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
### Selected studies on customer dissimilarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Thakor et al. (2008)</td>
<td>Younger consumers preferred similar age fellow customers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Schmidt &amp; Sapsford (1995)</td>
<td>Female discomfort in traditional male pubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Nicholls (2011)</td>
<td>Introduces concept of cross-cultural CCI (CC-CCI) and discusses relevant studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose of consumption</td>
<td>Vaske et al. (2000)</td>
<td>Identifies conflicts between snowboarders &amp; skiers</td>
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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
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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References

References (continued)