	227			
R square = 0.01					
Extra-role Customer Service					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	7.28	1	7.28	2.68	0.00
Residual	551.69	226	2.44		
Total	558.97	227			
R square = 0.01					
Organization Citizenship					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	0.01	1	0.01	0.00	0.97
Residual	717.90	218	3.29		
Total	717.90	219			
R square = 0.00					

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2a proposed that customer-contact employees' positive mood would moderate the relationship between computer self-efficacy and in-role customer service. The correlation results show a significant positive relationship (0.13*), see Table 4. Regression analysis results were not significantly positive for the interaction of computer self-efficacy x positive mood predicting in-role customer service: R

square = 0.02; F = 2.05; sig. 0.13, see Table 5. The standardized Beta value = 0.11; t = 1.28, see Table 6. There was no significant increase in in-role customer service as a result of the interaction between positive mood and computer self-efficacy.

Table 3

Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for Computer Self Efficacy predicting In-role Customer Service, Extra-role Customer Service and Organization Citizenship

	In-role Customer Service				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.72	0.55		8.53	0.00
Computer self-efficacy	9.01E-03	0.01	0.10	1.51	0.13
	Extra-role Customer Service				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.98	0.71		4.21	0.00
Computer self-efficacy	1.32E-02	0.01	0.11	1.73	0.09
	Organization Citizenship				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	3.90	0.81		4.80	0.00
Computer self-efficacy	-3.47E-04	0.01	0.00	-0.04	0.97

Table 4

Correlation Results for Computer Self Efficacy, Computer Self-Efficacy x Positive Mood, Positive Mood, Organization Citizenship and Customer Service

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Computer Self-Efficacy	91.39	13.55	1.00				
2. Computer Self-Efficacy x Positive Mood	1944.09	592.70	0.59	1.00			
3. In-role Customer Service	5.54	1.23	0.10	0.13 *	1.00		
4. Extra-role Customer Service	4.18	1.57	0.12 *	0.23 **	0.59 **	1.00	
5. Organization Citizenship	3.91	1.79	0.00	-0.15 *	-0.16 *	-0.27 **	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, one tailed.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, one tailed.

S.D. = standard deviation.

Hypothesis 2b proposed that customer-contact employees' positive mood moderates the relationship between computer self-efficacy and extra-role customer service. The correlation results show a significant positive relationship (0.23**), see Table 4. Regression analysis results were significant for the computer self-efficacy x positive mood interaction predicting extra-role customer service: R square = 0.06; F = 6.46; sig. 0.00, see Table 5. The standardized Beta value = 0.25; t = 3.09, see Table 6. There was a significant increase in extra-role customer service as a result of the interaction between positive mood and computer self efficacy.

Hypothesis 2c proposed that customer-contact employees' positive mood moderates the relationship between computer self-efficacy and organization citizenship. The correlation results show a significant negative relationship (-0.15*). Regression analysis results were significant for the interaction of computer self-efficacy x positive mood predicting organization citizenship: R square = 0.03; F= 3.06), see Table 5. The standardized Beta value = 0.20; t = -2.45, see Table 6. There was a significant decrease in organization citizenship as a result of the interaction between positive mood and computer self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3a proposed that customer-contact employees' organization citizenship is positively related to their in-role customer service. There was a significant negative correlation between organization citizenship and in-role customer service (-0.16*), see Table 1. Regression analysis results were significant for organization citizenship predicting in-role customer service: R-square = 0.03; F = 4.75; sig. 0.03, see Table 7. The standardized Beta value = -0.16; t = -2.18, see Table

8. There was a significant decrease in in-role customer service as a result of organization citizenship.

Table 5

Regression Results for Computer Self-Efficacy x Positive Mood predicting In-role Customer Service, Extra-role Customer Service and Organization Citizenship

In-role Customer Service					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	6.12	2	3.06	2.05	0.13
Residual	332.24	223	1.49		
Total	338.37	225			
R square = 0.02					
Extra-role Customer Service					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	30.32	2	15.16	6.46	0.00
Residual	523.60	223	2.35		
Total	553.92	225			
R square = 0.06					
Organization Citizenship					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	19.36	2	9.68	3.06	0.05
Residual	672.76	213	3.16		
Total	692.12	215			
R square = 0.06					

Table 6

Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for Computer Self-Efficacy predicting In-role Customer Service, Extra-role Customer Service and Organization Citizenship

	In-role Customer Service				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.78	0.56	8.58		0.00
Computer self-efficacy	3.83E-03	0.01	0.04	0.52	0.60
Computer self-efficacy x Positive Mood	2.18E-04	0.00	0.11	1.28	0.20
	Extra-role Customer Service				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	3.20	0.70		4.58	0.00
Computer self-efficacy	-3.06E-03	0.01	-0.03	-0.33	0.74
Computer self-efficacy x Positive Mood	6.58E-04	0.00	0.25	3.09	0.00
	Organization Citizenship				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.18	0.82		4.76	0.00
Computer self-efficacy	1.20E-02	0.01	0.09	1.13	0.26
Computer self-efficacy x Positive Mood	-5.48E-04	0.00	-0.20	-2.45	0.02

Hypothesis 3b proposed that customer-contact employees' organization citizenship is positively related to their extra-role customer service. There was a significant negative correlation between organization citizenship and extra-role customer service (-0.27**), see Table 1. Regression analysis results were significant for organization citizenship predicting extra-role customer service (ERCS): R square value = 0.07; F = 14.20; sig. 0.00, see Table 7. The standardized Beta value = -0.27; t = -3.77, see Table 8. There was a significant decrease in extra-role customer service as a result of organization citizenship.

Table 7

Regression Results for Organization Citizenship predicting In-role Customer Service and Extra-role Customer Service

In-role Customer Service					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	6.59	1	6.59	4.75	0.03
Residual	255.38	184	1.39		
Total	261.97	185			
R Square = 0.03					
Extra-role Customer Service					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	32.49	1	32.49	14.20	0.00
Residual	421.19	184	2.29		
Total	453.68	185			
R Square = 0.07					

Table 8

Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for Organization Citizenship predicting In-role Customer Service and Extra-role Customer Service

In-role Customer Service					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	5.92	0.21		28.91	0.00
Organization Citizenship	0.10	0.05	-0.16	-2.18	0.03
Extra-role Customer Service					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	5.10	0.26		19.37	0.00
Organization Citizenship	-0.23	0.06	-0.27	-3.77	0.00

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4a proposed that customer-contact employees' in-role customer service is positively related to customer satisfaction. There was a significant positive correlation between in-role customer service and customer satisfaction (0.15*), see Table 9. Regression analysis results were significant for in-role customer service predicting in-role customer satisfaction: R-square = 0.02; F = 3.11; sig. 0.08, see Table 10. The standardized Beta value = 0.15; t = 1.76, see Table 12. The increase in customer satisfaction as a result of in-role customer service approached but did not attain significance.

Table 9

Correlation Results for In-role Customer Service, Extra-role Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Delight

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. In-role Customer Service	5.69	1.28	1.00			
2. Extra-role Customer Service	4.41	1.72	0.58 **	1.00		
3. Customer Satisfaction	5.28	1.34	0.15 *	0.01	1.00	
4. Customer Delight	3.99	2.21	0.11	0.00	0.53 **	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, one tailed.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, one tailed.

S.D. = standard deviation.

Hypothesis 4b proposed that customer-contact employees' extra-role customer service is positively related to customer satisfaction. There was no significant correlation between extra-role customer service and customer satisfaction (0.01), see Table 9. Regression analysis results were not significant for extra-role customer service predicting customer satisfaction: R square = 0.00; F = 0.01; sig. 0.91, see

Table 11. The standardized Beta value = 0.01; t = 0.12, see Table 13. There was no significant change in customer satisfaction as a result of extra-role customer service.

Table 10

Regression Results for In-role Customer Service predicting Customer Satisfaction

	Customer Satisfaction				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	5.54	1	5.54	3.11	0.08
Residual	249.19	140	1.78		
Total	254.73	141			

R square = 0.02

Table 11

Regression Results for Extra-role Customer Service predicting Customer Satisfaction

	Customer Satisfaction				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	0.02	1	0.02	0.01	0.91
Residual	254.71	140	1.79		
Total	254.73	141			

R square = 0.00

Table 12

Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for In-role Customer Service predicting Customer Satisfaction

	Customer Satisfaction				
	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.40	0.51		8.62	0.00
In-role Customer Service	0.15	0.09	0.15	1.76	0.08

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5a proposed that customer-contact employees' in-role customer service is positively related to customer delight. There was no significant correlation between in-role customer service and customer delight (0.11), see Table 9. Regression analysis results were not significant for in-role customer service predicting customer delight: R square = 0.02; F = 0.01; sig. 0.91, see Table 14. The standardized Beta value = 0.11; t = 1.27, see Table 16. There was no significant change in customer delight as a result of in-role customer service. Regression analysis results are not significant for in-role customer service predicting customer delight.

Hypothesis 5b proposed that customer-contact employees' extra-role customer service is positively related to customer delight. There was no significant correlation between extra-role customer service and customer delight (0.00), see Table 9. Regression analysis results were not significant for extra-role customer service predicting customer delight: R square = 0.00; F = 0.00; sig. 0.97, see Table 15. The standardized Beta value = 0.00; t = -0.04, see Table 17. There was no significant change in customer delight as a result of extra-role customer service.

Table 13

Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for Extra-role Customer Service predicting Customer Satisfaction

	Customer Satisfaction				
	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	5.23	0.31		16.77	0.00
In-role Customer Service	7.58E-03	0.07	0.01	0.12	0.91

Hypothesis 5c proposed that joy (extreme happiness) has a greater positive relationship to customer delight than pleasant surprise to customer delight. The correlation result for the relationship of happiness and customer delight (0.68**) was greater than the correlation result for the relationship between pleasant surprise and customer delight (0.47**), see Table 18.

Table 14
Regression Results for In-role Customer Service predicting Customer Delight

	Customer Delight				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	7.84	1	7.84	1.61	0.21
Residual	681.15	140	4.87		
Total	688.99	141			

R square = 0.02

Table 15
Regression Results for Extra-role Customer Service predicting Customer Delight

	Customer Delight				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	0.01	1	0.01	0.00	0.97
Residual	688.98	140	4.92		
Total	688.99	141			

R square = 0.00

Table 16
Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for In-role Customer Service predicting Customer Delight

	Customer Delight				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.95	0.84		3.49	0.00
In-role Customer Service	3.67E-02	0.03	0.11	1.27	0.21

Table 17

Regression Analysis Beta Coefficients and t-values for Extra-role Customer Service predicting Customer Delight

	Customer Delight				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.01	0.52		7.80	0.00
In-role Customer Service	-9.57E-04	0.02	0.00	-0.04	0.97

Table 18

Correlation Results for Customer Satisfaction, Customer Delight, Happiness and Pleasant Surprise

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. Customer Satisfaction	5.28	1.34	1.00			
2. Customer Delight	3.99	2.21	0.53 **	1.00		
3. Happiness	4.97	1.75	0.51 **	0.68 **	1.00	
4. Pleasant Surprise	2.84	2.10	0.39 **	0.47 **	0.36 **	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, one tailed.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, one tailed.

S.D. = standard deviation.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 proposed a positive relationship between customer delight and the highest levels of customer satisfaction. The correlation result for the relationship of customer delight to customer satisfaction (0.53**), see Table 18.

Overall, the analyses provided mixed support for the hypotheses. Computer self-efficacy was found to be positively related to in-role customer service and extra-role customer service but not to organization citizenship (Table 1). Positive mood acting as a moderator was found to enhance both the positive relationship between computer self-efficacy and in-role customer service and the positive relationship between computer

self-efficacy and extra-role customer service. On the other hand, positive mood enhanced the negative relationship between computer self-efficacy and organization citizenship (Table 4). Further, the results revealed a negative relationship between organization citizenship and in-role customer service and also between organization citizenship and extra-role customer service (Table 7).

In the second stage of the study, in-role customer service was shown to be positively related to customer satisfaction and customer delight. Extra-role customer service was not found to be positively related to customer satisfaction and customer delight. Customer delight was found to be positively related to customer satisfaction, see Table 9. A model of the correlation results is presented in appendix 9.

The following chapter presents a discussion of the hypotheses' results. This is followed by details of the study's contribution to increasing the extant body of knowledge in the business-to-business service encounter literature. Proposed themes for future research are also discussed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of Research Questions

Hypothesis concerning Computer Self Efficacy and In-role Customer Service

Hypothesis 1a proposed that customer-contact employees' computer self efficacy is positively related to their in-role customer service. The results did not support this hypothesis. The lack of support for this hypothesis may be due to the following reasons. Data for computer self efficacy were skewed to the upper points of the scale possibly because of effects associated with self-assessment bias, a finding supported by the research of Bandura (1986, 1997). Almost all customer-contact employees showed a tendency to rate their computer self efficacy very high and limited objectivity is implied when making assessments of themselves. Therefore despite wide variation in time employed and variable experience of customer-contact employees, the expected variance range between high and low computer self efficacy was somewhat lower than expected. There is the concern that the scale in spite of its reliability is somewhat limited in capturing variance.

Another related issue that appears evident here is the effect of social desirability bias where the customer-contact employees would likely not want to give the impression of incompetence at doing the various tasks associated with this job. This is likely so because the ability to use computers effectively and efficiently in delivery of customer

service is crucial to good job performance and an integral part of the customer-contact employee: client service encounter evaluation process.

The nature of the job may also be partially responsible for the unanticipated low variance in computer self efficacy ratings as the computer tasks required for the job were not very technical in nature. The job involved navigating among a number of menu options in order to provide usually busy clients with desired information quickly. This speed of operation was also intended to enable customer-contact employees to achieve productivity goals with respect to number of calls answered. There were no computer programming or other advanced computer-related activities required.

Also intense training prior to job assignment may have contributed to reducing the variation in levels of computer self efficacy among customer-contact personnel. In this particular work environment customer-contact employees undergo approximately six weeks of initial training and testing that is followed by informal on-the-job training during the period of employment.

Hypothesis concerning Computer Self Efficacy and Extra-role Customer Service

Hypothesis 1b proposed that customer-contact employees' computer self efficacy is positively related to their extra-role customer service. The results provided significant support for this relationship. These extra-role activities go beyond the duties that are stated as formally required when performing the job. Once again the apparent tendency of customer-contact employees to inflate their computer self efficacy assessment is evident and has the effect of limiting variance. Notwithstanding this however, the relationship of computer self efficacy to extra-role customer service is stronger than that of computer

self efficacy to in-role customer service. This suggests that persons with a higher level of computer self efficacy are more capable and willing to perform extra job-related computer activities for their clients. Previous research studies by Compeau and Higgins (1995); Marakas et al. (1998) focusing on the capability and persistence of individuals with higher computer self efficacy support this finding.

Hypothesis concerning Computer Self Efficacy and Organization Citizenship

Hypothesis 1c proposed that customer-contact employees' computer self efficacy is positively related to their organization citizenship. The results did not support this hypothesis. It had been formulated on the basis that the individuals with higher levels of computer self efficacy would be able to deal with clients more quickly and have more time available for additional activities that demonstrate organization citizenship behavior. This lack of support is possibly because the activities that typify organization citizenship in this particular company have only indirect relationships to computer self efficacy. None of the organization citizenship tasks involved necessarily doing anything that required higher levels of computer self efficacy. These tasks could be classified mainly as office housekeeping activities aimed at helping their supervisors to complete required paperwork such as weekly scheduling activities.

From another perspective it is also possible that customer-contact employees with higher computer self efficacy could feel somewhat unchallenged and therefore a bit bored on the job after a while. This is a situation that could lead to non-optimal levels of performance as found in previous research done by Hartline and Ferrell (1996). A possible consequence of being unchallenged is that instead of excelling according to their

capabilities, some customer-contact employees may perform at mediocre levels doing the minimum necessary in order to achieve required productivity levels and avoid being penalized or being assigned additional office housekeeping duties.

Hypotheses concerning the Moderating Effect of Positive Mood

Hypothesis 2a proposed that customer contact employees' positive mood moderates the relationship between computer self efficacy and in-role customer service. The results did not support this hypothesis. Despite better variance in positive mood distribution compared to computer self efficacy distribution, the results here were not significant, implying that positive mood does not lead to higher levels of in-role customer service. The more acceptable variance in the distribution of customer-contact employee positive mood states may be because they did not think their job performance was evaluated based on positive mood as much as on their capabilities to use the computer to do the required job. This may have led to more truthful self-assessment of positive mood.

This finding suggests that the activities labeled in-role were performed effectively whether or not customer-contact employees are in a positive mood state. Further, in order to avoid negative repercussions such as being reprimanded by supervisors, the customer-contact employees made efforts to ensure the fulfillment of their in-role activities irrespective of positive mood state.

Hypothesis 2b proposed that customer-contact employees' positive mood moderates the relationship between computer self efficacy and extra-role customer service. The positive significant results supported the position that positive mood leads indirectly to higher levels of extra-role customer service. The reason for this indirect

relationship is that customer-contact employees still need to have a reasonable level of computer self efficacy in order to perform due to the integral nature of the computer in providing information for proper performance of the tasks related to this job. This finding is evidence of the fact that positive mood in collaboration with computer self efficacy increases the likelihood that customer-contact employees will go beyond the basics and attempt to perform additional customer service activities in order to enhance the service experience for their clients. This current research supports previous studies by George (1991) and Kelley and Hoffman (1997) that furnished evidence of a positive correlation between positive mood and customer service behavior.

Hypothesis 2c proposed that customer-contact employees' positive mood moderates the relationship between computer self efficacy and organization citizenship. The results are significant but in the opposite direction of what were expected. This was quite surprising as previous research studies showed that higher positive mood states resulted in more pro-social behavior as employees endeavored to give more assistance to their co-workers (George, 1991; Hoffman & Kelley, 1994; Smith et al., 1983). Based on the results of hypothesis 2b, the implication is that customer-contact employees in a positive mood are very focused on serving their clients and would rather continue doing that than get involved with internal office activities. It appears that high levels of positive mood led to greater focus by customer-contact employees on clients, possibly to the detriment of organization citizenship activities. This is usually good for a company as better customer service generally leads to happier customers and higher customer retention levels as shown in previous studies (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Hartline et al., 2000).

Generally, the difference in results between the first and second group of hypotheses provide support for positive mood as a moderator of the relationships between computer self efficacy and the dependent variables (in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship). A possible explanation is that the six week training program adequately prepares the customer-contact employees for the technological aspects of the job, but positive mood is an individual psychological issue. It is much more difficult, likely impossible to train someone to attain and maintain a positive mood while working, therefore this characteristic is more subject to variability.

Hypotheses concerning Organization Citizenship and Customer Service

Hypothesis 3a proposed that customer-contact employees' organization citizenship is positively related to their in-role customer service. The results did not support this hypothesis. Instead there was a significant negative correlation between organization citizenship and in-role customer service. This suggests that organization citizenship influenced the focus to change from performing required customer service tasks to concentrating on other things that did not directly impact the customer. The results contrasted those of previous research studies where organization citizenship behavior had a positive relationship to customer service (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Brief & Motowildo, 1986; MacKenzie et al., 1998; Organ, 1988, 1990; Smith et al., 1983). A possible explanation for this departure from expectations is the limited direct synergy between in-role customer service activities and organization citizenship activities. In this particular environment organization citizenship is given low priority with more emphasis being placed on the provision of in-role customer service. The

general feeling at this company is that available time should be used to cater to clients. Therefore the activities defined as constituting organization citizenship, such as assisting co-workers, may be perceived as hindrances to performing better in-role customer service.

Hypothesis 3b proposed that customer-contact employees' organization citizenship is positively related to their extra-role customer service. The results did not support this hypothesis. Instead there was a significant negative correlation between organization citizenship and extra-role customer service. This suggests that organization citizenship led to the focus changing from performing extra customer service tasks to concentrating on other activities that did not directly benefit the customer. The results were in the opposite direction of that expected based on previous research studies which showed organization citizenship having a positive relationship to customer service (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Brief & Motowildo 1986; MacKenzie et al., 1998; Organ 1988, 1990; Smith et al., 1983). A possible reason for the difference in this study's results is that organization citizenship is not viewed as being necessary for the effecting of extra-role customer service. The idea is that organization citizenship tasks limit the time available to address the various needs of clients. The activities defined as constituting organization citizenship, such as assisting co-workers may be perceived as impediments to performing better extra-role customer service and therefore should be avoided.

The problems associated with studies that rely to some extent on self-reports were addressed by utilizing supervisors in the assessment of in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and organization citizenship for the first three sets of hypotheses.

This was instrumental in alleviating possible social desirability bias on the part of the customer-contact employees regarding these particular measures.

Hypotheses concerning Customer Service and Customer Satisfaction

Hypothesis 4a proposed that customer-contact employees' in-role customer service is positively related to customer satisfaction. The results provided limited support for the relationship between in-role customer service and customer satisfaction. This has been a well researched topic in the services marketing arena. The results of a number of previous studies provided evidence of a significant relationship between customer service and customer satisfaction (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Bitner et al., 1990; Bitner et al., 1994; Bolton and Drew, 1991; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996).

Hypothesis 4b proposed that customer-contact employees' extra-role customer service is positively related to customer satisfaction. The results provided no support for the relationship between extra-role customer service and customer satisfaction. This may appear surprising but it must be noted that clients are not aware of the distinction that the company has made between in-role customer service and extra-role customer service. Given that these customer service classifications are company-based, the clients are likely thinking that customer-contact employees are routinely carrying out their duties in an attempt to satisfy a variety of customer requests.

It is reasonable to assume that the most important issue for the vast majority of customers would be that their queries are addressed whether or not the company has classified the duties of the customer-contact employees into in-role or extra-role categories. As has been pointed out before, these customers are travel agents, a number of

whom have been making regular calls to the call center for up to 20 years in some cases. The clients are more concerned about having their requests dealt with effectively and efficiently in a timely manner because of their busy schedules. However the company defined extra-role activities may appear in most cases to go beyond what the average client thinks is necessary with respect to addressing his requests and may appear to be more than what is critical for effective job performance. This is a possible explanation for in-role customer service and not extra-role customer service having a stronger relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore as customer-contact employees did more extra-role tasks for clients, the level of customer satisfaction did not rise accordingly. Instead in the context of time constraints, clients may have viewed these additional activities as unnecessary delays.

This research provides support for the position that extra-role customer service does not always lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction than in-role customer service. See appendix 8. This finding bears some similarity to the work of Estelami and De Maeyer (2002) that addressed customer service employees' over-generosity. It is an unlikely finding that is not supported by the existing business-to-business customer service literature and represents a departure from conventional thought. However it is reasonable given the circumstances discussed above and the current accepted view that customer satisfaction ought to be customer defined, that this could happen in a hectic business-to-business environment.

Another factor contributing to the results obtained could be the limited variance in customer satisfaction responses. The responses were skewed to the higher levels of the customer satisfaction scale. This being a field study, it would not have been a good

business strategy for the company to create the bad experiences that would have likely resulted in the negative client responses that would have helped to increase variance. Apart from that, high levels of training and monitoring of calls by supervisors to ensure the consistency of customer-contact employees are likely contributing to an overwhelming number of positive customer service interactions. These two factors are crucial in persuading customer-contact employees to conform to the company's policies regarding the customer service encounter in order to maintain their job security.

Hypotheses concerning Customer Service and Customer Delight

Hypothesis 5a proposed that customer-contact employees' in-role customer service is positively related to customer delight. The results provided no support for a significant relationship between in-role customer service and customer delight.

Hypothesis 5b proposed that customer-contact employees' extra-role customer service is positively related to customer delight. The results provided no support for a significant relationship between extra-role customer service and customer delight.

The findings associated with hypotheses 5a and 5b are unexpected and a definite departure from previous research results that found very high levels of customer service to be positively related with customer delight (Oliver et al., 1997). This unanticipated result may be due to limited variance in customer service because of the non-experimental nature of the study. This situation likely restrained the customer-contact employees from generating poor customer service experiences that would have had the effect of increasing variance in levels of customer delight. Apart from that, high levels of training and monitoring of calls by supervisors to ensure the consistency of customer-

contact employees are likely contributing to this overall positive customer delight situation.

The results also imply that the clients were not any more delighted by higher levels of performance of in-role customer service nor by higher levels of extra-role customer service activities. It appears that as far as the clients are concerned, the customer-contact employees provided reasonably delightful experiences in the vast majority of cases, even when they were performing routinely. This should not be too surprising given the relatively low level of customer satisfaction associated with the service sector (Fornell et al., 1996). The majority of clients just seem to be concerned about getting enough information from the customer-contact employees to enable them in turn to make better decisions in a quest to satisfy their own customers.

Since expectations are low then merely good customer service may be perceived by clients as delightful. Customer delight here is based on overall happiness with service performance instead of attainment of pleasant surprise. The impact of assimilated delight (Rust and Oliver, 2000), where what is considered as surprising first eventually becomes the norm, fits this scenario well. Under most circumstances customer delight should decrease over time, however customer-contact employees that perform consistently well over time have the potential to perpetuate the customer delight experience. This concept could be associated with the research of Kumar et al. (2001) that showed joy without pleasant surprise as an antecedent to customer delight in some environments.

Hypothesis comparing the antecedents of Customer Delight

Hypothesis 5c proposed that joy (extreme happiness) is more important than pleasant surprise in leading to delight in the business-to-business environment. The correlation results provided support for this hypothesis. This finding gives support to previous research of Kumar et al. (2001) that proposed joy as being a more important antecedent to customer delight than pleasant surprise. An implication of the current study is that when the frequency of customer service interactions is relatively high, clients are more concerned about consistent performance of duties over time rather than about pleasantly surprising events. Also in this environment the opportunities to surprise clients are limited, so the focus of the customer-contact employees appears to be on providing consistently pleasing customer service encounters. It is also likely that due to proper training and monitoring by their supervisors, the customer-contact employees have endeavored to deliver consistent performance over an extended period of time to their clients. This state of affairs potentially leads to a state of long term customer delight.

Hypothesis concerning Customer Satisfaction and Customer Delight

Hypothesis 6 proposed that customer delight is positively related to the highest levels of customer satisfaction. The significant correlations found between customer satisfaction and customer delight provided support for a very close relationship between these two variables. Performing in-role customer service and extra-role customer service to the highest levels has the potential to elicit an overwhelming feeling of great satisfaction from the clients. This causes clients to be delighted and most likely leads to

positive recommendations regarding the service encounters and anticipation of future encounters with customer service employees.

Contributions and Implications

This exploratory research study has served to improve our knowledge of the technology-based business-to-business customer service environment in a number of ways.

1. A specific contribution of this study is the fact that it was done in a business-to-business environment, a departure from most of the previous customer service research studies that have focused on the situation in the business-to-consumer environment. In comparison to previous research, another distinction was that this study was done in an environment that features a high frequency of repeated service interactions. These factors helped to provide a different viewpoint of how events transpire in the customer service environment.
2. This study demonstrated the greater impact of computer self efficacy on extra-role customer service than on in-role customer service. This is the first study that has looked at the effect of computer self efficacy on in-role customer service and extra-role customer service specifically in a computerized customer service environment. This is an important development as there is an evident trend of more computers being used to increase productivity in the delivery of customer service. Companies should therefore ensure that adequate training programs are utilized in order to increase the computer self efficacy of their customer-contact employees.

3. This study demonstrated the importance of positive mood as a moderator variable enhancing the relationship between computer self efficacy and in-role customer service and also between computer self efficacy and extra-role customer service. This supports previous research by George (1991) showing the important influence that positive mood can have in the customer service environment and points to the importance of companies doing as much as possible to provide a pleasant working environment that facilitates maintenance of positive mood among its customer-contact employees.
4. This study disputes the commonly held assumption that customer satisfaction increases in direct proportion to the level of customer service delivered. This study showed that customer-contact employees doing more than their customers require are not necessarily well received. These results in the business-to-business environment support previous research in the business-to-consumer environment done by Estelami and De Maeyer (2002). This is likely due to the fact that these clients were themselves customer service representatives. Customer satisfaction still remains a subjective issue and must be based on the customer's perspective. As has been noted, the customers in this study are not members of the general public.
5. Support was provided for the argument by Kumar et al. (2001) that customer delight is not necessarily always preceded by pleasant surprise and joy in the service encounter, but can alternatively be dependent solely on the joy that customers experience from consistent performance by customer-contact employees of their duties over time. This is a particularly useful explanation of

customer delight responses in situations where there are frequently repeated interactions between customer-contact employees and their clients. Such circumstances limit the customer-contact employees' options to perform tasks that induce pleasant surprise in their clients on every occasion.

Future Research

As call centers have become more important in the present economic environment, increasing its role as a growing area of employment in the domestic and international environments, there should be greater interest in doing more research on various aspects of their operations. To overcome generalizability limitations, further studies should be done to replicate this research in other similarly computerized customer service departments.

Noting the difficulty associated with generating desired scenarios that result in desired variability, another option may be to approach this type of research experimentally. Unfortunately this will take away from the reality of the situation found in a call center, but the controlled experiments with pre-planned cases that address various conditions should lead to desired variability in customer-contact employee performance and also in client responses.

This study limited its focus to the positive mood levels of customer-contact employees but these individuals also have negative moods that are not directly opposite to their positive moods (Watson et al., 1988). With the level of customer service rendered in the service sector facing so much criticism (Fornell et al, 1996), it would therefore be interesting to do complementary research where the impact of negative mood of

customer-contact employees on customer service could be investigated. Also doing further research to determine the level of negative mood compared to the level of positive mood felt while on the job and the resulting impact on customer service is critical.

This study has pointed out differences between business-to-business customer service and business-to-consumer customer service. As customer service has increased in importance, the need to differentiate types of customer service based on the nature of the service providers and clients is more crucial. A variety of technological developments such as the evolution of e-commerce has increased the prominence of various customer service scenarios. We could therefore further investigate differences in the following scenarios: business-to-business customer service, business-to-consumer customer service and consumer-to-consumer customer service.

There are training implications for the customer service representatives related to the three customer service scenarios proposed and associated client type expectations being examined. It is reasonable to conclude that the differences in addressing clients' needs are such that it would be practical to categorize the training of the customer service representatives based on which group of clients is to be serviced. For example business-to-business customer service representatives should be trained to do just what is necessary so that their clients can then perform their duties as required. On the other hand business-to-consumer customer service representatives should be trained to do relatively much more for their clients.

The increase in self-service options for clients is a reality of current times. More companies are using self-service technology in order to empower their customers, allowing them to make choices when, where and how they desire to. This evolutionary

development is taking place as computer technology is being made more easily accessible and client-friendly. In many cases, the technology utilized will be upgraded or changed over time, therefore this makes the increased study of customer computer self efficacy more important. This is especially so since unlike the case of customer-contact employees there is not usually extensive formally structured training for customers. Customers usually decide independently if, when or how they are going to learn about using the computer technology associated with a particular activity. It is therefore expected that the degree of computer self efficacy variability among customers should be a more decisive factor in eventual performance of tasks related to any self-service activity in question. The influence of the relative level of positive mood of the customers can also be investigated to see how positive mood affects their willingness to use self-service equipment.

Facing the reality of globalization and international outsourcing, the world has become a smaller place with exposure to a wider variety of societies and their corresponding cultures. It is therefore appropriate that cross-cultural studies be undertaken to investigate cultural issues related to call centers in different parts of the world. The disparity especially between developed and developing countries in required work performance, compensation and working conditions of customer service representatives in call centers are current topical issues.

Another area of interest is the impact of difference in educational level of the customer service representatives among countries on performance. In some developing countries the customer service representatives tend to be generally more educated than those in a number of developed countries. It would be interesting to determine if higher

education is directly correlated to the level of customer service offered by the customer service representative. Also one could investigate if educational level or culture plays the bigger role in determining the level of customer service offered.

The issue of satisfaction of clients in countries differentiated by level of economic development is also an area of interest. The impact of variations in customer knowledge and expectations across countries also deserve some attention. The traditional commonly held belief that customers in developed countries tend to have higher standards of customer satisfaction than their counterparts in developing countries could be studied to see if its importance is decreasing in our evolving global environment.

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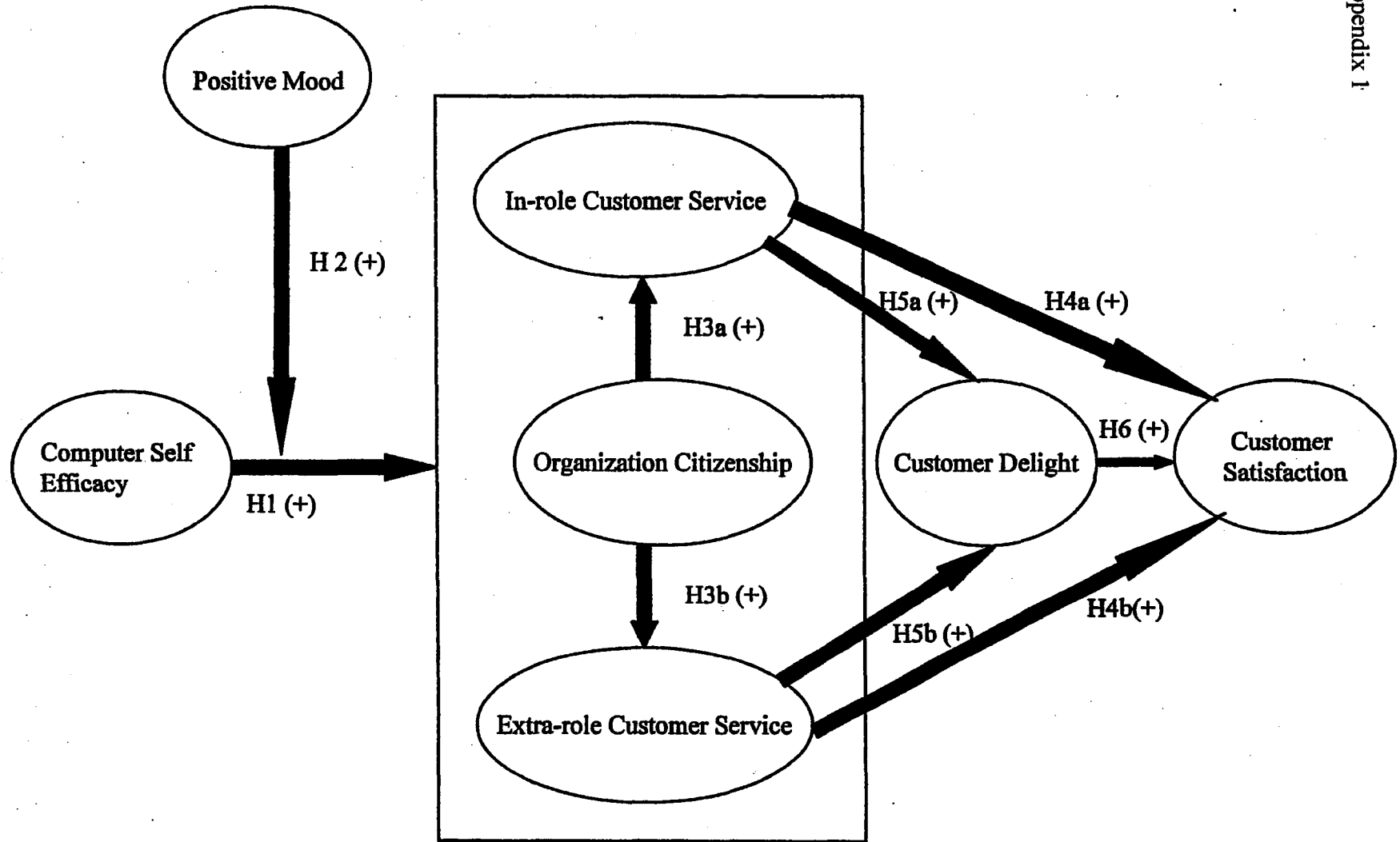
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PROPOSED MODEL OF RELATIONSHIPS

Appendix 2

Computer Self Efficacy Measurement

This scale is intent on determining the beliefs of the employee regarding ability to perform the job-related tasks using the available information technology. It is adopted from a scale used by Marakas et al (1999) to measure computer self efficacy.

	Not at all		Moderately		Totally						
	Confident		Confident		Confident						
I believe I have the ability to input correct booking data	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to advertise discounts	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to make attractive offers	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to advise of open sailings	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to advise of upcoming promotion	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to sell up when appropriate	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to quote insurance rates	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	
I believe I have the ability to offer appropriate alternatives	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	

	Not at all			Moderately			Totally			
	Confident			Confident			Confident			
I believe I have the ability to quote accurate rates	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
I believe I have the ability to service existing booking	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
I believe I have the ability to provide information on other services offered by my company	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

Appendix 3

Positive Mood Measurement

The PANAS (Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale) can be used with varying timeframes: for eg., This moment, Today, Past Few Days, Week, Past Few Weeks, Year General. Adopted from Watson and Tellegen (1988).

The scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Respondents will read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. The following scale is used to determine the level of positive affect related to using information technology in the workplace during the Past Few Weeks:

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

_____ interested
_____ alert
_____ excited
_____ inspired
_____ energized
_____ determined
_____ attentive
_____ active
_____ enthusiastic
_____ proud

Appendix 4

In-Role Customer Service Measurement

Adopted from Bettencourt and Brown (1997).

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
The employee performs all those tasks for customers that are required.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee meets formal performance requirements when serving customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee fulfills responsibilities to customers as specified in the reservations sales agent job description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee adequately completes all expected customer service behaviors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee helps customers with those things that are required of him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 5

Extra-Role Customer Service Measurement

Adopted from Bettencourt and Brown (1997).

	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
The employee voluntarily assists customers even if it means going beyond job requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The employee helps customers with problems beyond what is expected or required	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The employee often goes above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The employee willingly goes out of his/her way to make a customer satisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The employee frequently goes out of the way to help a customer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Appendix 6

Organization Citizenship Measurement

Adopted from Smith et al (1983).

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
The employee helps others who have been absent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee volunteers for things that are not required	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee helps others who have heavy workloads	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee assists supervisor with his or her work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee willingly helps others who have work-related problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The employee helps to orient new employees even though not required	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 7

Customer Satisfaction/Customer Delight Measurement

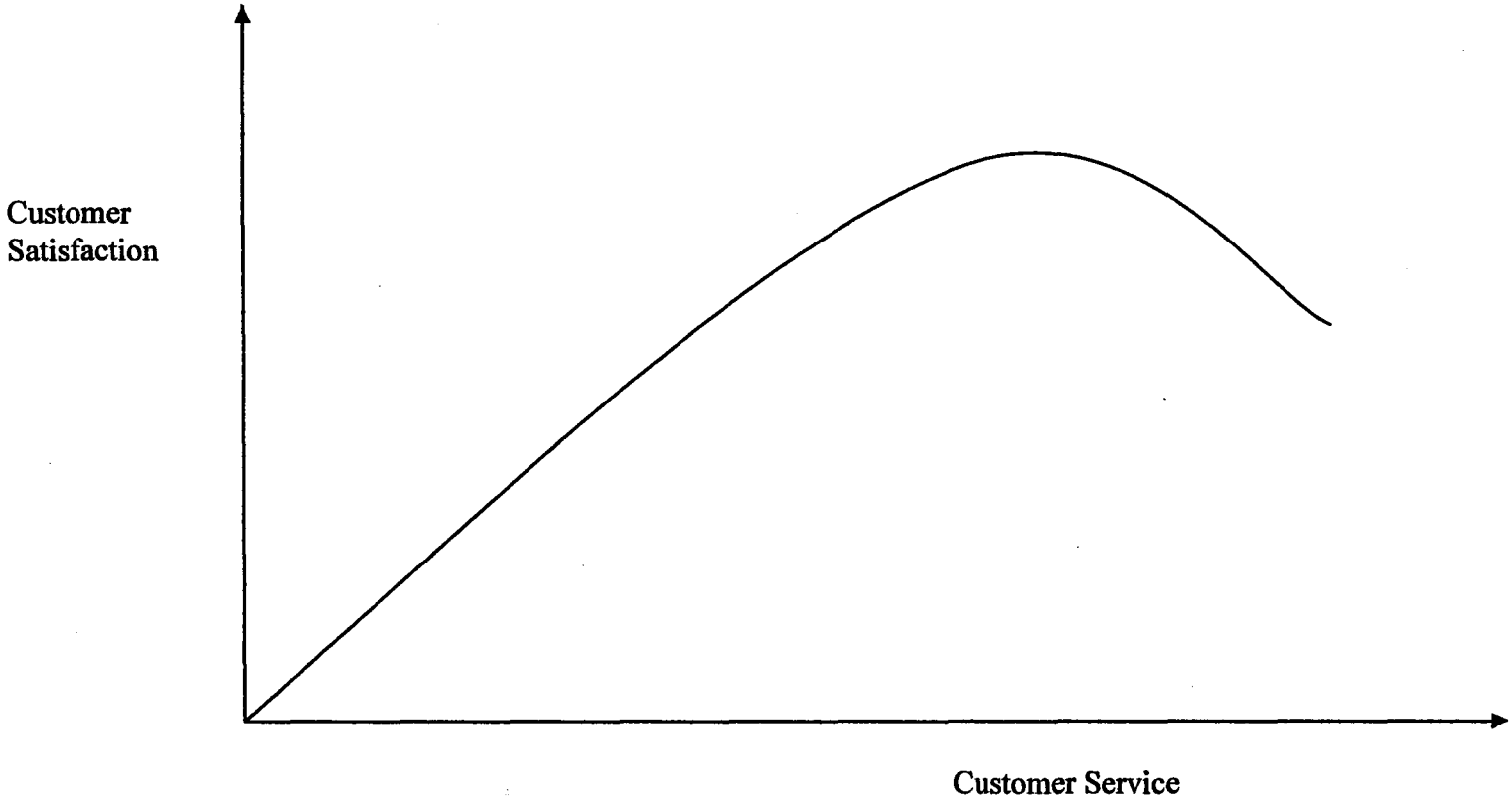
Adopted from the work of Oliver (1977, 1981, 1985, 1997).

Compared to how satisfied I expected to be with the reservations agent. I was:

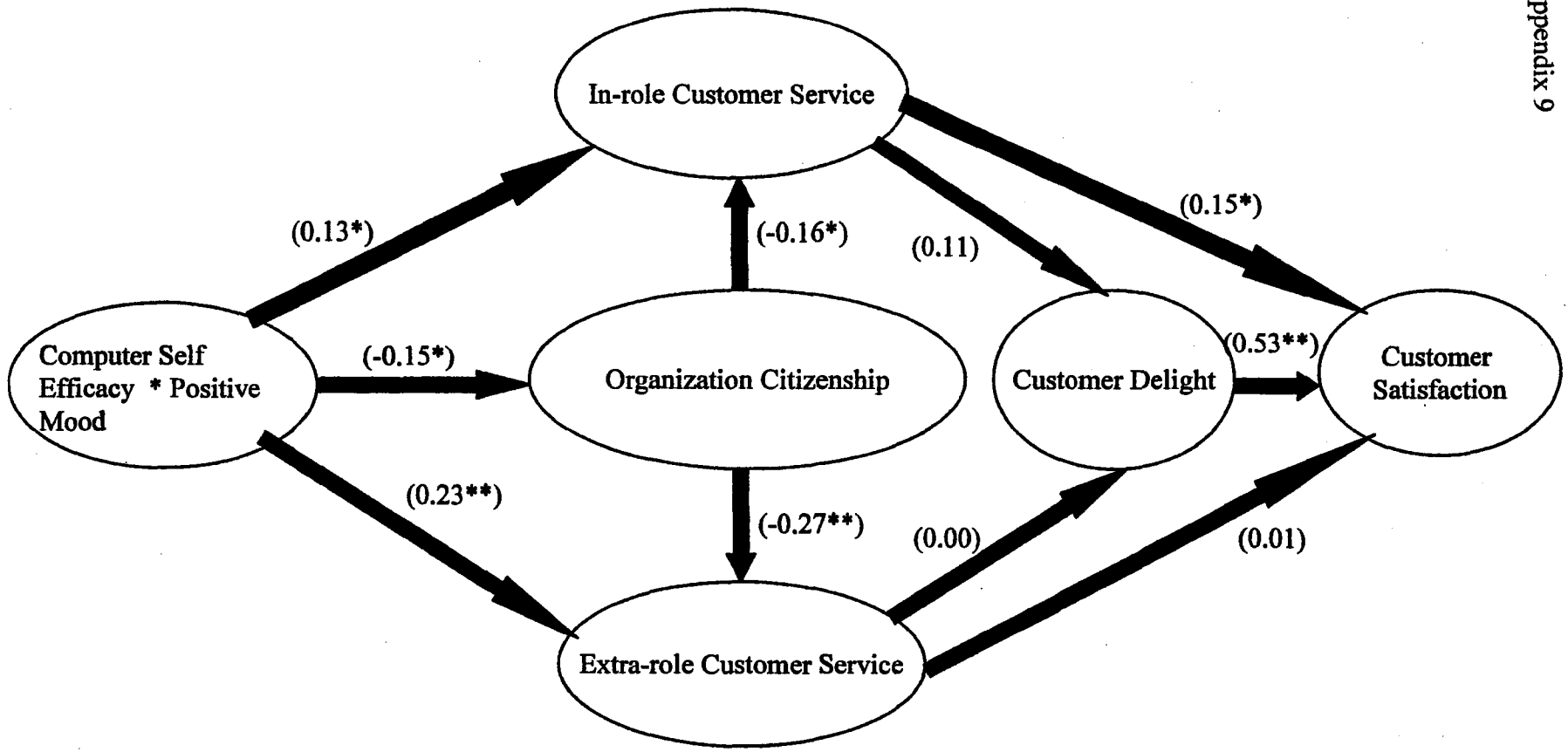
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Much Less Satisfied	Less Satisfied	Slightly Less Satisfied	Just as Satisfied	Slightly More Satisfied	More Satisfied	Much More Satisfied

During the interaction with the reservations agent, how frequently did you feel any of the following affects:

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Quite Often	Always
Surprise	1	2	3	4	5
Happiness	1	2	3	4	5
Delight	1	2	3	4	5



Model of the relationship between Customer Service
and Customer Satisfaction



MODEL CORRELATION RESULTS

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, one tailed.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, one tailed.

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