

Customer-to-Customer Interaction (CCI) through the lens of social diversity

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Customer-to-Customer Interaction (CCI)

- CCI / C2C is used in a wide range of ways:
- This presentation's focus:
 - **direct interactions** occurring between customers in **physical service settings**

CCI and similarity

- An established theme in CCI research:
- Compatibility management roots:
 - “instances of incompatibility can usually be traced to some form of customer heterogeneity”
 - Martin and Pranter (1989: 11)
- Many authors see **limiting customer diversity** as key to managing CCI

Narrative Literature Review (NLR) study of social diversity

- Aim: to identify themes relating to social diversity and CCI
- NLR involves **integrating** a number of **scattered topics** to help make sense of their bridging value
- Useful for:
 - developing a broad perspective on a topic
 - structuring a diverse literature in an accessible way

Themes

1. A range of **types of diversity** which tend to influence CCI
2. Some **service contexts** lessen the impact of social diversity
3. Customer **dissimilarity** can be a source of **value added**

1 Selected studies on customer dissimilarity

| Theme | Study | Findings |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Age | Thakor et al. (2008) | Younger consumers preferred similar age fellow customers |
| Gender | Schmidt & Sapsford (1995) | Female discomfort in traditional male pubs |
| Culture | Nicholls (2011) | Introduces concept of cross-cultural CCI (CC-CCI) and discusses relevant studies. |
| Size | Kruse (2003) | Perceptions of female dwarfs of encounters in service settings |
| Purpose of consumption | Vaske et al. (2000) | Identifies conflicts between snowboarders & skiers |

② Customer social diversity impact dampened

- Some service contexts lessen the 'everyday' **social order**:
 - E.g. adventure activity
- **Liminal conditions** enable this
- **Communitas** develops as diverse individuals share a common bond of experience
- Studies include:
 - Arnould & Price, 1993
 - Foster & McCabe, 2015

③ Customer dissimilarity: a source of value added

- **Help-seeking** customer:
 - Present buying:
 - seeking help from other who resemble the end-user
- **Mutual help**:
 - Learning from other with different experiences
- **Variety** as ‘the spice of life’:
 - Desire for others to be different

Selected managerial implications

- Segmentation
- customer equilibrium
- pre-service expectations management
- behavioural standards communications
- employee-based service recovery

Contribution of study

1. Highlights the centrality of similarity and dissimilarity in CCI research
2. Identifies a range of ways in which customers may differ from each other
3. Explores a range of 'less obvious' CCI literature and uses it to enrich CCI discussion
4. Identifies approaches to managing customer diversity

Taking the research further

- Next stage is a wider NLR
- Identification of further research
- This could include:
 - case study research on service organisations which seek to regulate the social diversity of their customers (e.g. universities)
 - service environments where C2C social diversity is viewed as a source of value-added by customers

Thank you

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