

Goal Interdependence and Quality in Services Marketing

Choy L. Wong and Dean Tjosvold
Simon Fraser University

ABSTRACT

Service quality is considered an important competitive edge because it generates repeat sales, positive word of mouth, customer loyalty, and competitive product differentiation. This study examines the impact of a company's cooperative or competitive orientation and the service provider's warm or cold communication style on customer evaluation of service quality. Results from 83 participants in a simulated bank interview experiment indicate that when the bank communicated a cooperative orientation they perceived it as offering a higher-quality service than when it had competitive or individualistic goals. The warmth of the service personnel contributed to high-quality service, liking the bank representative, future confidence in dealing with the bank, satisfaction with the interview, and willingness to be interviewed by the bank representative in the future. These results were interpreted as suggesting that companies who can demonstrate a strong cooperative orientation toward customers and whose service providers demonstrate warmth will be considered to offer high-quality services. © 1995 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Quality is a very important characteristic in product and service evaluation, but it is an indistinct and subjective construct. One difficulty is that customers use a myriad of criteria to evaluate quality. Cues include price, physical characteristics, word-of-mouth reports, brand

image, and advertising. Performance, durability, reliability, and other intangible attributes are also salient to the determination of quality. Difficulties involved in defining and measuring the quality construct have limited conceptual and empirical research. This study examines the effect that a company's cooperative or competitive orientation and its service provider's warm or cold communication style have on customer evaluations of the quality of its services.

Implications of Service Characteristics on Quality

The most important and distinguishing characteristic of services is *intangibility*. It is not possible to taste, feel, see, hear, or smell services before they are purchased (Shostack, 1981). Many researchers argue that intangibility forces consumers to rely on surrogate indicators of quality such as the surroundings and equipment (Berry, 1980; Eigler, Langeard, Lovelock, Bateson, & Young, 1977; Grove & Fisk, 1983; Shostack, 1977; Upah, 1980), service personnel (Gronroos, 1981; Rathmell, 1974), and price (Berry, 1980; Booms & Bitner, 1981; Zeithaml, 1981).

Whereas goods are produced, sold, and consumed, most services are first sold and then *produced and consumed simultaneously*. This inseparability of production and consumption means that the service provider is often physically present when consumption takes place. Only direct distribution is possible in services that have to be delivered face to face (Upah, 1980). Consequently, marketing and production are highly interactive processes (Gronroos, 1978).

Indeed, services are often classified based on this interactive dimension. Chase (1978) argued that services are differentiated on the extent of customer involvement. One of Lovelock's (1983) multi-dimensional classification matrices also uses the service-provider-customer involvement dimension to differentiate services. This study deals with services high on provider-customer involvement.

Because of intangibility, it is difficult for consumers to make conscious evaluations and comparisons of the quality of various service offerings. In the absence of tangible cues for customer evaluation, the firm may find it difficult to understand how consumers perceive and evaluate their services (Zeithaml, 1981). The predominance of human contact in service offerings also highlights the importance of the service experience. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) found that 8 of the 10 dimensions important in determining quality were experiences drawn from the service encounter, such as friendly staff and speedy service. Their results imply that the service provider takes a central role in communicating quality.

The involvement of both customer and service provider suggests that services that require high customer contact are more difficult to control and standardize than those with low consumer contact (Chase,

1978). The simultaneous production and consumption of services means that quality occurs during the service delivery, usually in an interaction between the customer and service provider. It is difficult to inspect the service prior to delivery to the customer. The problems created by intangibility and inseparability highlight the need for a system of service delivery to be built into the firm to ensure consistent quality delivery.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses Deutsch's (1949, 1962, 1973, 1980) theory of cooperation and competition to examine the link between the firm and its customers. The terms cooperation and competition are so commonly used that they are stereotyped to mean many phenomena. Axelrod (1984) referred to cooperation as a survival strategy of reciprocal "niceness." Kramer (1977) typified the American viewpoint of competition as a strong moral force that must prevail for the sake of the general welfare of society. Cooperation is used to refer to attraction and the absence of conflict; competition, to challenges and high aspirations. However, cooperation and competition in this study refer to how people *believe their goals are interdependent*, not to whether persons are helpful and nice to each other or are or are not in conflict.

Deutsch argued that whether people believe their goals are primarily cooperative or competitive greatly affects the dynamics and outcomes of interaction. The theory postulates links between goal interdependence, orientation toward each other behaving effectively, patterns of interaction, and consequences on relationships and productivity.

Goal Interdependence and Orientation to Effectiveness. In cooperation, people believe their goals are positively related so that as one moves toward goal attainment, others move toward reaching their goals. They understand one's goal attainment helps others reach their goals; as one succeeds, others succeed. People in cooperation encourage and value each other's effectiveness because the success of one helps others pursue their goals. Cooperative task force members believe they are closer to reaching their goals when others develop useful ideas; their own goal attainment depends upon others acting effectively.

Alternatively, people may believe their goals are competitive in that one's goal attainment precludes or at least makes less likely the goal attainment of others. If one succeeds, others must fail. If one wins, others lose. People in competition conclude that they are better off when others behave ineffectively; when others are productive, they are less likely to be successful themselves. Competitive task force

members want to prove they are the most capable and their ideas superior; they are less likely to succeed when others develop useful ideas and work hard. Competitive work pits self-interests against each other in a fight to outdo and win.

Independence occurs when people believe their goals are unrelated. The goal attainment of one neither helps nor hinders the goal attainment of others. Success by one means neither failure nor success for others. Independent task force members are disinterested and indifferent to whether others develop useful ideas or work hard.

Interaction and Consequences. Cooperators are expected to want each other to behave effectively because it is in their self-interests (Deutsch, 1949, 1973). Consequently, they engage in substitutability in which the effective actions of one substitute for others; cooperators divide up the work to reach their common objective. Cooperation also results in cathexis in which people value each other's effective actions and each other. Cooperators are also inducible in that they are easily influenced to help another act effectively; however, they will obstruct others from acting ineffectively and against their mutual interests.

As theorized and documented by many studies, cooperative goals induce promotive interaction, whereas competition induces oppositional interaction. People in cooperation share information, take each other's perspective, communicate and influence effectively, exchange resources, assist and support each other, discuss opposing ideas openly, use higher-quality reasoning, and manage conflicts constructively (Deutsch, 1949, 1973, 1980; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1983; Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, & Skon, 1981; Lanzetta & Englis, 1989; Tjosvold, 1984a, 1986a, 1986b). These studies also show that interaction patterns in cooperation result in task completion, problem solving, reduced stress, attraction, strengthened work relationships, and confidence in future collaboration (Etherington & Tjosvold, 1990).

People in competition are expected to be suspicious and to discourage and interfere with others' effectiveness, whereas those with independent goals are disinterested and indifferent. However, studies have not so clearly distinguished the effects of competition and independence, though independence's impact is generally not as powerful as competition's (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Tjosvold, 1989). Competition and independence, compared to cooperation, restrict information and resource exchange, distort communication, and escalate or avoid conflict; these patterns in turn frustrate productivity (except on some simple tasks) and intensify hostility.

The consistency of cooperation research in laboratory experiments and field settings is impressive. For example, Tjosvold has shown that experimental research on cooperative and competitive dynamics generalizes to service organizations such as a hospital (1989), a municipal

engineering department (1986b), a computer support services division (1988b), an educational institution (Tjosvold & McNeely, 1988), and a public health agency (1988a).

The Service Encounter. Cooperation and competition theory suggests that service providers and consumers are interdependent and affect each other's goal attainment. The service provider's outcomes may include satisfaction in a job well done, financial gain or loss, stress, inconvenience, or embarrassment. For the customer, the outcomes may include receiving the desired services, increased confidence in the service organization, disillusion with the service organization, and anger. It is the perception of goal interdependence (whether cooperative, competitive, or independent) that is expected to affect the dynamics and outcomes of the service encounter. It is likely that service interactions typically engender a mix of cooperative, competitive, and independent goals, but the dominating goal interdependence is expected to impact the dynamics and outcomes of provider-customer interaction.

Although the value of cooperative goals with the customers to obtain business may be clear, service organizations also have competitive goals with the customers. The service provider's responsibility to maximize price opposes the customer's interest of low cost. Meeting the customer's expectation of customized service may come at the expense of excessive effort for the service provider. In situations where either or both parties perceive that they do not have to depend on each other, individualistic goals are likely to occur. For instance, a high number of loan applications may cause the loan officer to view a potential customer with indifference.

Based on the above research, it is expected that the goal orientation a company communicates to customers affects the evaluation of service quality. It is hypothesized that

H1: The goal orientation of the company influences the customers' interaction with service providers and affects the customers' evaluation of service quality.

Research reviewed also suggests that cooperative, compared to competitive and independent, goals can contribute substantially to a positive evaluation of company service by strengthening relationships, morale, and effectiveness. Other favorable effects include task completion, positive feelings, constructive interaction and work relationships, and effective problem solving. In this way, cooperative goals are proposed to contribute indirectly to a firm's profits.

H2: Companies that communicate cooperative, compared to competitive and independent, goals have satisfied customers, encourage future purchase, and create positive attitudes toward the service provider and service organization.

Communication Style

The style or manner in which a person communicates his or her words can affect the outcome of the interaction. This style is manifested in many ways, including the tone of the voice, facial expression, spatial distance from the addressee, and eye gaze. Specific expressions of these behaviors are coldness and warmth of a person. In particular, friendly tone of the voice, smiling, closeness to addressee, and constant eye contact are considered warm behaviors. In contrast, crisp vocal tone, stern expression, distance from the addressee, and avoidance of eye contact are considered cold behaviors (Mehrabian, 1968).

Johnson (1971) found that warm persons were considered more willing to compromise, in greater agreement, and making more effort to understand the other's position more than cold persons. Additionally, Tjosvold (1984b) found that a leader's warmth or coldness affected employees' perceptions, relationships, and task performance. Employees were more open, motivated to work, and attracted to and satisfied with a warm leader than were employees whose leader communicated coldness.

These studies suggest the important role of nonverbal communication in the customer-service provider interaction. Although the theory of cooperation and competitiveness highlights the importance of the goal orientation to service quality, the warmth-coldness style focuses on communication during the service interaction. The warmth or coldness of communication style may alter the responses to the company's cooperative, competitive, and individualistic orientations. Specifically, service providers whose competitive behaviors are communicated coldly will intensify the win-lose objective of the service organization. On the other hand, service providers who are competitive yet warm may confuse the customer as to the provider's intentions because the vocal information does not match the verbal information.

Based on the above reasoning, the following is hypothesized:

H3: Warmth and coldness interact with cooperation, competition and independence to enhance and lower service quality.

METHOD

Procedure

Design. The experiment was a 2×3 design with three levels each of the independent variables social context (cooperation versus independent versus competition) and two levels of communication style (warm versus cold).

Participants. Ninety-two undergraduate students representing 85% of a class were recruited from a business course to participate in the study. A pretest was conducted with nine of the students to check for the goal context and communication style manipulations, and the believability of the bank setting. The conditions were modified and a second pretest was conducted. The manipulations proved satisfactory and the results of the second pretest were included in the overall analysis. Thus, 83 participants were randomly assigned to the six conditions.

Research Context. A bank setting was employed for several reasons. First, the bank service environment has a high degree of familiarity among participants. Participant involvement in the experiment is expected to be high because the study context is specifically designed for students. Second, services such as loan applications require high contact with the service provider. Finally, although the banking industry has become increasingly competitive, financial services are often perceived as being similar across institutions. The quality of services as typified by cooperative goal orientation can be used to differentiate a bank's services.

Cover Story. Participants were given a cover story which read

A major financial institution in Canada is investigating various alternatives to attract loans services. One possible strategy is to cultivate customers in a segment of the population usually without much credit history, notably university students. Only 23% of 18–22 year olds have ever established credit. University students are of particular interest for the obvious reason that most will progress to relatively well-paid white-collar jobs after graduation. The bank believes that students who establish credit with them before their careers begin will continue to patronize their other loan services after graduation. For instance, 60% of graduates purchase a new car within eighteen months after graduation.

In order to encourage early credit among students, the bank is considering expanding its student loan services. Present student loan practices in the bank are extremely conservative and thus, very limited. In Canada, the government handles the majority of student loans. This is an exploratory study conducted in conjunction with the bank to test the viability of such a project. Specifically, we want to assess the viability of the student market, their needs for loans, and their creditability.

Story and Context Believability. The cover story was shown to two loan officers from two major banks to check for credibility. Although both officers thought that such a strategy implementation by their banks would be highly improbable, they thought that the story was very

convincing. The officers provided loan application forms that were used to guide the role play and one assisted in formulating the questions.

Experimental Task. Participants were given the cover story to read. They were then escorted to a room where a confederate posed as a bank representative. Two male and two female students were trained to act as bank representatives in all six conditions. Each session lasted approximately 18 minutes. Participants were interviewed for information about their creditworthiness and their needs for private student loan services. After the session, participants were escorted out of the room and given a questionnaire measuring the encounter and the dependent measures. They were then fully debriefed, questioned about the believability of the encounter, and asked not to discuss the study.

Independent Variables

Goal Interdependence. The three goal contexts were operationalized with questions asking for similar information. The cooperative interdependence was operationalized by having the confederate emphasize that the bank wanted to learn more about the student market so that it could better serve its needs. Students were good investments because the majority of them would be major customers of banks in the future. During the information exchange, the confederate encouraged the participant's views and suggestions as to how best to serve him or her. The confederate was accepting of the data given by the participant.

In the independent condition, the confederate emphasized the bank's goal of increasing market share and profits without regard to the student's needs. The main purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a special group of good-risk students. The bank was interested in students only because of their potential to generate profits through loans. The bank did not really need the students and could afford to be selective, because it could invest its money elsewhere. The confederate was distrustful of the data given.

In the competitive interdependence, the confederate emphasized the riskiness of the venture and expressed the belief that students might default loans. The confederate also doubted the loyalty of students to the bank after they received the loan. The confederate indicated that the bank wanted to learn more about the students to see if the venture was worth the risk. The bank wanted to come out looking like a winner and not a loser holding a lot of bad debts. The confederate was distrustful of the data given.

Communication Style. Warmth and coldness were communicated nonverbally through voice tone, facial expression, posture, and eye gaze (Johnson, 1971; Mehrabian, 1968; Tjosvold, 1984b). Specifically, warm confederates used a friendly tone of voice, smiled, kept close to

the participant, and kept eye contact. Cold confederates used a crisp vocal tone, stern expression, kept their distance from the participants, and avoided eye contact.

In the postexperiment questionnaire, six questions served as manipulation checks for the two independent variables. Participants were asked the extent to which the bank representative was concerned about the participant's and the bank representative's interests (cooperative), the extent to which the bank representative was concerned about his or her own interest but indifferent to the participant's interest (independent), the extent to which the bank representative was concerned about his or her own interest at the expense of the student's interest (competitive), and the extent to which the bank representative was cooperative or competitive, and indifferent to the participant's needs. They were also asked the extent to which the bank representative was warm or cold.

Dependent Variables

A questionnaire was administered immediately after participants finished the session. Accompanying the questionnaire was a form that requested participants to fill in their names, addresses, and telephone numbers if they wished to be contacted for another possible loan interview.

Participants also rated the session they had experienced. They indicated on 7-point Likert scales their satisfaction with the interview, their desire to patronize this bank in the future, their positive to negative feelings about the bank representative and the bank, their confidence in dealing with the bank in the future, the quality of the service provided in the interview, the attempt of the bank to offer quality service, and their interest in being interviewed by the same bank representative in the future.

RESULTS

Induction Checks

Checks of the contexts indicated that the experimental conditions were created (Table 1). Participants in the cooperative condition ($M = 5.59$) indicated that the confederate was more concerned about both parties' interests than in the competitive ($M = 4.93$) and independent ($M = 4.71$) conditions ($F = 4.27$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). Participants in the competitive condition ($M = 5.08$) indicated that the confederate took more of a win-lose view than in the individualistic ($M = 4.56$) and cooperative ($M = 2.55$) conditions ($F = 18.53$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). Similarly, two questions measuring individualistic conditions indicated that the

Table 1 Cell Means and F Values for Content and Style Manipulations.

Manipulation	Conditions			<i>F</i>
	Cooperation	Competition	Individualistic	
Concerned about both your and his or her interests	5.59	4.93	4.71	4.27**
Concerned about his or her goals and indifferent to yours	2.81	3.74	4.44	7.25*
Take win-lose view	2.55	5.08	4.56	18.53*
Concerned about what he or she wanted but unconcerned about what you wanted	2.44	3.93	4.17	12.58*
Competitive or cooperative	5.46	4.60	5.00	2.39

	Conditions		<i>F</i>
	Warm	Cold	
Warm or cold	5.55	3.63	45.35*

Note. For warm and cold conditions, 1 = cold, 7 = warm.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

confederate was more concerned about his or her goals and indifferent to theirs than in the cooperative and competitive conditions.

A check of the communication style indicates that subjects perceived that the confederate was very warm ($M = 5.55$) in the warm condition and cold in the cold condition ($M = 3.63$) ($F = 45.35$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$). On the basis of these results, it can be concluded that the goal context and communication style inductions necessary to test the hypotheses were successful.

As a role-playing method was used, efforts were made to check for possible contamination due to participants' disbelief. During the debriefing, 86% of the subjects revealed that they thought the session was a real loan interview. Twenty-nine participants (35%) filled out their names, addresses, and telephone numbers so that they could be contacted for another possible loan interview. This is considered a high number because many participants indicated no need for a loan.

Bank and Representative Quality

Consistent with hypotheses, participants attributed high-quality company service to cooperation compared to competition and independence (Table 2). Bank quality was the lowest in the competitive context. Not only did the goal context greatly affect perceptions of the service quality of the bank, it interacted with the bank representa-

Table 2 Comparison of Means on Dependent Measures.

Dependent Variable	Cooperation	Competition	Individualistic	<i>F</i>
Quality of service bank provided	5.74	4.74	4.90	4.95**
Quality of service bank representative provided	5.38	5.07	4.64	2.65
Confidence in dealing with bank in future	5.15	4.52	4.71	1.67
Patronize bank if need a loan	5.19	5.00	4.72	0.84
Satisfied with interview	5.63	5.22	5.00	2.28
Feelings toward bank representative	5.44	4.59	4.83	2.00
Feelings toward bank Like bank representative	5.44	4.57	4.66	5.36**
Want to be interviewed by bank representative in future	5.19	5.11	4.79	1.07
	5.26	4.85	4.28	2.28

Note. For feelings toward bank and bank representative 1 = negative and 7 = positive.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

tive's communication style (Table 3). When bank representatives were warm and cooperative, the bank was perceived to provide very high quality service. When they were cold and competitive, the bank was perceived to provide much lower quality service (Table 3). The warmth and coldness of the service provider enhanced and lowered the service quality of the bank in the cooperative and competitive contexts. However, results for the independent-warm and independent-cold conditions were reversed: The warm condition was perceived to offer lower bank quality than the cold condition.

The quality of the service provided by the bank representative was not significantly different among the three goal orientation conditions even though quality was highest in the cooperative condition (Table 2). Oddly enough, the independent condition yielded lower bank representative quality than the competitive condition. When results were analyzed by goal context and communication style, only the bank representative's communication style was significant (Table 3). Overall, participants attributed much higher quality in the warm ($M = 5.40$) condition than the cold ($M = 4.61$) condition ($F = 8.88$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$).

Other Factors Related to Profitability

The cooperative goal orientation of the bank was hypothesized to contribute indirectly to the firm's profits. Participants had positive

Table 3 Comparison of Means on Dependent Measures by Goal Context and Communication Style.

Dependent Variable	Cooperation		Competition		Individualistic		Significant Effects
	Warm	Cold	Warm	Cold	Warm	Cold	
Quality of service bank provided	6.00	5.36	5.43	4.00	4.53	5.29	Context* interaction
Quality of service bank representative provided	5.60	5.09	5.64	4.46	4.93	4.36	Style*
Confidence in dealing with bank in future	5.75	4.27	4.71	4.31	4.71	4.50	Style**
Patronize bank if need a loan	5.75	4.36	4.93	5.08	4.57	4.93	Interaction*
Satisfied with interview	5.81	5.36	5.86	4.54	5.00	5.00	Style**
Feelings toward bank representative	5.88	4.82	5.50	4.38	5.13	4.50	Style*
Feelings toward bank representative	5.69	5.09	4.93	4.23	4.53	4.79	Context*
Like bank representative	5.63	4.55	5.64	4.54	5.07	4.50	Style*
Want to be interviewed by bank representative in future	5.75	4.55	5.64	4.00	4.93	3.50	Style*

* $p < .01$.** $p < .05$.

feelings toward the bank when it was cooperative and less positive feelings when it was indifferent to their interests. The goal orientation had no significant effect on participants' confidence in dealing with the bank, patronizing the bank in the future, satisfaction with the interview, positive feelings toward the bank representative, liking the bank representative, or willingness to be interviewed by the bank representative in future.

When results were analyzed by goal context and communication style, these variables were significant on the main effect style but not context, except patronizing the bank. The representative's warmth enhanced participants' confidence in dealing with the bank, satisfaction with the interview, positive feelings toward the bank representative, liking the representative, and willingness to be interviewed by the representative again. Context and style interacted to produce a very high likelihood of patronizing the bank in the cooperative-warm condition ($M = 5.75$) and a much lesser likelihood in the cooperative-cold condition ($M = 4.36$). These results suggest that customers differentiate between the personal characteristics of the service provider and the policies of the bank. With the exceptions of confidence in dealing with the bank, patronizing it in the future, and feelings toward the bank, all the other questions pertained directly to the bank representative. The bank representative's warmth and coldness affected the participants' satisfaction with the interview, their feelings toward the

representative, their liking for the representative in the future, and their willingness to be interviewed by the representative in the future.

DISCUSSION

Results suggest that customers distinguish between the service of the company and by the person giving the service. Communication style contributed substantially to judgments about the quality of service offered by the provider. Warm confederates were perceived to offer personal quality to the service, created more satisfaction, were viewed more positively, were better liked, and were more likely to secure repeat interviews than cold confederates. Goal orientation of the company had much less impact on these outcomes, and, contrary to the hypothesis, did not appear to interact to enhance or lower the effects of the above dependent variables.

The significant impact of communication style may be because participants understood the confederates' warmth or coldness as expressions of their personalities. Participants judged the quality of service the confederates had provided; their liking, satisfaction, and desire to be interviewed in the future were based on the service provider's warmth or coldness. Goal context may not have affected these variables because participants did not see an immediate relationship between the bank's goal orientation and the representative's performance. Representatives were thought to be only performing their duties in carrying out the bank's cooperative or competitive mandate.

Goal context did impact customer evaluation and feelings toward the company's service quality. Goal interdependence of the organization with the customer was a more important factor than communication style in determining overall quality. Analogous with service provider quality, factors relating specifically to the bank were affected by the general goals of the organization. Contrary to expectations, communication style contributed to participants' confidence in dealing with the bank in the future. Why this particular organizational dependent variable is affected by style rather than goal context is not immediately apparent.

Although the service provider was important in suggesting satisfaction with the service encounter, communication style was insufficient to affect the judgment of overall quality of the firm. The warmth or coldness of the confederate was obviously not salient enough to have an impact on overall quality. These results are consistent with the Crosby and Stephens (1987) finding that the agent's performance affects satisfaction but is insufficient to balance out the overall satisfaction with the service.

Overall, the means of the dependent variables for the cooperative

condition are higher than those of independent and competition conditions. However, the relatively high means for both independent and competitive conditions imply that they do contribute to quality. This could be attributed to the competitive approach adopted by many banks. Competitive and individualistic behaviors, it can be argued, are typical, and their occurrence is expected. This reasoning is consistent with the Parasuraman et al. (1985) proposal that judgments of quality depend on how consumers perceive the actual service performance in the context of what they expect.

Our study indicates that how the organization perceives its goals with its customers guides its conduct of business and relationship with its customers. If the service organization perceives itself and its customers as having cooperative goals, then it will strive to satisfy the customers' needs and accordingly, provide quality service. Conversely, if the service organization perceives itself and its customers as having competitive goals, it will try to maximize its interest at the expense of its customers. Such service will be rated as poor.

Translating cooperative goals into action is a difficult challenge. Unfortunately, research on training service providers is scarce. Bowen and Schneider (1988) proposed that service firms needed to create and sustain cultures that encourage allegiance to organizational goals in order to guide and control service providers' behavior. Previous research suggests that common tasks, the need to share information and resources, shared rewards, and joint problem solving contribute to cooperation (Tjosvold 1988a, 1988b). Field research and case studies would help to identify how banks can communicate a cooperative orientation to customers.

Limitations

The findings of this study are, of course, limited by its operations and sample. A major limitation is that the research participants knew that they were participating in an experiment and that they were being monitored in some fashion. This could have induced them to respond less fully and perhaps differently. The nature of the sample could have placed an upward bias on the means of the individualistic and competitive conditions. The participants were business school students and may have considered the bank's explicit profit-making and market share expansion motives normal business practice. Other types of samples would be more inclined to perceive such open expression of motives as being individualistic and competitive. Finally, the service interview lasted 18 minutes. Although many service encounters are much shorter, some span a much longer period. Future studies could use more representative samples and more realistic ways to operationalize the independent variables and measure the dependent ones. Field experiments would be particularly valuable.

Implications for Further Research

The findings reported in this study have implications for services marketing research. First, the salience of service providers' behavior in suggesting quality calls for further investigation into other behavioral dimensions that may affect quality. Because the service provider plays a central role in suggesting the quality of the service, studying other behavioral dimensions could provide new insights into defining quality.

Second, the study highlights the overriding importance of the service firm's cooperative goal interdependence with its customers. Having cooperative goals is especially important if service firms desire to maintain long-term relationships with their customers. Research is needed to examine the possible ways that service firms can translate their cooperative interdependence with customers. How can the service firm communicate to its customers that it is serious about satisfying their needs without appearing to pay lip service? Service managers can use these cooperative ways to give them an edge over the competitor. Small firms, for instance, often perform well in highly competitive markets because of their good service. Our study helps define that good service consists in part of developing cooperative goals with customers and with service providers expressing genuine warmth.

CONCLUSION

Findings demonstrated that an organization's goal interdependence with its customers can be a powerful framework for understanding the evaluation of service quality. Participants could distinguish between cooperative and competitive strategies of the organization. Further, the warmth and coldness of the service provider were important antecedents to service quality. The major insights gained from this study suggest that the quality of the service delivered could be enhanced through the interpersonal skills of the service provider and the development of strongly cooperative goals with customers.

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The authors are with the Faculty of Business Administration, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6.