

# **Management of customer-to-customer interaction (CCI) by the front-line employee (FLE) in the supermarket industry**

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**A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By  
Alex Kay**

**Supervisory team: Dr Richard Nicholls and Dr Catharine  
Ross**

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**University of Worcester**

## **Abstract**

Research examining the impact of fellow customers on the service experience is well documented within the marketing literature. However, little attention has been paid to the supermarket industry from the perspective of the front-line employee. This study addresses the need for the employee perspective on customer-to-customer interactions (CCI) and identifies the management techniques that are utilised by front-line employees in a service heavy environment. Utilising the critical incidents technique, 49 participants were interviewed across three different locations, 22 employees and 27 customers. The findings identified that FLEs do possess the ability to spot and recall CCI, with the study producing typologies from both perspectives. The findings indicated that some types of CCIs were unique to the FLE viewpoint and not noted by customers. Additionally, the management of CCI from the FLEs perspective is captured in a conceptual framework that showcases CCI management is a process that requires FLEs utilising judgement rather than traditional scripting methods. FLEs identify that many of their techniques originated from experience rather than training. For service researchers, several recommendations are made to further develop the understanding of CCI management including the testing of the conceptual framework in various other industries. It is also recommended that the CCI management techniques are further explored to identify the success or failure of the tactics from the customer perspective. For service managers and FLEs, recommendation was made to improve the current training system and incorporate EBM into their organisational strategy. Organisations currently utilise scripting and set techniques, which were not deemed applicable within this study, but should focus on empowering employees to use their judgement. The wide range of recommendations should stimulate investigation into many new avenues for CCI from both customer and employee perspectives.

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**List of Abbreviations:**

Aberrant consumer behaviour: ACB

Customer-relationship management: CRM

Critical incident technique: CIT

Customer to customer interactions: CCI

Customer to customer: C2C

Customer to employee: C2E

Electronic word of mouth: E-WOM

Evidence based management: EBM

Front-line Employee: FLE

Negative customer to customer interactions: NCCI

Positive customer to customer interactions: PCCI

United Kingdom: United Kingdom

Word of mouth: WOM

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

In recent years there has been a strong focus by marketing researchers on examining the customer experience due to the competitive nature of the retail environment. Puccinelli et al., (2009) states the importance of understanding customer experience is vital to retailers, with McColl-Kennedy et al., (2015) identifying that creating a meaningful customer experience is pivotal for achieving competitive advantage and satisfied customers (Bolton et al., 2014; Verhoef et al., 2009). Shaw and Ivens (2002, p.40) identify that “85% of business leaders propose that differentiation by price, product and service is no longer a sustainable business strategy”, with Lemon and Verhoef (2016) identifying that at the forefront of business objectives, is the need to create a strong customer experience. Large firms including KPMG, Amazon, Microsoft and Nike now have customer experience ‘managers’ and ‘vice-presidents’ according to the latest research (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) showcasing the importance of the subject. However, understanding the customer experience is a complex and challenging task, with many different factors influencing the experience of customers whilst shopping.

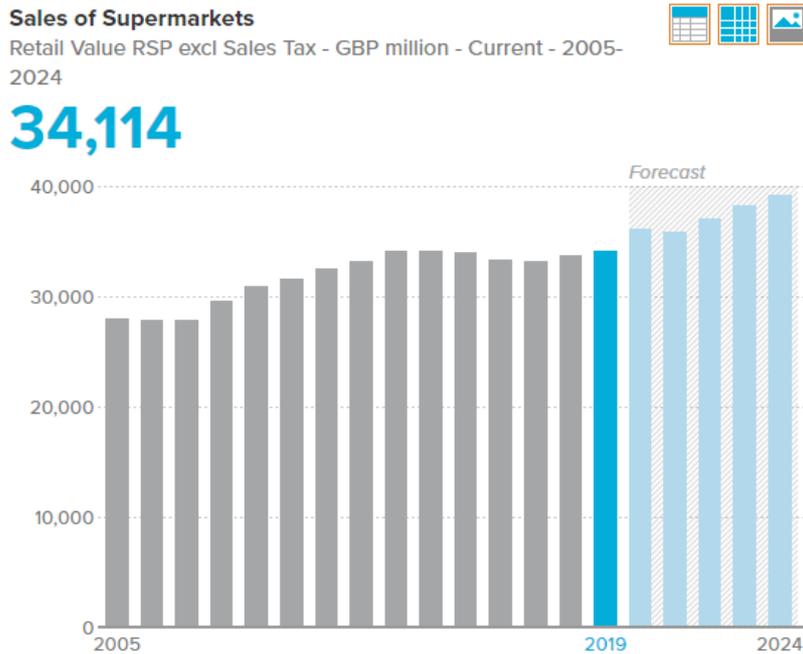
There has been a focus by scholars of understanding the experience by examining the physical layout of the store (Nasar, 1989; Bitner, 1992), the ambience (Caldwell and Hibbert 2002; Morin, Dub, and Chebat, 2006) and social factors (Martin and Pranter, 1989; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Soderlund, 2011; Nicholls and Gad Mohsen, 2019), all of which have been identified as important to control by the service organisation. Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p. 69) identify that customer experiences “are now more social in nature” and indicate that fellow customers can influence the service experience. When discussing social influence on the customer service, Fisk et al., (1993) identifies that there has been a strong focus on examining the customer to

employee relationship (hereafter known as C2E), however, as Nicholls and Gad Mohsen (2019) identify, many services include multiple customers interacting in the service environment.

When consuming a service, research has indicated that customers frequently interact in several different ways. The main findings of CCI have identified varying types of CCI categories, including, but not limited to: general pleasantries, product advice and recommendation, physical assistance, interactions whilst queuing, and customer misbehaviour (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Harris and Baron, 2004). These types of incidents are classified as customer-to-customer interactions (hereafter known as CCI) and can have a major influence on the customers experience. The phrase CCI was originally coined by Martin and Pranter (1989), and as Nicholls (2010) highlights has received a wide range of interest from varying industries, including: travel, tourism, hospitality and retail (Martin, 1997; Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Wu, 2007). Although CCI has received attention in numerous industries, little research has focused on CCI in the supermarket environment.

Martin and Pranter (1989) produced service “intensifiers” which are factors that indicate CCI is likely to occur in that service environment. The service intensifiers identify that when certain conditions are present, customers may interact and engage in CCI. Supermarkets have not been explored in terms of CCI, despite the fact that supermarkets meet the ‘criteria’ for an industry where CCI is likely to occur, with many intensifiers present, such as sharing time and space, e.g. queuing and browsing goods. Additionally, the supermarket industry is continuing to grow and despite COVID-19, shows no sign of slowing (Figure 1 Euromonitor, 2020). UK consumers spend “14% of their weekly disposable income on food and beverages at supermarkets” (Intel, 2018), with 44% of the UK population aged 18+ visiting the supermarket more than once a week. Interestingly, 16% of customers shop “every other day”

in the supermarket industry and the trend continues to grow (Euromonitor, 2019), highlighting the increase in visits to the supermarket for customers. However, due to COVID-19 some customers have changed their shopping pattern due to government restrictions.



(Figure 1 - Euromonitor, 2020).

Although Euromonitor (2020) highlights that customers have altered their behaviour pattern and are visiting supermarkets more frequently, research by Mintel (2020) highlights the growth of online retailing. Along with the growth of online retailing, COVID-19 provides additional challenges to supermarkets, highlighting the need for the correct management of customers, not only for a positive customer experience, but also customers safety. With many factors influencing the retail environment, it is more important than ever that the customer experience is managed in the correct way.

Within the CCI literature, the impact of fellow shoppers is well documented and showcases the need for management. Pranter and Martin (1991) suggest that attention paid to CCI management would be as fruitful as attention historically devoted to C2E relations, as left unmanaged, CCI can have a big impact on the customer experience. Research examining the impact of CCI highlights it having an impact on both customer satisfaction and patronage in the service environment. Positive CCI (hereafter as PCCI) has been found to have strong links to customer satisfaction, with negative CCI (hereafter NCCI) linked to customer dissatisfaction (Arnould and Price, 1993; Harris et al., 1997; Wu, 2007). Harris et al., (1995; 1997) examined the impact of CCI on service quality and satisfaction, with a clear recognition that the service encounter can create satisfied or unhappy customers.

Grove and Fisk (1997) research identifies that left unattended, CCI can undermine an organisations' overall performance from the customer's points of view, indicating the need for CCI management. Many different types of CCI can impact a customer's experience, with severe forms of CCI even resulting in physical conflict (Dorsey et al., 2016). Baker and Kim (2018) suggest that customers perceive the service organisation to be responsible for recovering CCI when the incidents are negative in nature. Nicholls (2010) identifies that the current understanding of CCI management discusses two groups: CCI strategy, such as compatibility management (Martin and Pranter, 1989; Martin 1995; Baron et al., 2007), and those dealing with the tools and techniques of CCI such as coping strategies (Baker et al., 2012) and roles of employees (Pranter and Martin, 1991; Baron et al., 2007). However, many of the management ideas presented in the services marketing literature are theoretical contributions and have not been empirically tested, therefore the area needs further development.

Interestingly, the current COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, further highlights the importance of CCI management within supermarkets due to the incidents reported in the mainstream media. Various news articles and reports highlight how customers frequently become violent and aggressive when dealing with fellow customers breaking social distancing rules (BBC, 2020), leaving the organisation in a precarious position to manage CCI. With the effects of COVID-19 still visible within society, research around CCI continuously needs to develop the understanding and role of the front-line employees (hereafter FLEs) when dealing with multiple customers.

Nicholls (2010) highlights the main achievements of CCI with a review of the literature and provides new direction for further CCI research, with a key recommendation of focusing on the insight of CCI from the FLE perspective. This research not only addresses the call for further CCI development and contribution to the literature, but also to provide practical recommendations to the supermarket industry for dealing with multiple customers at a time where management is needed most. The FLE viewpoint is seldom discussed when analysing CCI, with the main contributions to the literature coming from the customer viewpoint (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Baron, Harris and Davies, 1996; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Parker and Ward, 2000; Huang and Cathy, 2000; Dorsey et al., 2016). Nicholls and Gad Mohsen (2019) identified the value of the FLE perspective in their study focusing on libraries, showcasing that FLEs possess the ability to identify and describe CCI encounters, providing valuable insight into customer encounters. Additionally, the FLE viewpoint can provide a unique perspective to CCI scenarios, as highlighted in (Eiglier and Langeard, 1977) servuction model as they can observe two parties interacting, whereas when customer describe CCI they are often immersed in the incidents themselves.

Additionally, little work has focused on the impact of CCI on the FLEs, with HR literature mainly focusing on C2E interactions, in particular customer misbehaviour (Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Baker et al., 2012). The literature identifies that problem customers can severely impact the employee, causing dissatisfaction (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Fisher, 1998); stress (Kraus et al., 2012; Hu, et al., 2017;); and emotional exhaustion (Dormann and Zapf, 2004). However, little research showcases the impact of more than one customer on the FLE. Lovelock, (1994) indicates that not only can customers be wrong, but they can also be disrespectful and rude, impacting the FLEs well-being. Therefore, research needs to explore the impact of more than one rude customer, or even customers that like to moan about the service organisation together, classified as “mutual moans” (Harris and Barron, 2004). Exploration into the FLEs perception on CCI will not only identify or how it can be managed, but also how the employees feel whilst dealing with the incidents, in particular NCCI.

The perspective of the FLE has seldom been explored in the services marketing literature and could help identify types of customer interactions that have not yet been examined from the customer perspective (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Grove and Fisk; 1997; Harris and Reynolds, 2006; Nicholls and Gad Mohsen, 2015). Additionally, the HR literature focuses on the impact of customers, but usually identifies one customer at a time, with little recognition of CCI. Research has paid attention to customer misbehaviour (Lovelock, 1994; Harris and Reynolds, 2006; Berry and Seiders 2008; Huang and Miao, 2016), however exploration into the impact of more than one customer could deepen the understanding of how customers can impact employees. This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach and addresses the need for research in the HR and services literature and further adds to the understanding of the customer experience, from both FLE and customer perspectives.

## 1.2 Research question

How do front-line employees (FLEs) effectively identify and manage customer-to-customer interaction in the UK supermarket industry?

### 1.2.1 Research Aims

This study aims to: -

- 1.0 Categorise the types of customer-to-customer interactions occurring in supermarkets.
- 2.0 Discuss the capability of the FLEs to identify CCI in the supermarket industry.
- 3.0 Gain understanding into how FLEs experience CCI.
- 4.0 Conceptualise a framework of the approaches FLEs utilise to manage CCI in the retail industry.
- 5.0 Provide recommendations to the retail industry on how FLEs can be supported to manage CCI.

### 1.2.2 Research Objectives

- 1.0 To identify types of customer-to-customer interactions from customer and front-line employee viewpoints.
- 2.0 To compare the types of customer-to-customer incidents identified by customers and front-line employees.
- 3.0 To identify the strategies deployed by the front-line employee managing the incidents.
- 4.0 To analyse the perception and experiences that FLEs have whilst dealing with CCI incidents; in particular negative CCI.

### 1.3 Research outline

In addressing the aims and objectives of this study, the thesis is structured as follows. The discussion in chapter 2 provides the context for CCI and identifies the need for the current study. The chapter presents an overview of the importance of Customer Experience in relation to satisfaction, patronage, consumer spending and identifies the varying factors that influence the experience whilst consuming a service. The chapter identifies the various methods for capturing the customer experiences via service frameworks and examines the impact of the physical servicescape on the customer experience. A review of the literature is conducted and examines the need for further research into the social factors that can impact customer experiences, in particular the need for CCI development in the supermarket industry. An overview of the current understanding of CCI is discussed, with examination of the wide range and types of CCI that is currently understood in varying service environments. Additionally, the literature review identifies the impact of customers on the FLE and summarises how CCI is currently managed. The chapter concludes by identifying the gap in the HR and services literature surround CCI and the FLE perspective, especially in the supermarket industry.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology adopted for this study and places it in the context of service consumption and CCI. The chapter identifies the importance of foundationalism and the impact of research philosophy on the essence of the study and gathering of data. Ontological and epistemological underpinning is provided in terms of social research and the applicability of CCI to the interpretivist philosophy. The research method is identified and showcases the context and location of data collection and the breakdown of participant details. In depth discussion around sample size and recruitment method is identified in line with a review and critique of the research method: the critical incident technique (CIT). It is important to establish a suitable research method and sample size that addresses the aims

and objectives of the research question. Therefore, examination into previous studies identifies the appropriate method of data collection and adequate sample size. The chapter further discusses how participants were recruited and provides context to the location of the organisation utilised within this study. After identification of the methodology and data collection approach, the chapter identifies the most applicable analysis technique suited to the study. Careful review of the technique is provided with a detailed breakdown of the appropriate steps moving towards successful analysis, including information about data storage, transcription and presentation of results.

Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive discussion of the typology findings of the varying CCIs that are present in the supermarket industry, from both customer and employee perspective. The chapter aims to identify if FLEs possess the ability to spot and recall C2C incidents and if they differ from the customer perspective. The chapter provides two tables grouping the CCIs that are present in the study and compares the different viewpoints building on the current literature. The chapter systematically works through each type of CCI and discusses the impact in terms of theoretical contribution and the practical impact on service organisations and FLEs. The chapter identifies the original contribution and discusses unique forms of CCI that are present in the study.

Chapter 5 identifies the management techniques adopted by FLEs and how they feel dealing with CCI. A conceptual framework for managing CCI showcases how CCI is managed and the numerous factors that influence the decision-making process by employees. Additionally, the chapter presents data that showcases if the management techniques originate from experience or the training received at the organisation. One major original contribution occurs in the chapter when analysis of how the FLEs feel dealing with CCI, in terms of their perceived ability

to manage the incidents and the impact it has on their well-being. Another original contribution in the chapter occurs via CCI mapping that identifies the location of incidents and provides an overview of CCI hotspots that can occur throughout the service environment.

Chapter 6 concludes the study and summarises the original contribution to the literature and discusses the potential impact on industry. The chapter identifies the limitation of the study, both in terms of research methods and contextual factors such as the organisation and geographical location. The chapter makes recommendations in terms of future research outputs and identifies practical recommendations for FLEs, service management and the organisation. The recommendations not only focus on future theoretical research but practical development in terms of training and staff resource allocation.

## **2.0 Literature review**

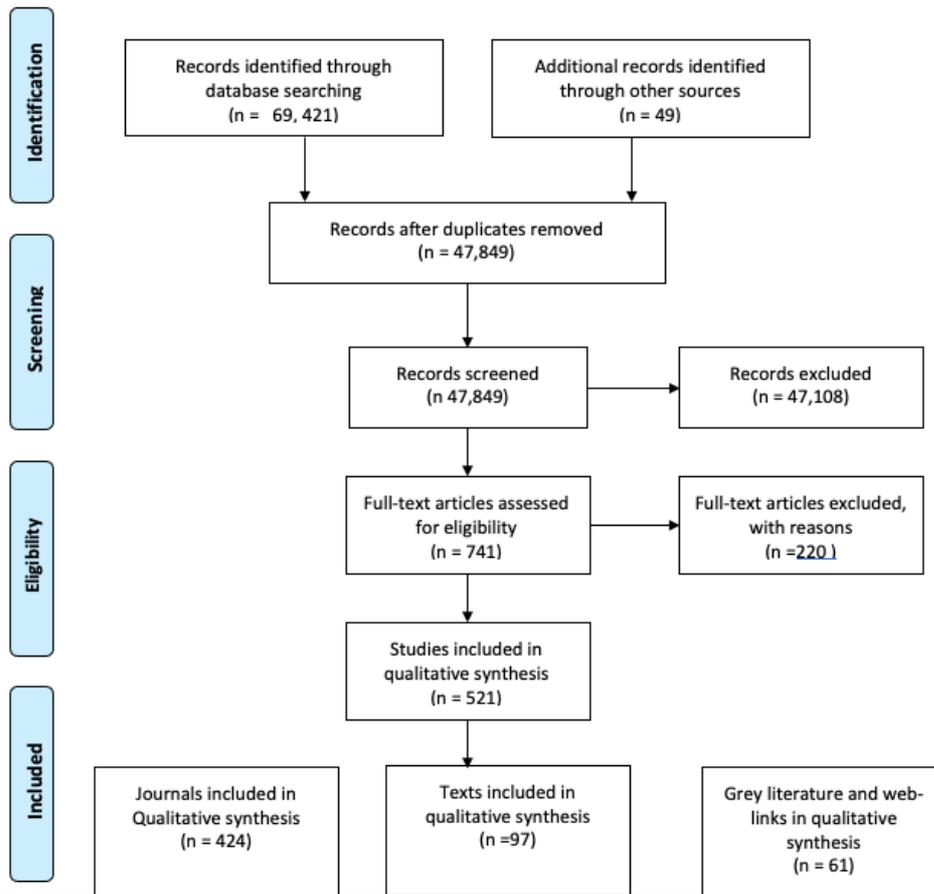
### **2.0.1 Literature search strategy**

Hermes (1995) argues that although gathering literature using secondary sources provides an efficient way of interpreting social constructions of customer-to-customer interactions, it simply, is not possible to read profoundly into the constructions of a concept from the surface of text. Furthermore, Noblit and Hare, (2018) suggest that traditional techniques utilised to conduct literature reviews may lack significant rigour. Grant and Booth (2000) highlights literature reviews often have aims which are unclear, cherry-pick research and include only evidence that tends to support that position. These limitations have encouraged scholars to develop more reliable and comprehensive assessments of the existing research (Briner and Walshe, 2014).

#### **2.0.1.1 Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)**

To ensure methodological rigor, objectivity and replicability, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Higgins and Green, 2009; Petticrew and Roberts, 2005) were applied. PRISMA is a 4-stage process that identifies a clear and systematic search approach for the literature utilised within this study, it includes search terms, eligibility criteria, inclusion and exclusion and total number of resources utilised.

## Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA)



### 2.0.1.2 Identification

The initial phase of PRISMA, formulates the identification process, a phase that ascertains and obtains relevant literature (Moher, et al., 2009). A primary search of the electronic library database Worcester University Summon's was conducted up to and including February 2020. Search terms included 'customer interaction', 'customer-to-customer interaction', 'CCI, and 'customer experience' (see Fig. 2.0 for complete search strategy). All the search terms were configured into different combinations using Boolean operators (i.e., AND, OR, and NOT). The truncation symbol (\*) was added as appropriate to individualise for example between 'consumer', 'consumers', and 'consumerism'. Wildcards were used for words with the same meaning but alternative spelling. For instance, the + symbol was added to customers (i.e.

customer+) to return results for both customer and customers. Applying all search terms as stated, identified 69,421 literature sources. To avoid reviewing duplicate literature, all citations were exported to Mendeley.

<b>Fig. 2.0. Search Strategy:</b>	
Customer* interaction	Customer interaction Typology+
Consum* experience	CCI Review
Interaction	CCI recommendation
CCI	Front-line employee management
Front-line employee*	Decision making behaviour
Customer+customer interaction	Customer* Management
CCI + Front-line employee	Employee* engagement with
Customer* management	CCI
Customer Journey	CCI Management
Servicescape	Consumer psychology CCI
Customer* satisfaction	Customer waiting
Customer Sensitivity	

### 2.0.1.3 Screening

In phase 2, screening of the remaining literature conceivably relevant to the research topic, involves managing the volume of literature against criteria for a bipartite process of inclusion and exclusion (Hart, 2018). These criteria may include the quality of author, purpose of study, the nature of the argument, epistemological stance, peer review quality and number of citations. (Figure 3 gives an example of the criteria used).

<b>Figure 3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in Application: Professor Mary Jo Bitner</b>	
Quality of author	Professor Bitner is one of the founders of the service marketing discipline, committing her career to the study of customer-employee interactions, technology delivered service, service infusion and customer satisfaction.
Purpose of study	Professor Bitner is the executive director of the W. P. Carey School's Center for Services Leadership, a globally recognized authority on how to compete strategically through the profitable use of services
Nature of argument	Professor Bitner identifies that the customer experience is a difficult concept to measure, however her seminal work on the servicescape plays a vital role in shaping the customer experience and patronage of consumers.
Number of citations	Professor Bitner has published more than 50 journal articles in leading academic and managerial journals. She is the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Service Research and is the co-author of "Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm," and "Profiting From Services and Solutions: What Product-Centric Firms Need to Know," a text used in universities around the world.

After the screening process, a total of 47,849 of the originally identified literature (after removal of duplicates) were deemed unsuitable, leaving a more manageable 679 for eligibility.

#### 2.0.1.4 Eligibility

For phase 3 of PRISMA, all 741 literatures for eligibility to be included in the research, should be subject to a further screening phase to refine the literature pertaining to a greater depth of appropriateness (Moher, 2009). Here, the eligibility criteria represent the rationale for the applicability of literature, detailing the parameters for particular exclusion logic (Liberati, et al., 2009).

<b>Fig. 4.0 Eligibility Criteria:</b>	
Date of publication	Only the most up to-date literature should be considered for empirical research around CCI. For example, if there has been a previous review undertaken that has been updated then it not necessary to go back over covered ground. Seminal work around CCI frameworks and theory shall be included.
Language	On the occasion where it is necessary to translate literature, such literature will be exempt from eligibility. Just literature published in the English language recognised.
References of interest	Only research with a clear support network of credible, reliable and valid references with be studied.
Type of Publication	Journals, books, the original texts, some grey literature are the preferred publication types.

#### 2.0.1.5 Included

The last phase is a simple declaration of the sum of literature included for the final review. Accordingly, included studies equaled n=521, comprising of n=424 journals or 67% of the research literature; n=97 texts or 20% of the literature sources and, n= 61 grey literature including web links or 13% of research used. The results show a good balance of literature between substantial academic texts, methodological books, and relevant online data sets. The PRISMA review process helps to identify and understand the various research stream and topic areas within the CCI and customer experience literature. The literature search strategy has identified that CCI has been discussed in the services marketing literature, consumer psychology literature and HR discipline. PRISMA allows for CCI to be identified and present across multiple disciplines, allowing for analysis of the service encounter from a holistic perspective, not only the services literature.

## 2.1 The service encounter

Customer experience is often defined as holistic in nature, involving the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to any direct or indirect contact with the service provider during the entire customer journey (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015; Bolton et al., 2014; Meyer and Schwager, 2007). The impact of customer experience on satisfaction and patronage is well documented (Baker et al., 2002; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Klaus, 2014) however, the research on the area is limiting, as McColl-Kennedy et al., (2015) identifies that most research focuses on the management action and outcomes, not the underlying antecedents and cause. Furthermore, the outcome of the service interaction is frequently monitored and measured such as loyalty and experience, but individual factors such as personality (Gergen, Gergen, and Meter, 1972; Moore et al., 2005) cultural differences (Small and Harris, 2014), and age (Caber and Albayrak, 2014; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2015).

### 2.1.1 Capturing the customer encounter

Seminal work understanding how and why a sense of loyalty develops in customers is defined by Pritchard et al., (1999, p.333) as “one of the crucial management issue of our days”, over 20 years on, although the understanding of customer encounter has improved, gaps in the literature remain. Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p.70) state “that ‘customer experience’ has recently become one of the major buzzwords in marketing”, despite elements of the customer experience being highlighted in literature as early as the 1960s. Initial seminal theories on marketing and consumer behaviour were originally developed and communicated through consumer buyer behaviour models that still influence customer behaviour today (Kotler, 1967; Howard and Sheth, 1969).

The model of service encounter evaluation relies on the definition of the term “service encounter” Shostack (1985, p. 243) cited in Bitner, (1990), as "a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service.” The retail environment can exert an influence on consumer behaviour in numerous ways such as: social presence; indirect interaction; direct interactions and even the service layout, all of which can influence the satisfaction and loyalty of customers in the retail environment. “Being able to detect and understand customer behaviour may constitute a competitive advantage. Ultimately, the retailer would like to know everything about the customer the minute he or she enters the store. In online shopping the retailers have access to large amounts of log files and data-rich customer profiles” (Landmark and Sjobakk, 2017, p. 844). Yet, in traditional ‘brick and mortar’ type stores, Landmark and Sjobakk, 2017) highlight that such information is rarely available, especially trying to gather information from subjective personal interactions between fellow customers. The focus of researchers on understanding the shopping experience and how the service environment can influence behaviour has often been evidenced in varying frameworks.

Analysing and presenting the customer experience can be a difficult phenomenon to conceptualise, as there are many elements involved with the interaction. Nicholls (2010) highlights that service frameworks have advanced our understanding and are utilised to bring clarity to service consumption and factors that influence customer experience. A review of the literature (Table 1.1) gives an overview of marketing work that utilise frameworks for showcasing factors that influence customer experience.

Table 1.1

<b><u>Author(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Findings and conclusion</u></b>	<b><u>Category</u></b>
Howard and Sheth (1969)	"The Theory of Buyer Behaviour"	-Decision making by the customer is viewed as a process with various elements 09	Holistic approach
Mehrabian and Russell (1974)	"Individual Differences in Stimulus Screening and Arousability"	-Two dimensions that capture the perception of the environment: classified as the "pleasure-displeasure" which refers to the amount of stimulation and excitement. - "Individuals react to places with two general forms of behaviour: approach and avoidance."	Physical layout
Wohlwill (1976)	"Environmental Aesthetics: The Environment as a Source of Affect."	-Identifies that the aesthetics of the service environment can have an "eliciting affect" on the consumer.	Physical layout
Eiglier and Langeard (1977)	"Services as systems: marketing implications."	-Acknowledges the importance of other customers and that customers for one of three elements in the service environment.	Social interaction
Harrel, Hutt and Anderson (1976); (1980)	"Crowding in Retail Stores" "Path Analysis of Buyer Behaviour Under Conditions of Crowding"	-Physical setting may also influence the customer's ultimate satisfaction with the service. -Customers who are time sensitive on are more affected by crowding than those who are patient.	Physical layout  Crowding
Donovan and Rossiter, (1982)	"Store Atmosphere: An Environmental Psychology Approach"	-A positive service environment influences both customers and employees. -The servicescape influences satisfaction, productivity, and motivation.	Atmospherics
Nasar (1989)	"Effect of Sign Complexity and Coherence on the Perceived Quality of Retail Scenes"	-Within the service environment there are many factors that are found to influence the perception in "urban settings". The list included "poles, wires, signs, and dilapidated buildings and vehicles are classified as nuisances."	Physical layout
Martin and Pranter (1989)	"Compatibility management: customer-to-customer relationships in service environments"	-Identified the role that CCI plays in the service environment and the relevance of managing the incidents.	CCI
Bitner (1990)	"The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favourable and Unfavourable Incidents"	-"Produced categories to identify interactions between employees and customers that cause customers to distinguish very satisfactory service	Social interaction/C2E

		encounters from very dissatisfactory ones.”	
Bitner (1992)	“Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees”	-Produced a framework to identify the effect of the physical surround on customers and employees. Builds on previous work by Bitner (1990) that highlights physical surroundings influence in the service environment and makes key managerial (and research) implications.	Physical layout
Hui, Dube, and Chebat (1997)	“The Impact of Music on Consumers' Reactions to Waiting for Services”	-Positive impact of music in the service environment. Findings suggest less negative emotional responses.	Ambience/Music
Machleit and Mantel (2000)	“Perceived retail crowding and shopping satisfaction: what modifies this relationship?”	-Crowding produces a negative state of mind.	Crowding
Caldwell and Hibbert (2002)	“The Influence of Music Tempo and Musical Preference on Restaurant Patrons' Behaviour”	-When “pleasant music” is present, the waiting is viewed as shorter.	Ambience/Music
Morin, Dub, and Chebat (2006)	“The role of pleasant music in Servicescapes: A test of the dual model of environmental perception”	- Research focusing on the “holistic nature” of the service environment and the impact of music. The findings show that music type reflects the customer attitude, such as a positive upbeat music track also is reflected by positive upbeat customers.	Ambience/Music
Hassanein and Head, (2006)	“The impact of infusing social presence in the web interface: an investigation across product types.”	-The presence of other customers (even strangers) contributes to a positive attitude towards the service company if the customer is acting in a positive manner.	Online crowding/presence of others
Soderlund, (2011)	“Other customers in the retail environment and their impact on the customer's evaluations of the retailer”	-Identified that customers who share the customer servicescape together has an impact on the overall feeling towards the service organisation. Noting that when customer are behaving in a negative manner, the customer perceive the service organisation for recovering the experience.	Social interaction/CCI
Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	“Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey”	-An overview of the current understanding about the varying factors impacting on the customer experience. These include the physical layout and impact of fellow customers on the service journey.	Historical perspective on customer experience

Previous research has identified that customer satisfaction depends directly on the management and monitoring of individual service encounters (Shostack, 1987; Solomon et al. 1985), however, table 1.1 highlights there are numerous other factors that can influence customer behaviour. Most service frameworks that aim to capture the service framework have focused on the physical environment and ambiance. Seminal work by Eiglier and Langeard (1977) pioneered the servuction system model breaking the service environment into sections that are visible and invisible to customers. As Nicholls (2010, p.88) identifies, the servuction model “also contains a vital third influence which, referred to as “customer B”, which represents the influence of other customers on a customer’s perception of his/her service experience.”

Bitner, (1990) presented a model that synthesised consumer satisfaction, services marketing, and attribution theories to help understand the impact of physical surroundings and employee responses on customer satisfaction in the travel industry. However, there are numerous other factors that can influence customer behaviour and Bitner (1990), identified the effects of physical surroundings in the service vicinity. The research addresses how services are produced and consumed simultaneously amongst other customers, indicating that customer interaction takes place and has an influence on the service quality and satisfaction perception (Gronroos 1984; Langeard et al. 1981; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1985).

The first process of Bitner’s, (1990, p.72) framework suggests that a “consumer's pre-attitude will influence expectations about the outcome of a particular service encounter.” The second phase of the framework focuses on when prior expectations and performance do not match, indicating that a positive and negative confirmation occurs. Bitner, (1990) identifies that the marketing mix, in particular people and physical evidence, feed into the perceived service

performance and expectations; both of which are ever present in the retail and supermarket industry. Overall, the framework shows that consumer satisfaction is from many different inputs, indicating that people play a vital role, especially in environments where the product/service is consumed on site and social interactions occur, such as in a supermarket. Although Bitner, (1990) started to identify that other 'people' influenced customer satisfaction in the service environment, it was mainly focused on customer-to-employee interactions and did not discuss CCI in depth. Bitner's (1992, p.62) framework describes "how the built environment (i.e., the manmade, physical surroundings as opposed to the natural or social environment), or what is referred to here as the "servicescape," affects both consumers and employees in service organisations." Rapoport (1982) identifies that the physical layout and environment where service is consumed, is rich in physical cues and can be influential in communicating the retailer's brand image. Furthermore, research has suggested that the physical setting can influence the customer's ultimate satisfaction with the service (Bitner 1990; Harrell, Hutt, and Anderson 1980).

Although research has identified the effect of ambient features and store atmospherics on customer satisfaction, there is a lack of social element in the frameworks. Bitner's (1992) framework identified the effects of the servicescape on both customers and employees and how the service environment can influence satisfaction for both. Although it did include some social elements, customers interacting with each other was seldom discussed and explored in detail. Baker et al., (2002) added to the Bitner, (1992) research and produced an empirically based framework for retail patronage. The overall aim of the research was to examine the extent to which environmental cues influence consumers' assessments of retail stores and influence loyalty intentions.

The framework includes three main elements: design, social and ambient factors. The model explained a high percentage of the variation in perceived merchandise value (68%), and the most important predictor, was based on price perceptions of products. Furthermore, “the framework also explained a high percentage of the variation in store patronage intentions (54%)” Baker et al., (2002, p.133). It was identified that merchandise value perceptions had the strongest direct effect (.37), whilst interestingly, the impact of the service quality received by consumer also had a significant impact (.23). “Perceptions of store environment (especially design cue perceptions), merchandise quality perceptions, and monetary price perceptions all had significant indirect effects on store patronage intentions” (Baker et al., 2002, p.134). However, one limitation to the study was the method of data collection. The research was video recorded and in a simulated environment, meaning that social elements that are naturally occurring could be missed. Baker et al., (2002) identified that the method had limitations, and suggested that video capture was not able to identify the wide range of factors influencing the customer experience, in particular ambient factors. Although social influences have received less attention, some service frameworks acknowledge the importance of other customers.

Grove and Fisk's (1983) framework identifies that customers can be viewed as part of the service ‘audience’, building on work by Booms and Bitner (1981) who suggest that customers are ‘participants’ in the service environment. Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991) discuss customer can have a presence in the service environment, but provide an additional dimension, labelled as an ‘interactive dimension’, not merely participants there to observe. Similar to the seminal work and creation of the servuction model (Eiglier and Langeard, 1977), the research is ‘dated’ and was not the sole purpose of the study. All of the previous frameworks that mention other customers in the servicescape, highlight the impact and role of other customers in regard to

satisfaction and patronage, highlighting that further research into social elements influencing consumer experience such as CCI is needed.

## 2.2 Social Interaction

Research has been extensive on design and ambient factors, including; music (Hui, Dube, and Chebat 1997; Miiliman 1982; crowding (e.g.. Eroglu and Machleit 1990; Hui and Bateson 1991); “store atmosphere” (Donovan and Rossiter 1982) and “physical attractiveness” of the store (Darden, Erdem, and Darden 1983). Although research and framework’s highlight that social interaction plays a role in the customer experience, it frequently examines just one form of interaction, the interaction of service provider to customer (C2E).

The framework produced by Eiglier and Langeard (1977) identified that other customers are influential in the service environment, however the research is over thirty years old and is not the sole purpose of the study. Soderlund, (2011, p. 174) indicates that many studies focusing on social influences, focus on “the impact of the employee – the salesperson or the service worker – on the customer’s evaluation of the retailer”. For a long time, “a customer’s evaluation of a service firm often depended on the evaluation of the ‘service encounter’ or the period of time when the customer interacted directly with the firm” (Bitner, 1990, p. 69). Research indicates that the interpersonal nature of interactions between customer and employees are key to customer satisfaction in retail (Goodwin 1996); crowding, having too many employees can have a negative impact on the customer experience (Baker 1965); servicescape such as music and lighting (Baker, Levy, and Grewal 1992); and overall store layout (Titus and Everett 1995).

The customer to employee relationship is an area that has been heavily studied (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Kraus et al., 2012; and Bitner, 1990) is often included under customer

relationship management (CRM), although CRM does not have to be face-to-face contact and little research is focusing specifically on CCI. CRM research has focused on: loyalty cards (Humby and Hunt, 2003; Dowling and Uncles 1997; Shugan 2005); CRM in retailing (Verhoef et al., 2010; Verhoef et al. 2003; Bucklin and Gupta 2002); CRM on customer outcomes (Reinartz and Kumar 2003; Du, Kamakura, and Mela 2007); and how to influence customer behaviour (Blattberg, Malthouse, and Neslin 2009). Despite the plethora of literature regarding CRM, the focus is either on the organisation to the customer, or the employee to the customer, not CCI based.

### 2.3 The focus on CCI

Much research has been paid to the interaction between the employee and the customer and how it can be managed (cf. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault, 1990; Harris, Baron, and Parker, 2000; Harris and Reynolds, 2004). However, there is another form of interaction that occurs that shapes the evaluation and perception of the service firm, the interaction with fellow customers, which is defined as customer-to-customer interaction (CCI) (Martin and Pranter, 1989). Customers interact in many ways when consuming a service, whether this be in the service environment, or even on the internet and website forums. The CCI literature has identified interactions that occur in the service setting as on-site CCI (Bitner, 1992), and interactions that occur outside of the service setting (off-site CCI). On-site CCI is defined as specific interactions amongst customers present in the service setting, that can have a positive or negative effect on the service experience (McGrath and Otnes, 1995), while off-site CCI can be referred to as word-of-mouth (WOM).

Word of mouth is a very broad area that has received much attention, including website reviews, online forums, and word of mouth (Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004; Gupta and Harris 2010; King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). WOM tends to concern consumers involved in

the pre-purchase stage decision, whereas on-site CCI concerns interaction during the delivery stage. WOM has been acknowledged for many years as a major influence on what people know, feel and do (Buttle, 1998). Arndt (1967) was one of the earliest researchers into the influence of WOM on consumer behaviour and defined WOM as oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product or service. However, this research is 50 years old and understandably limited, mainly due to the rise in technology and before what Nicholls (2005) describes as e-CCI.

Arndt's (1967) definition is outdated due to WOM now being utilised online via website reviews and online forums, not necessarily oral communication. Buttle (1998) reviewed WOM research and developed a contingency model for practical application. Furthermore, the research developed the oral definitions of Arndt (1967) and Stern (1994) and suggested new areas of customer WOM research, digital WOM. Buttle (1998, p. 243) first acknowledged that WOM can be digital via a variety of different sources, stating "In this electronic age, WOM does not need to be face-to-face, direct, oral or ephemeral. There is some evidence that WOM through electronic bulletin boards functions analogously to face-to-face WOM". Although stating technology can be useful for digital WOM, due to technology at the time, Buttle's (1998) research does not discuss the Internet and the large impact it has had. King et al., (2014, p.167) stated that "traditional WOM behaviour now has an electronic element resulting in a substantial research stream - electronic WOM (eWOM)". King et al., (2014, p.167) review of the literature categorises the research around eWOM into various research streams, highlighting the differing types of communication: blogs (Kozinets et al., 2010; Thorson and Rodgers 2006); product reviews (Lee and Youn 2009; Sen and Lerman 2007; forums (e.g., Cheung et al. 2009); and social network applications (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels 2009).

Research highlights that much attention has been paid to e-WOM (also known as ‘offsite CCI’) in the past decade, however a greater understanding of ‘onsite’ CCI is still needed, in particular, regarding the retail environment. Although e-WOM research profile is large, the emphasis is on oral/digital interaction and ignores some smaller detail of what originally constituted CCI; behavioural and face-to-face interactions. Therefore, this research will focus on ‘onsite’ CCI.

### The Service Encounter and Sensitivity

Discussion around ‘onsite CCI’ has identified that CCI is characterized from a temporal perspective, supporting the view that interactions between customers, employees and the organisation depends on the innate differences between individuals. Although the literature often focuses on the customer experience (Berry, Seiders, and Grewal 2002), exploration into the differing views of service encounter, and in particular customer sensitivity has been recommended (Nicholls, 2010). Martin (1995) research produced a customer compatibility scale that highlighted how compatible customers were with fellow customers, such as the likelihood to interact with fellow customers and their level of concern based on different actions.

Martin’s (1995) compatibility scale identified customer profiles that are higher or lower in tolerances about the behaviours of other customers, with other research highlighting that some customers may not even notice CCI, whereas other customers actively seek it during social encounters (Harris and Baron, 2004). Additionally, work in other industries such as tourism identifies that there are many reasons why people interact, and factors such as cultural differences (Small and Harris, 2014), personality (Moore et al., 2005), and age (Nicholls and Mohsen, 2015). Additionally, this was supported by the viewpoint of the FLE and that the

severity of the CCI is not only noted by customers, but by employees dealing with the incidents. Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) identified that employees could identify varying levels of CCI situations, and that customers different levels of sensitivity to CCI, supporting the other CCI literature (Grove and Fisk, 1997; Martin 1995).

## 2.4 CCI categories

To understand the complexity and varying interactions that occur between customers, it is important to review the current understanding of CCI and identifying the types of interactions that occur between shoppers. This review highlights the different forms of CCI, the impact of CCI on customer satisfaction and the industries in which CCI occurs. Work focusing on CCI has developed steadily since the original definition of CCI by Martin and Pranter (1989), who developed two broad categories of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ customer interactions. However, 30 years on the research around customer interactions continues to grow and deeper understanding of the phenomena has indicated that CCI is present in a number of different industries. This review identifies the varying types of CCI, including the impact on customer satisfaction and patronage, the current industries CCI research has occurred, the FLE perspective and how CCI can be managed.

### 2.4.1 Direct and indirect CCI

Seminal work by Martin and Pranter (1989), who coined the phrase CCI, identified a wide range of customer incidents including “direct” and “indirect” incidents. Direct CCI refers to specific interpersonal interactions between two customers aware of the interaction, such as verbal communication. Whereas indirect CCI refers to customers who are merely part of the scene such as the servicescape space sharing including blocking of aisles, being too loud or being the focus of copying behaviour. With in-direct types of CCI, the customer was not always

aware they were involved in the CCI, with the research suggesting that some customers were oblivious to blocking other customers and invading their space. Although this research identified the two categories, little context and depth was provided around the incidents, as all forms of CCI could fit into the categories. This provides a very broad category overview, that makes it difficult to manage CCI. Martin and Pranter (1989) outlines a CCI research agenda that shaped the future of the literature, even providing service “intensifiers” that highlights where CCI is more likely to occur.

Building on Martin and Pranter’s (1989) work, further research into CCI adopted a similar approach discussing “direct” and “indirect” categories. Harris (1993) suggested that one of the most common types of interaction to occur in the service environment is direct verbal interaction, which has been explored frequently in the literature (Baron et al., 1996; Martin, 1996; Parker and Ward, 2000; Harris and Reynolds 2004). Classified as “observable oral participation” Harris (1993) identified that customers participate in OOP as either transmitters or receivers of oral communication, with both employees (OOP1) and with fellow customers (OOP2). OOP2 is specifically defined as interactions between two or more customers who enter the service delivery system separately. Similar to the Martin and Pranter (1989), observable verbal communication is a very broad category, that can range from offering product advice to shouting and abusing other customers. Additionally, using the term ‘observable’ could suggest a method of collecting CCI incidents, rather than a type of interaction.

Harris et al., (1995) developed the (1993) research by producing a quantitative research piece that focused on spoken interaction in the service environment, more importantly examining not only C2E interactions, but also CCI. The research states that there are clear advantages of studying verbal interaction between customers (OOP2). Firstly, “examining OOP2 in the

service delivery system can be observed by the service provider (unlike pre- and post-service delivery conversations). Secondly, such conversations can be recorded both for frequency and content (unlike purchase conversations which are in the private domain); and third, because OOPs can be observed and “measured”, there is the potential for managing them” (Harris et al., 1995, p. 64). The research also highlighted that verbal interaction between customers varies between different demographic groups, such as age and gender, concluding that verbal interaction is a frequent aspect of retailing.

Although the study provides a method for researching conversation between shoppers and highlights that customers interact in verbal communication, “only 11.63% of customers engage in CCI, compared to 48.41% of C2E. The research took place in an Ikea store in Warrington and had 1,101 participants and given that 78% of customers had visited this particular store more than once in the past 12 months (and 24% had visited six times or more)” (Harris et al., 1995, p. 67). Building on this, research has identified that customers who frequently visit the store may require less assistance and communication than customers who have never entered the service environment before (Wener, 1985). The study was quantitative and not necessarily conducive towards understanding CCI in depth, but merely identifying that CCI occurs in retail. Bateson (1985) and Edvardson (1992) state that exploration of phenomena such as services marketing requires a research method that can capture the unique subjective and processual qualities of CCI, something that a positivist quantitative approach does not do.

#### 2.4.2 Types of CCI

Research around CCI developed categories and broad classifications with varying types of CCI occurring (Martin and Pranter, 1989; Harris et al., 1995). McGrath and Otnes (1995) developed the understanding of CCI and produced a taxonomy of CCI incidents in the retail environment and identified a wide range of CCI roles. The research consisted of 60 hours of observations,

8 interviews with consumers and a prescribed format of shopping with 5 consumers. McGrath and Otnes (1995) utilised the Park and Lessig (1977) framework that categorised three types of influences. These are: “when an individual seeks the expertise of another customer (informational); when decisions about which the individual does not have strong preferences and the path of least resistance is to succumb to another's influence (utilitarian); and when the individual seeks to better the image of themselves in the eyes of another (value-expressive)” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 263). McGrath and Otnes (1995) used the framework as a starting point, which led to two main classifications being identified, overt and covert. Overt was defined as those involving face-to-face encounters and interactions between strangers. Covert was referred to as one member of the exchange dyad being oblivious to the interaction occurring, supporting Martin and Pranter's (1989) seminal work acknowledging that not all customers realise they are part of the interaction.

Within the two overall categories (overt and covert), McGrath and Otnes (1995) identified that customers frequently took on numerous “roles”. Appendix 1.0 highlights the varying roles between the categories. The identification of overt and covert further suggest the importance of a greater understanding of CCI sensitivity, as not every shopper noted that CCI was occurring, even if they were the centre of the scenario. Martin (1995) compatibility management identified that customers had differing levels of sensitivity and could be further explored to help identify how factors such as personality (Moore et al., 2005) and other cognitive factors like paranoia influence the ability to not only spot CCI, but how customers react to it. Furthermore, building on the holistic understanding of CCI, there were individual factors that influenced the severity of CCI and roles adopted within McGrath and Otnes (1995), including innate personality. McGrath and Otnes (1995) classified it as customers private persona being revealed within the service environment and highlighted that there was a

consistency between their private and public personas. For example, their findings indicated that proactive helpers who assist shoppers during the service encounter, also assumed this role in many aspects of their life. This could have a management implication, as some customers may want help dealing with CCI, in particular NCCI, but others may not depending on personality, age or situational factors.

The research highlights that customers adopt many different roles in the service setting, ranging from helping other customers to “dampening another customers experience”, really highlighting the broad nature of customer interactions. The data collection occurred in November and December, 25 years ago, and although the retail environment is similar, the processes and layout of the servicescape have changed vastly, especially with the inclusion of self-service technology (SST) and focus on the customers experience. Furthermore, during the holiday season (e.g., Christmas, Easter), research suggests that consumer buying behaviour alters during holiday periods (Belk and Bryce, 1993; Laroche et al., 2003; Deloitte, 2019), and that “the density of shoppers in stores is higher than at other times of the year” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p.261). Deloitte (2019) research into Christmas buying habits highlights that customers not only visit the store more often, spend more money whilst shopping, but also “interact with the product more”. Therefore, the McGrath and Otnes (1995) research could have produced ‘seasonal’ types of CCI that occurred only during the festive and holiday period, not transferable categories that occur year-round.

Baron et al., (1996) further explored the use of taxonomies in CCI literature, and identified five categories of observable oral participation, labelled: products related; directions; procedures related; physical assistance; and ‘other’ interactions. The research also compared the types of CCI and C2E interactions, where the main difference between the interactions was found in

the “other” category. The category was divided into ‘pleasantries’, ‘mutual moans’ and ‘niggles’ with other customers. Out of the 128 CCI incidents collected, 21.1% of customers had mutual moans such as the rudeness of staff, large queues and the complicated nature of the store. This indicated that customers were more likely to share complaints and feedback to customers than they were to members of staff; providing rich information which could provide vital forms of customer research for retailers. Also, in regard to product information, 43% of participants involved in CCI had also engaged in C2E, identifying that they could have spoken to an employee, but felt the need also to discuss with a fellow customer, identifying an unsatisfied response from the employee. Studies have explored these phenomena and identified that customers can be a more reliable source of information and advice to other customers than retail store personnel (McGrath and Otnes 1995; Baron et al. 1995; Harris et al. 1995).

The research suggests that it may identify that the word of the employee is not as trusted as that of another customer due to the bias of working at the store and loyalty to their employer. Adopting the research from the perspective of the FLE, rather than just the customer, could provide insight into additional types of CCI occurring. Baron et al., (1996) compared C2C to C2E for insight into the differing interactions, but few scholars have adopted the FLE position to compare CCI viewpoints. Research into the FLE perspective and comparison to the customer view on CCI could provide additional information into CCI and identify if FLEs have the ability to spot CCI. As Baron et al., (1996) research highlights, the interactions between customers and employees differ in their nature and context, which identifies the need for further exploration into the FLE perspective.

Grove and Fisk (1997) collected and explored CCI in a more specific manner, when customers share time and space, focusing on queuing. Although the vast majority of incidents reported were verbal, the study developed oral interactions and provided additional details about non-

verbal incidents whilst customers were sharing the service vicinity. Of the 486 respondents, there were 330 incidents in which a customer affected the service experience of another customer. Out of the of the incidents, “161 (48.8%) were positive reports and 169 (51.2%) negative incidents that reflected occasions when respondents were significantly dissatisfied with an attraction because of the behaviour of other customers” (Grove and Fisk, 1997, p.69). The study classified the incidents into two large groups, discussing the impact of other customers on the shopping experience, ‘protocol’ and ‘sociability’ incidents. Protocol incidents emerged from noncompliance to perceived rules and behaviour during shared time and space with other customers. Sociability incidents “emerged from customers' perceptions of other customers’ sociability. Incidents in this category reflect occasions when others were extremely amicable, or conversely, when others were hostile or antagonistic” (Grove and Fisk, 1997, p.73). Both groups were then further split into satisfying and dissatisfying incidents.

Within the two major classifications of critical incidents, six secondary categories were identified, four in protocol incidents and two in sociability incidents. Protocol incidents subcategories are titled: protocol incidents in line; verbal incidents in line; other incidents in line; and other protocol incidents in line. For sociability incidents the categories included friendly/unfriendly incidents and ambience incidents. Overall, “276 of the 486 subjects (56.8%) indicated that others sharing the servicescape with them had significantly affected their satisfaction at the tourist attraction” (Grove and Fisk, 1997, p.69).. This includes people cutting in the line, talking in a foreign language so others could not understand them and even a fight between customers.

The study highlights the importance of understanding CCI that occurs whilst queuing as it is a frequent component of the service environment, further supporting the need for attention in the

supermarket industry as queuing is a frequent component of the service. Grove and Fisk (1997) identify the impact of CCI on customers satisfaction and highlights the importance of CCI in regard to patronage and the impact on the customers experience. However, not all findings are directly applicable to the supermarket and retail industry. The environment where the data was collected (theme-park) is a unique environment where participants may not act in a manner befitting social norms across other industries. For example, whilst in a theme park customer's may be more tolerant of other customers as often rides and open spaces are shared with other customers. They could also be more sensitive to other customers because of specific factors such as queuing in the heat and paying a lot of money for tickets. Therefore, some of these incidents that occurred in the study may not necessarily be true about all service environments, in particular supermarkets. Furthermore by focusing on one element of the service encounter (queuing) other elements may have been missed or lacked detailed investigation, such as the service recovery and interactions at the point of sale/activity.

Continued research into CCI has highlights that customers often take on varying 'roles' whilst in the service environment (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Parker and Ward, 2000). Parker and Ward (2000) research builds upon work by McGrath and Otnes (1995) and utilises role theory to identify not only the frequency of the interactions between customers, but to also understand the nature of the incidents. Their research occurred in U.K. garden centres and found that a high percentage (55%) of participants regularly spoke to other customers whilst shopping. However, their research reported that respondents did "not feel comfortable, initially, admitting this behaviour" (p.354), highlighting that there is a 'stigma' attached to talking with strangers, indicating the importance of the correct research methodology and the role of the researcher in drawing out information from participants in regard to CCI. Their findings support McGrath and Otnes (1995) study, and also developed the work by identifying differences in

‘helpseekers’ between U.S and U.K customers by suggesting that they behave either ‘proactively’ or ‘reactively’.

Research in the tourism industry also examines CCI and the impact of other customers, especially during holiday encounters. Wu (2007, p. 1526) explored CCI and the impact on satisfaction and “found marital homogeneity has a positive influence on evaluation of other customers. The research indicated that the perception of CCI incidents could be classified into six types, namely protocol and sociable incidents, violent incidents, grungy incidents, malcontent incidents, crude incidents, and inconsiderate incidents”.

Nicholls (2010) examines CCI literature in terms of its demographic profile and highlights the importance of expanding CCI research worldwide, highlighting a publication increase in Asian contexts (Wu, 2007; Yang, 2007; Huang and Cathy, 2010). Nicholls (2010) article summarises “two decades” of CCI research and highlights the main achievements of the services marketing literature. The article provides valuable insights into the accomplishments of CCI researchers and makes recommendations for the future direction of customer interaction research, placing an emphasis on the FLE perspective. Nicholls (2010) research highlights many findings such as the value of the CCI on customer satisfaction, the methodological underpinnings and approaches for capturing customer interactions and highlights the need for CCI to be studied from the front-line employees’ perspective and the value it can bring. The article provides many avenues for further research into CCI highlighting the need for CCI to be studied in different industries, such as the supermarket.

Nicholls (2003, 2005) further enhanced CCI understanding by creating a CCI classification that consisted of six main categories: time, space, verbal behaviour, information, assistance and non-customer activity, and 17 sub-categories. The categories were similar in nature to other

research, apart from the term ‘non-customer’ that was introduced by Nicholls (2005). Broadly defined, Nicholls (2005, p. 149) describes behaviour from the non-customer as “actions of persons (sometimes customers or posing initially as customers) that are (or could be perceived as) deliberately planned to interrupt, temporarily temporarily or permanently, the customer’s receipt of services.” The research identified four types of non-customer behaviour as criminal, intimidation, pestering and other. Nicholls (2010) acknowledged that further research is needed into the non-customer phenomena and how it is often a ‘by-product’ of CCI. The notion of the non-customer being a ‘by-product’ showcases that CCI does not have to be at the interaction, but often other customers can have an influence on fellow shoppers, sometimes without realising. This is particular in the customer misbehaviour literature and there has been a steady stream of research focusing on the impact of problem customers on not only the organisation, but also on fellow customers.

#### 2.4.3 Customer Misbehaviour

As the service industry increasingly adopts ‘the customer is always right’ value, a close examination of customer behaviour reveals that customers cannot only be wrong but also unjust and rude. Berry and Seiders (2008) states that unfair customers take advantage of being “always right” by demanding unwarranted privileges and compensation, adversely affecting companies and in some cases, employees and other customers. If indeed, the ‘customer is always right’ – what happens when two customers interact, in particular, negatively, both claiming to be right?

Echeverri et al., (2012, p.430) states that “the concept of customer misbehaviour is defined as customers that deliberately act in a thoughtless, abusive, or dysfunctional manner and cause problems for the company, its employees”, and importantly for this research, other customers.

Huang and Miao (2016) identified that customers engage in a variety of ‘misdemeanours’, such as abusing employees and properties, shoplifting, illegitimate complaining, and fraudulent returning – all of which are applicable to the retail environment. Research focus on customer misbehaving emerged in the 1990’s with typologies identified as: the “jaycustomer” (Lovelock, 1994); “problem customers” (Bitner et al., 1994); “dysfunctional customers” (Harris and Reynolds, 2003); “unfair customers” (Berry and Seiders, 2008); and aberrant customer behaviour (Fullerton and Punj 1993). Although there are many different forms of misbehaviour, it is important to focus on the types that influence other customers. For example, Harris and Reynolds (2004) identify illegitimate complainers; customers who write “compensation letter writers” tend to deliberately gain material compensation through dishonest appeals to the hospitality company. Although this is most definitely a form of misbehaviour, it is an interaction between one customer and the company, not CCI.

Fullerton and Punj (1993) identifies aberrant consumer behaviours (ACB) impact on not only marketers and organisations, but also other customers. Aberrant consumer behaviour breaks the societal accepted norms of customer behaviour whilst consuming a service, leading to monetary, psychological and social costs for the organisation and its consumers. Their research produces a preliminary framework that analyses customer misbehaviour and identifies three major outcomes of ACB: “1) destruction of marketer property - vandalism; 2) abuse, intimidation, and physical and psychological victimisation of other consumers and marketer personnel; and 3) material loss through various forms of theft including insurance, credit card, and check fraud, and shoplifting” (Fullerton and Punj, 1993, p.570). Although all three outputs can be useful to the retail environment, it is the second output that is most useful to this study, the impact on other customers. Although the financial impact on the company can be large because of misbehaviour such as vandalism; Fullerton and Punj (1993, p.570) states “ACB also

has social costs arising from its potential to make the marketplace an arena of disillusionment rather than of fulfilment for both marketers and consumers.” Pointing out that problem customers and misbehaviour makes the servicescape an unpleasant place and affects other customers. The framework is drawn from two factors: consumer traits and predispositions and the characteristics of the exchange setting and marketing institutions. Both of these factors are divided into smaller subgroups identifying the cause of ABC and the impact it can have. One subgroup is titled “provocative situational and temporal factors” which includes crowding and heat and noise. Fullerton and Punj (1993) argue that those factors experienced by a consumer, could trigger acts of ACB towards another customer.

The severity of customer misbehaviour and the jaycustomer means that it is more likely to impact the front-line employee having to deal and witness the incidents. It is important to identify the impact that these interactions are having on the employee and how organisations are managing the situation. Unlike general CCI studies, there is a sound body of research regarding the FLE and their interactions with customers. In CCI research in general, the vast majority is from the customers’ viewpoint.

#### 2.4.4 FLE perspective

Twenty-one years after Martin and Pranter (1989) first identified a research agenda for CCI, Nicholls (2010) identifies the main accomplishments of CCI studies and makes wide recommendations for future research. One key recommendation is greater attention needs to be paid to the front-line employee (FLE). There is literature regarding customer interactions in the services environment from the consumer’s viewpoint, such as (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; Harris et al., 2000; Grove and Fisk, 1997), but very little from the FLE perspective. Although FLE research has been undertaken by Bitner et al. (1994) in the hotel,

restaurant and airline industry, the research is over twenty years old and not focused on CCI, but more C2E. It will be very difficult for FLEs to manage CCI incidents if research only asks customers about CCI – whereas adding the perspective of FLE can identify management techniques, experiences, and emotions dealing with the incidents.

Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) advocate the investigation of service from the employee perspective and produced findings highlighting the value of the FLE viewpoint of service employees in the library industry. Their research identified the varying challenges that front-line employees face and identify the major contributions of the services literature from the FLE perspective. Their findings indicated that FLEs are able to recall CCI encounters (both PCCI and NCCI) and understand ‘complex nuances’ surrounding CCI encounters. One of the main findings is that FLEs vary in their comfort when managing negative CCI situations, indicating the need for management training for specific CCI scenarios. Although this study provided insight into the value of the FLE perspective, it occurred in a library setting and not in retail. However, it did build upon earlier work from Nicholls (2010) who identified the need for FLE perspective to be investigated as one was FLE general awareness of CCI. Nicholls (2010) also highlights the need for FLE tactics and coping strategies to be further analysed on how CCI is managed from the customer perspective and their view on the training received.

Aldrich and Herker (1977) state the FLE perspective can assess both customers’ viewpoints from a neutral non-biased standpoint if an interaction is occurring. Often the customers involved will only discuss their viewpoint and not that of the other customers; the FLE can discuss both. Aldrich and Herker (1977) identify that employees can assess both customers viewpoints, something that cannot be achieved during C2E interactions as the employee is immersed in the interaction and can be managing the incident. Eiglier and Langeard (1975)

servuction model and much of the service literature focuses on dyadic interactions, however the FLE viewpoint explores the “triadic nature” of interactions when conversations, such as the FLE observing customer A and B interacting (Harris et al., 2000; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019). Bitner et al., (1994) identify the “boundary spanner” and how it can give frontline employees a “unique vantage point” (Huang and Miao, 2010).

Furthermore, no studies have attempted to compare viewpoints between the customer and the FLE, to note if there is any disparity in incidents noted. This is important because it can be difficult for front-line employees to manage CCI if there are types of incidents identified that the FLE does not spot. The FLE perspective on CCI can also be valuable as employees are a critical source of information about customers due to the nature of service and often being the first point of call in retail outlets (Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019). The service encounter involves at least two individuals interacting, so it is important to gain an understanding of the encounter from multiple perspectives. Therefore, as Bitner et al., (1994, p.96) states that “armed with such understanding, firms can design processes and educate both employees and customers to achieve quality in service encounters”, thus often leading to better understanding of customer needs.

## 2.5 Industry relevance

Martin and Pranter’s (1989) conceptualised CCI and aimed to heighten service providers’ awareness of the importance of customer-to-customer (C2C) encounters. Martin and Pranter (1989) identify seven service intensifiers to help establish the relevance of CCI to different industries and servicescapes. The service intensifiers are: customers that are in close physical proximity; verbal interaction among customers is likely; customers are engaged in numerous and varied activities; the service environment attracts a heterogeneous customer mix; the core

service is compatibility; customers must occasionally wait for the service; and customers are expected to share time, space or service utensils with each other (Martin and Pranter, 1989). Based on the service intensifiers, CCI takes a more prominent role in some industries than others. Nicholls (2010, p.97) states that the service intensifiers “provide a useful guide for managers wishing to audit the applicability of CCI to their business. If at least one of the characteristics is present then CCI will be a relevant issue, and if several are present then CCI will be a substantive issue.”

As a consequence, CCI has received attention from travel, hospitality and tourism researchers due to those areas being heavily focused on the service experience, whereas supermarkets appear goods based, however customer service is provided. Research has included: cruise ship experience (e.g Huang and Cathy, 2010; Yarnal and Kerstetter 2005); tourism industry, (Wu, 2007); leisure industry including bowling alleys, museums and theme parks (Martin, 1997; Grove and Fisk, 1997) and the jaycustomer in hospitality (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). Additionally, research has been conducted in the retail environment that focuses on C2C interaction and the impact on the consumer. Classifications have been made in clothing stores, bookstores, garden centres and music stores (Harris, Davies and Baron 1996, McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Parker and Ward, 2000); furniture retailers (Harris, Baron and Davies, 1999); along with other industries such as libraries (Lange et al., 2016; Nicholls and Mohsen 2019) and trains (Harris and Baron, 2004).

Despite the growth of the literature on CCI, an extensive review reveals an apparent lack of research in the supermarket environment. Dorsey et al. (2016) study that looked at CCI aisle rage in the supermarket industry, however the study mainly focused on outcomes and triggers of aisle rage and occurred in the U.S, not the U.K. Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) identify that

services possessing at least one of the Martin and Pranter (1989) service characteristics are considered as CCI-relevant, and services having three or more characteristics are considered CCI-intense. Supermarkets demonstrate all of the 7 service intensifiers, and have large amounts of customers present daily in the service environment, greatly outnumbering the FLE. As Nicholls and Mohsen (2019, p. 802) highlight, “high customer-to-employee ratios are also common in-service environments”, showcasing the importance of the FLE perspective and that this study has relevance in many other industries. Furthermore, Fridgen (1991) highlights that supermarkets are one of many service types that have various stimuli that can influence a customer’s satisfaction, one of which is their fellow shopper. The supermarket industry would provide pioneering insight into classifications of CCI, from both the customer and FLE perspective.

## 2.6 Impact on satisfaction and experience

Understanding the customer experience whilst in the service environment is vital to aid with satisfaction and patronage of customers from the service organisation perspective, and to enhance the customer experience. Harris et al., (1995, p.) state that there is clear recognition in the services marketing literature of the importance of CCI in the service encounter, either creating satisfied or unhappy customers (Mattsson, 1994; Solomon et al., 1985). However, Grove and Fisk (1997, p.66) identified a potential issue with measuring CCI satisfaction, stating that the impact of CCI on service quality is lacking in the “instruments that measure the construct as neither, SERVQUAL or SERVPERF conceptualize interaction among customers as a factor affecting quality evaluation”. However, studies have continued to develop this phenomena and identified varying techniques for measurement, Harris et al., (1997) compared perceptions of the effects of spoken contributions by sales assistants and customers on satisfaction and purchase intention. With the results indicating that conversations with other

customers are shown to lead to greater perceived satisfaction in the consideration phase than those with sales assistants. Showcasing that fellow customers can have a greater impact on the service experience than employees.

Interactions between service customers present in the service setting are increasingly the focus of service management research (Colm et al., 2017; Heinonen et al., 2018). Nicholls (2010p. 88) further highlights the importance of greater understanding and management of CCI as “there is evidence that CCI can impact customer satisfaction. Most empirical studies of CCI included evaluation of the positive and negative balance of CCI.” Few studies have adopted the approach of linking CCI to satisfaction directly, although Wu (2007) found strong links both between positive CCI and customer satisfaction, and negative CCI and customer dissatisfaction. Harris et al., (1997) found a positive relationship between CCI and satisfaction whilst making purchasing decisions, supporting Arnould and Price (1993) who found CCI to be vital when influencing customer satisfaction in their empirical study.

## 2.7 Managing CCI

Research has indicated that customers interacting can have a positive (Harris et al., 1997; Wu, 2007) and negative (Lovelock, 1994; Bitner et al., 1994; Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Berry and Seiders 2008; Verhoef, et al., 2009) effect on the customer experience and satisfaction in the service environment. The customer experience during service delivery process influences commitment to the firm’s products and brand loyalty (Gronroos, 2004; Waari, 2018). Furthermore, previous research has identified that customer satisfaction depends most importantly on the management and monitoring of individual service encounters (Berry 1985; Shostack, 1987; Solomon et al. 1985). This is further supported in the literature as Baker and Kim (2018) found that customers perceive the service organisation to be responsible for

recovering CCI when the incidents are negative in nature. Grove and Fisk (1997) research concluded that left unattended, CCI relationships could undermine an organisation's overall performance from the customer's points of view. Highlighting that management of CCI is just as valuable to organisations as the interactions between the customer and employee, that has received greater attention in the literature (Grove and Fisk, 1997; Guenzi and Pelloni 2004).

When discussing management techniques, the current understanding of CCI identifies there are two main groups of CCI management (Nicholls, 2010), identified as CCI strategy, such as compatibility management (Martin and Pranter, 1989; Martin 1995; Baron et al., 2007), and those dealing with the tools and techniques of CCI. These include coping strategies (Harris and Reynolds, 2006; Baker et al., 2012; Huang and Miao, 2012) and roles of employees (Pranter and Martin, 1991; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Baron et al., 2007). Although this research has provided insight into the role the FLE and organisations can play in managing CCI, much of the research is theoretical in nature and does not examine the management of CCI from the FLEs perspective in terms of the processes and decisions that they make. The FLE can play two vital roles when it comes to CCI, their information and overall perspective, and then the influence they can have over CCI.

### 2.7.1 Strategic management - FLEs perspective on CCI

Nicholls (2010, p.91) highlights that “strategic contributions are those designed to assist in making strategic decisions in how to manage CCI”. Such as trying to manage the CCI environment, encouraging or preventing interactions to occur, although this can be a very difficult task in the supermarket industry. Martin and Pranter (1989) seminal work identified the need for management to address CCI and ways to deal with the interactions, and refer to it as compatibility management. Broadly defined, compatibility management is a process of first

attracting homogeneous customers to the service environment, then actively managing the physical environment and customer-to-customer encounters (Pranter and Martin, 1991). Although Martin and Pranter (1989) identified service intensifiers and introduced compatibility management, little depth was provided as to how management can control and manage CCI using specific roles and tools. Many companies, in particular the supermarkets, have a wide and varying customer profile where compatibility management is not applicable. Additionally, the research focused on managing the customer demographic, especially before the customer was in the service environment, not tools for managing the CCI once customers started interacting.

Further research by Martin (1995) provided what is known as the customer compatibility scale, which focuses on the customer tolerances of other customer behaviour and how these tolerances effect experience and likelihood to engage or react. Strategic contributions are those designed to assist in making strategic decisions in how to manage CCI such as Baron et al. (2007) research that distinguishes between recogniser, shaper and influencer roles. Whilst this research provides insight into customer behavior and broad generic management strategies, neither piece of research is from the FLE perspective and identifies techniques that are carried out by FLEs daily. This is similar with the remaining CCI literature that focuses on roles FLEs adopt. It highlights that FLEs do try and manage CCI, but not necessarily great depth or application around techniques and management tools. Research has identified that customers can be a valuable resource tool and help influence the management of CCI (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Baron, Harris and Davies, 1996). However, little research has focused on utilizing knowledge from the FLE when making policy and management decisions.

As Nicholls and Mohsen (2019, p.801) highlight that although the FLE role in managing CCI

has “frequent mention in the CCI literature, it has received minimal research consideration”, despite the fact that the literature suggests the potential of using FLEs to deal with CCI, and provide a new means of competitive advantage (Nicholls, 2005). Current understanding around CCI management is from the customer perspective, whereas research utilising evidence-based management (EBM) techniques highlight that FLEs could provide vital information around the process of making decisions when managing customers. Research analysing EMB by Francis-Smythe, Ross and Robinson (2013) has highlighted the development and value of utilising employees as resources, with work supporting that EBM can enhance organisational effectiveness (Damore, 2006; Briner *et al.* 2009). This further enhances the stance of this research that FLE perspective on CCI is needed, as it is largely ignored in the literature.

### 2.7.2 FLEs influence over CCI

Although FLEs can provide foundation for perspectives on CCI, the day-to-day experiences of FLEs and CCI need management techniques to influence CCI. Pranter and Martin (1991) identified ten CCI roles a service provider can play in managing CCI, but they are roles associated for management level rather than the FLE. Research by Grove and Fisk (1997) highlight how FLEs can ‘police’ CCI incidents, building on work by Lovelock (1996) around managing problem customers, however no management specific techniques were provided. The research however did identify that FLEs can attempt to ‘educate’ customers, with a particular emphasis on stopping the CCI from occurring, but may lead to less NCCI in the future if the customers start to appreciate CCI and their impact they may have on fellow shoppers.

McQuilken et al., (2017) analysed CCI management techniques in the restaurant industry, identifying the use of empathy and apologizing to customers who were waiting for food,

deeming it a successful way of managing NCCI. However, this occurred in the hospitality industry and needs to be analysed in retail. The paper in particular, highlighted the role of the service when another customer was at fault and the organisation had to recovery the customer experience. Although the research did highlight that empathy is a success for technique in CCI, the technique is focused around service recovery, rather than prevention or during the encounter. However, research by Anaya (2016) highlighted how customers can become 'envious' of other customers during the service encounter if they perceive other customers to receive preferential or favorable service. Furthermore, research is to highlight how FLEs can foster PCCI, something explored by McGrath and Otnes (1995) and how employees can be used to foster conversations between strangers and improve the service experience.

Encouraging PCCI may be useful to service organisations due to research highlighting the value of customers interacting. Harris et al., (1995) identified customers as "free human resource tools". The study showcased that customers often take on the role of temporary employee and do not have a biased view of the organisation, meaning that whilst employees may be shaped by management due to using scripts and other devices, the interaction with another customer can be noted as more natural and neutral. Adelman et al., (1993, p.158) state that customers "have the potential to be more effective than paid employees not only because they are often more readily available than sales assistants, but the absence of a profit motive will lend credibility to their advice". Although research has looked at fostering PCCI (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019), no research has been conducted from the FLE viewpoint or in the supermarket industry. Research focusing on FLE roles within the retail industry is limited, however other industries have examined how FLEs influence interactions between two parties, such as in education. Hoffman and Lee (2014) identify that teachers have 5 tactics to discourage disruptive behaviour occurring between students and even discuss the

effectiveness of the techniques. The findings indicate the importance of the teacher in managing student interactions, supported by McQuilken et al., (2017) who identify the importance of the FLE in the restaurant industry. Although some work has occurred in retail around FLE roles, (Martin and Pranter, 1991, Grove and Fisk, 1997) the research is dated and greater understanding in the supermarket industry is needed.

### 2.7.3 Coping with CCI

The literature identifies that although FLEs can adopt varying roles for managing CCI, little information highlights the specific techniques utilised by employees for managing the scenarios and the impact of managing incidents. Research identifies the impact of customers on FLEs when dealing with customer misbehaviour (Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Hu et al., 2007), however it would be beneficial to examine the impact of CCI on employees. Nicholls and Mohsen (2019, p. 812) highlight this by stating “research should investigate the FLE stress associated with dealing with difficult CCI situations”, as their research supports that FLEs are often stressed dealing with numerous customers at simultaneously.

However, studies have indicated that FLEs are often exposed to incidents that has severe negative emotion towards customers, especially if they are not equipped with the correct management techniques. Research has indicated that FLEs can feel: stress (Kraus et al., 2012; Hu, et al., 2017;); job dissatisfaction (Fisher and Baron, 1982; Andersson and Pearson, 1999) and emotional exhaustion (Dormann and Zapf, 2004). This can lead to employees wanting to quit, losing sleep and even suffering from mental health related issues (Hughes and Tadic, 1998; Grandey et al., 2004), highlighting the importance of having FLEs comfortable dealing with NCCI and receiving the appropriate training. Schmidt (2007) highlights the importance

of satisfaction with workplace training as it leads to overall job satisfaction, something echoed by Kokko and Mäki (2009) who emphasise the importance of prior FLE training.

The impact of customers on FLEs has mainly focused on the impact of customer misbehaviour in a wide range of industries, including retail (Hughes and Tadic, 1998; Harris and Reynolds, 2004), airline (Hu et al., 2017), and the hospitality industry (Guerrier and Adib, 2000; Huang and Miao, 2016). Although the literature has been focused on customer misbehavior or the ‘jaycustomer’, many of the elements are similar in nature to C2C incidents such as complaining, oral interactions and product related returns (Baron et al., 1996; Harris and Reynolds, 2004).

Frequent contact with customers means the FLE has adopted coping mechanisms for dealing with problem customers and NCCI. Harris and Reynolds (2006) study included interviews with employees in the hospitality industry and developed coping mechanisms employees used to deal with customers who misbehaved. The tactics include: bribing customers, ignoring difficult customers, using emotional labour, exploiting sexual attractiveness, eliciting support from patrons, altering personal speech patterns, and manipulating the servicescape. Although these mechanisms may work in the hospitality, they are not generally applicable to the supermarket industry. Harris and Reynolds, (2006, p.99) found that “frontline employees are less motivated to solve the problems raised by dysfunctional customers due to the perceived injustice in the interaction”, arguing that left to their own choice, FLEs will not manage the interactions. Although FLEs may not manage the incidents, coping mechanisms for managing customers is well documented in the HR literature, in particular emotional labour (Harris and Reynolds, 2006; Huang and Miao, 2016).

Research by Hu, et al., (2017) indicates that when employees engage with misbehaving customers, it actually can create more tension by driving and/or generating negative C2E outcomes and cause employees to utilise emotional labour. The term “emotional labour” was originally applied by Hochschild (1983) to describe the expectations that employees should control facial and body expression, alongside their feelings. The research highlighted two classifications entitled surface and deep acting. Surface acting involves displaying appropriate characteristics despite not feeling them, such as smiling at a customer even if they have been upset by an action or by a comment. Whereas deep acting, describes attempts to feel required emotions (Hochschild, 1983). Grandey (2003) identifies that in the service environment, a common feeling from organisations is that the employee should display “service with a smile” despite evidence that FLEs can receive varying negative treatments, even abuse that causes severe emotional feelings (Fullerton and Punj, 1993; Lovelock, 1994; Berry and Sieders, 2008). How the employee feels, and how they are expected to act, especially when research highlights employees are not necessarily equipped to deal with problem customers, or even worse, two problem customers.

Mann (1999) identifies that emotional dissonance can occur when Hochschild’s (1983) surface and passive deep acting emotions differ from the emotional demeanors displayed by that individual and the felt emotions. Research has rarely highlighted how the FLE feels whilst dealing with two or more customers and is something that could provide insight into the employee’s perception of CCI and how it can be managed. This will enable strategies to be provided, so employees can be proactive in their management techniques, rather than utilizing coping strategies and emotional labour.

Dealing with CCI from the management perspective indicates that although FLEs take on roles and utilise emotional labour for dealing with CCI, little evidence has utilised empowerment as a form of CCI technique. Research suggests that giving employees greater levels of empowerment can reduce negative emotional and “antisocial behaviours” caused by jaycustomers (Bowen and Lawler, 1995; Groth and Grandey, 2012). Although CCI is not entirely focusing on problem and dysfunctional customers, there are elements of Jaycustomer behaviour in the literature, highlighting that empowerment may be a technique suitable for CCI. Little research on this as a viable CCI technique further enhances the need for this research on CCI in the supermarket industry.

## 2.8 Lacuna in the literature

Despite the growing literature on CCI, there are still clear lacunae that need further research and attention. Three clear areas for exploration have emerged; knowledge of CCI in supermarkets, the perspective of FLEs on CCI and CCI management in the retail environment. Seminal work by Martin and Pranter (1989) argued previous researchers had ignored CCI, however, over the past 25 years there has been a steady stream of research addressing the call (Baron et al., 1996; Grove and Fisk; 1997; Parker and Ward, 2000; Nicholls 2005; 2010). Although a plethora of typologies and classifications have been made, such as: queuing (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Grove and Fisk; 1997); customer misbehaviour (Bitner et al., 1994; Lovelock, 1994; Echeverri, et al., 2012); and oral interactions (Harris et al., 1997) none of the incidents are from the FLE perspective.

Various research into the FLE perspective has been conducted in other industries including: travel, tourism and hospitality (Bitner et al., 1994; Colm et al., 2017; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019 ), however the retail environment is lacking. Evidence suggests that the FLE perspective

can provide insight into CCI from a '“unique vantage point” (Huang and Miao, 2010) based on other research adopting the front-line employee perspective. It would allow the perspectives of the customer and FLE to be compared, to identify if any unique CCI types occur from either of the two viewpoints. This would identify if FLEs have the ability to spot all forms of CCI, or perhaps highlight if there are CCI's unique to their viewpoint.

Furthermore, despite the retail environment in general receiving attention for CCI (Harris, Davies and Baron 1996; McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Parker and Ward, 2000), research on the supermarket industry is seldom explored. Dorsey et al, (2016) examined CCI in the supermarket industry, but was focused on aisle rage, highlighting extreme causes of NCCI and was conducted in the U.S. This research focuses on the supermarket industry and will provide pioneering insight into classifications of CCI. Utilising Martin and Pranter's (1989) service intensifiers, research suggests CCI will occur and influence the customer experience in the supermarket industry. Comparisons between industries could also highlight types of CCI occur in the supermarket that have not been present in other retail industries, further enhancing the need for this study.

There is little research focusing on the management and techniques of FLEs when managing CCI, especially specific techniques that are utilised on a daily basis. Much of the research around CCI management is from a strategic viewpoint (Nicholls, 2010), such as the compatibility scale (Martin; 1995) and service roles (Martin and Pranter, 1991; Baron et al., 2007). Furthermore, research has evidenced that FLEs often adopt 'coping' mechanisms to deal with 'unfavorable service encounters' (Harris and Reynolds, 2006; Baker et al., 2012; Huang and Miao, 2012), however few CCI techniques have been showcased, with many management techniques originating in the C2E and customer misbehavior literature.

Furthermore, Nicholls (2005) highlights that when CCI techniques are implemented, there is contradictory information about how FLEs should deal with incidents, as there is evidence of customer dissatisfaction with FLE responses to CCI. There is little research around CCI techniques and how FLEs feel whilst dealing with multiple customers, with research highlighting how one dysfunctional customer can impact employees, such as stress and anxiety (Fisher, 1998; Kraus et al., 2012) but little on the impact of multiple customers (CCI). Examining the impact of CCI on the FLE can provide insight into the wellbeing of employees, highlight why they may manage CCI in certain ways and their feedback on training received, something that is seldom explored in the literature. This will help retail organisations with managing the customer experience and could provide employees with techniques to help manage customers interaction, whether that be foster PCCI or cope with NCCI

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Foundationalism**

The term 'method' tends to be used as a catchall phrase for how data is going to be collected, whereas Harding, (1987), cited in Richardson, (1996) state there are many layers and processes that need to be taken into consideration when articulating research methodologies. There is a need to identify a clear epistemological position in order to identify the research methodology (a theoretical analysis defining a research problem) and in turn a specific method in order to collect and analyse data produced. Epistemological underpinnings will shape the nature of reality and the direction of the research piece in regard to CCI and how qualitative methods can conceive social reality to explore experiences of customers and FLEs.

Burrell and Morgan (1979), state that quantitative and qualitative perspectives on the study of human behaviour have profound implications for research: the choice of the problem, the

formulation of questions to be answered, and methodological concerns, all of which will be influenced or determined by the viewpoint held. The differences between quantitative and qualitative research are grounded in their philosophical assumptions. The underlying paradigm of quantitative research is based on a positivist position, while qualitative research is based on a phenomenological position' (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). Hughes and Sharrock, (1997) state it is necessary for philosophical views to be regarded as a prerequisite in order that sound methodology for enquiry can be laid down in advance of the empirical research itself.

### 3.2 Research philosophy in CCI

#### 3.2.1 Ontology in social research

Ontology is the foundation and starting point of all research, after which researchers' epistemological and methodological positions logically follow. Barbour, (2008) states ontology may be described as the picture of social reality upon which a theory is based or deduced. However, Blaikie, (2000) develops this view and suggests that ontological claims are assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what is believed to constitute social reality. The two paradigms within ontology are referred to contrastingly as objectivism and constructivism. An objectivist ontological position is positioned within the positivist paradigm (Henn et al., 2006), and views social reality as being made up of observable facts existing independently of the researcher, they are external and independent from social actors and driven by binding natural laws and mechanisms (Guba, 1990). Contrastingly, constructivism, closely associated with subjectivism, states reality as social, and therefore social reality is the product of social

actors with interpretations, cultural and social meanings, and subjectivities having a bearing on the construction of reality (Lincoln, 1990).

In CCI, ontology is the attempt (by the researcher) to understand and share reflections of customer's inner emotions, cultures, past experiences, social norm activities etc. expressed in their interactions with other customers. As Rossman and Rallis, (1998) state constructivism is closely associated with multiple views and opinions on the world that make up reality, which aligns with this research aim of understanding how people view and perceive interactions with each other. Therefore, the paradigm that is being adopted for this research on CCI is of the constructivist philosophy.

### 3.2.2 Epistemology in social research

Bryman, (2016) states that epistemology is the very basis of knowledge and what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in a specific discipline. The debate is regarding whether the social world can be and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as natural sciences. Burrell and Morgan, (1979) ask whether is it possible to identify and communicate the nature of knowledge as being hard, real, and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form, or whether 'knowledge' a softer and more subjective kind based on experience and insight of a unique and personal nature. The philosophy of logical positivism is based on the assumption that the conditions of life are controllable. Positivism is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural science. The adoption of a particular epistemological foundation leads to the choice of a specific method on the grounds of its enquiry and nature of research. Depending on the discipline and industry, the research paradigm selected can vary. Although publications and research in marketing are showing an increase in mixed method and qualitative approach (Saks and Allsop, 2013), the most widely

utilised paradigm in marketing research over the past 20 years is the positivist position (closely associated with quantitative methods), which assumes that there are laws or law like relationships that can be captured and calibrated in a mathematical function or model (Simon, 2004).

However, Hughes and Sharrock, (1997) stated that the positivist methodology of natural sciences and society is inadequate to the understanding of human phenomena except in so far as human beings were natural objects. Positivism leaves little room for the idea that societies were human creations and that this free creativity constituted the essence of all social forms. A method is needed to recognise the actions, events and artifacts *within* human life in the terms in which they were experienced and known by those living among and through them, such as how the FLE feels managing CCI, not just observing. Knowledge of this nature can only be gained through an interpretative and subjective procedure in the recollection or recreation of lived experiences, a social research enquiry known as phenomenology. Bentz and Sharipo, (1998) state that the phenomenological paradigm recognises the importance of situational context, the subjectivity of perception and the constructed nature of human reality. This is supported by (Giorgi, 1975, p. 83) cited by (Kvale, 1996) that states phenomenology is the study of the structure, and the variations of structure, of the consciousness to which anything, event, or person appears.

Adopting a subjectivist, phenomenological epistemological stance allows for interaction and emotional responses between participants that helps understand the different perspectives and view of the world in relation to CCI. Customer-to-customer interaction is a communication process that is created by numerous people communicating that all have ontological norms, correct ways of behaving that are all subjective to the individual – a

phenomenological/subjectivist approach allows for these elements to be captured. It focuses on understanding and interpreting the meanings and experiences of their informants and will help address the FLEs feelings and emotions whilst identifying and dealing with CCI incidents (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

The underlying paradigm of quantitative research is based on a positivist position, while qualitative research is based on a phenomenology position' (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). Important consideration has been given to analyse the correct methodological approach in relation to data collection and the research studies method. Exploration of phenomena such as service experiences required a research methodology that can capture the unique subjective and processual qualities of services (Bateson, 1985; Edvardsson, 1992; Grove and Fisk, 1992; Shostack, 1977). The most appropriate form of methodology is therefore via the use of a qualitative approach. It allowed the participants to subjectively discuss their own personal experiences in great detail including their emotional responses to certain situations and how they felt in the CCI scenario. When constructing the research question, aims and objectives, the epistemological and ontological philosophies were considered throughout. Careful selection of research paradigms enabled for aims and objectives that captures the essence of the study and addresses the need for FLE perspective, feelings and response to CCI in the supermarket industry.

### 3.3 Method – Data collection

The foundation for research has been presented and identified that based on the notion of foundationalism (the first step in the methodological process), the ontological stance taken is of the constructivist nature that will detail human experience and emotion to meet the needs of the research aim. In connection with subjectivism and phenomenology, a qualitative approach

is deemed most appropriate to capture the unique individual experiences and nuances of human interaction with great depth and detail.

When selecting the most appropriate research method it is important to review techniques that previous research has utilised to help assess the most applicable technique. Within the marketing literature, there have been numerous techniques utilised to capture CCI that include: questionnaires (Baron, Harris, and Davies, 1996); in-depth interviews (McGrath and Otnes, 1995); observations (McGrath and Otnes, 1995); and ethnographic studies (Harris and Baron, 2004). However, within the services industry, previous studies have successfully used a method named the critical incident technique (CIT) to explore phenomenon related to customer interactions, such as Grove and Fisk, 1997; Harris and Baron, 2004; Baron, Harris, and Davies, 1996. Critical incident technique is a popular research method in the services literature and is a “story telling” method that “provides a rich source of data by allowing respondents to determine which incidents are the most relevant to them for the phenomenon being investigated” (Gremler, 2004, p. 66). CIT is a practical step-by-step approach to collecting and analysing information about human activities and their significance to the people involved. Due to the open-ended nature of questions, critical incident technique arguably generates uninterrupted dialogue and thus, rich and real data, as respondents are given the opportunity to provide a thorough and in-depth depiction of their own experiences via interviews (Stauss and Weinlich, 1997). It allows for CCI to be classified into incidents for deeper analysis and categories to be formed.

### 3.3.1 Critical Incident technique (CIT)

Gremler, (2004, p.67) states that CIT research is “inductive in nature, meaning the method is especially useful when the topic being researched has been sparingly documented”. CIT is also

utilised as an exploratory method when a thorough understanding is needed when describing or explaining a phenomenon (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault, 1990). CIT is a practical step-by-step approach to collecting and analysing information about human activities and their significance to the people involved.

Asking FLEs to recall situations and past incidents over a lengthy period of time could cause problems as CIT has received criticism for selectivity or lack of accuracy of critical incident data, due to its personal recall nature (Chell, 1998). However, Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) identified in their study that FLEs could accurately recall CCI (both positive and negative) and were capable of conceptualising complex nuances surrounding CCI encounters. They also identified that FLEs had the ability to distinguish the severity of negative CCI and variations in customer sensitivity to CCI. That was also similar in this study, with FLEs being able to provide rich data and scenarios involving CCI, the management of CCI and how they felt towards the incidents. However, to increase the rigour of the data collection technique, FLEs were also provided with a service diary so that incidents could be noted down instantly rather than recalling past incidents from memory during interviews. Serrat, (2010) suggested that critical incidents collected by a service diary are often more rigorous than interviews alone due to the incident being collected instantly. Service diaries were given to employees willing to partake in additional data collection and remained with employees for six weeks. The use of the service diary was not the primary form of data collection and was only used in triangulation with interviews. The application of triangulation will go a long way towards enhancing the reliability of results (Stavros and Westberg, 2009) and the attainment of data saturation.

CIT in relation to this study involved gathering data that allowed customers and FLEs to express incidents in an open dialogue providing detail and depth. However, it was noted that

some participants were unfamiliar with the phrase ‘customer-to-customer interactions’ initially so the phrasing had to be explained to some customers. Therefore, rather than total open interviews, semi-structured took place where the interviewer prompted the conversation when needed and explained precisely what CCI was.

Interviews can take many different forms and not all interview types are conducive to the exploratory method of CIT - semi-structured narrative interviews were deemed the most appropriate. As Kvale, (2007) states narrative interviews focus on the story’s subjects tell, on the plots and experiences of their accounts. The stories in the research came up spontaneously for the vast majority of the interviews, however a few interviews required cautious prompts such as “can you give more detail” or “did anything else happen”. Narrative interviews allowed the researcher to ask directly for stories and incidents around customer-to-customer interactions and direct feelings regarding these incidents. As Kvale, (2007) states, after the questions such as “can you describe a customer-to-customer interaction you witnessed?” is asked, the main role of the researcher is to remain a listener. Kvale (2007, p. 74) states that “it is important that the researcher abstains from interruptions, occasionally posing questions for clarification, and assisting the interviewee in continuing to tell their story. Through questions, nods and silences the interviewer is a co-producer of the narrative”. The interviewer remained a listener throughout and only prompted when the participant became stuck or actively asked questions that made the interviewer engage.

### 3.4 Data collection

Overall, 49 participants were interviewed in the study, comprising of 22 employees and 27 customers. A total of 141 incidents were collected, 71 from the FLE and 70 from the customers. In previous studies, interviews normally generate only one incident per participant. Gremler (2004) states that in CIT research, 50% of studies asked participants to identify only one

incident per interview, whereas this study asked participants to recall as many incidents as possible, with one participant recalling 6 incidents. All participants identified more than 1 incident – the interviewer did not want to cut participants off if they had more than 1 incident to report and participants seemed to provide more detail after they had relaxed and gave one example. This enabled participants to give as many incidents they could remember and provided additional depth and detail that would not be possible when asking them to recall just one. Furthermore, asking participants to recall just one incident would require the participant themselves to prioritize which incidents they deem most severe, not necessarily the most frequent form of CCI.

Data collection stopped after 22 interviews with the FLE, and 27 interviews with customers as data saturation was reached, which was identified during preliminary analysis. This number of interviews is in line with similar studies utilising this technique. Gremler, (2004) analysed 115 studies using CIT and noted the range of incidents collected and the point of theoretical saturation varies across study types and industry. Huang and Miao, (2016), utilised a similar study and conducted 16 interviews with front-line employees in the hospitality industry, Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) interviewed 10 FLEs working in the library industry. Indeed, conducting in the region of 15-20 in-depth interviews seems consistent with other studies (e.g., Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould, 2012; Francis et al., 2010) and took into account good practice in qualitative research (Saunders and Townsend, 2016).

The study occurred across 3 stores (of a well-known supermarket chain) in the West Midlands region in the UK. Access was granted to the company via a single gatekeeper who was worked for the company for 17 years. Access to this gatekeeper was acquired through personal connection. Agreement from each store manager was to enable access to staff canteen to collect

participants who will be willing to give up their time. Participants were recruited by asking if they wanted to participate in a research project as part of a PhD thesis. The interviews were conducted across a 12-week period from spring 2018 through until the middle of summer 2018. The interviews were all recorded on a secure recording device in line with Government GDPR act (Gov UK, 2020) allowing interviews to be re-listened to and transcribe in-line with Braun and Clarke's (2013) qualitative research recommendations. All participants were presented with a participant information sheet (appendix 1.1) and had to sign a consent form (appendix 1.2).

Customers were recruited at the front of the store and interviewed in the customer cafeteria or meeting room provided by the organisation. The recruitment process involved the interviewer approaching customers entering or leaving the store at the main entrance, explaining the study, ensuring anonymity and then offering them the opportunity to participate. Around 1 in 4 customers agreed to the interview, with the main reason for opting out was due to time restrictions.

Employees were recruited in the staff café and were interviewed there, or in the customer café for added privacy away from their colleagues and managers. The interviewer had a desk in the staff café and approached employees either during their break, before their shift or after their shift. The process involved explaining the research interests, screening the employee to make sure they fit the sample criteria and arranging a time for the interview to take place. The interviews occurred at the most convenient time for employees, which was quite often during their break or after shift. Data validity was undertaken through respondent validation by reading the findings, summarizing and repeating to the participants. A full list of the interview

questions and plan is attached for both front-line employees (appendix 1.3) and customers (appendix 1.4).

### 3.5 Interview process

The nature of the data collection relied upon approaching participants at the front of the store in a random non-selective manner. One area of concern was the potential for participants that agreed to be involved with the research, could be customers who would have been more likely to have had interactions. Therefore the researcher had to ensure that they actively approached customers instead of waiting for self-selection to limit this bias. The interviewer played a key role during the data collect process and reflexivity was utilised to ensure credibility remained throughout. The interviewer made a self-critical account of the research process, including their internal and external dialogue and reviewed each interview. This included editing the interview questions, listening back to each recording and transcribing the interview at the end of each session. Interviewer credibility was explained via the use of a signed ethics form, introduction around the research topic and clarity about the study. The interviewer introduced themselves as a doctoral student from a reputable University.

During the interview process, participants were made aware of the nature of the study and how the data would be used. The researcher developed the questions based on previous studies and using Flanagan's (1954) CIT techniques to help gather uninterrupted rich stories from both customer and employees. Some of the incidents provided were personal stories and were met by some resistance at the start of the interview. Many participants enquired about the confidentiality of the study and if their responses would be shared with anyone else. The information sheet and consent form eased concerns and helped to overcome any resistance about discussing their CCIs. Any resistance talking about incidents was concentrated in the

employee interviews, as many expressed concerns that their responses would be seen by management and could impact on their job security. However, the use of a private interview room and detailed information about the anonymity of their responses and storage of data eased these concerns. Customer interviews had no hint of resistance and many customers seemed very willing to share their incidents.

The first question was designed to gauge the level of knowledge and understanding of CCI from the participant by asking them to recall a time they interacted with another customer or witnessed CCI. The interviewer then did one of three things; asked for further detail via prompts associated with semi-structured interviews, moved onto the next question if enough detail was provided, or gave further assistance and explanation if the participant was unsure on what a CCI was. Depending on the responses that were given in the opening statements and minutes of each interview, the researcher would use personal judgement and notes from previous interviews to decide on the most appropriate questioning style. If a participant looked and behaved confidently, such as body language (Jefferson, 2006) and ability to recall and describe incidents, fewer prompts were given in comparison to a participant who was quiet and did not speak. A reflective approach was undertaken and although the interview questions and technique remained consistent, the style would change depending on the initial responses and ability for participants to recall incidents. Occasionally participants would be unsure on what constituted CCI, so an example was given to provide clarity. However, to avoid steering participants the example provided was based on Grove and Fisks (1997) examples of CCI away from retail in a theme park. This prompted participants but avoided repetition of the example and any guidance to repeat scenarios provided by the interviewer.

## 3.6 Data collection FLEs

### 3.6.1 Sampling method

There were 22 employees who were interviewed across the 3 stores and were recruited via purposive, homogenous sampling that focused on a sub-group of employees (the front-line employee) rather than the entirety of supermarket employees. This enabled the FLE to be studied in great depth, which was identified within the literature review. Homogenous sampling was utilised to ensure consistent traits were present across the sample group such as:

- FLEs had completed all mandatory staff training.
- Wide range of FLE roles were represented where frequent customer contact was present. This was ensured by a full list of job titles present in the store on arrival.
- Staff training was signed off by management.

It was important to establish that all staff training had been completed as one objective of the research project is to identify how the FLE dealt with incidents – if it was based on training or experience. Therefore, they had to be equipped with as many tools as possible that the company-training scheme provided in relation to management of incidents. It would be unfair to expect new members of staff who have not completed all possible training to give their perception on the tools if they are yet to put them into practice. It was also important to select a variety of participants based on job roles as the nature of duty can influence the incidents witnessed; for example, customer service assistants dealing with complaints may deal with more severe incidents than cleaners or general assistants.

All employees received information regarding what was classified as a critical incident and told to note not only the interactions witnessed, but also the way in which they dealt with them

and how they felt. They were made well aware that all information was anonymous and that they could stop the interview at any time in line with ethical approval. They were also made aware that all interviews were being recorded and agreed to it, too. Participants were recruited across varying times and throughout the working week. This is important to identify different employees based on shift time and time of interaction – some employees only worked weekends, whereas other employees only worked evenings.

### 3.6.2 Participants

Interviewees were in the age range 18-63, which is representative of the age range of the organisation. There were 14 females and 8 males interviewed, which corresponds to the gender weighting of the organisations FLE demographic breakdown, with more female front-line employees across the company nationwide. There was a wide and varied role of FLEs, all of which deal with customers or are in a position to witness CCI. There were FLEs ranging from cleaners and bakery assistances, through to managers and car park attendants. The most common role was cashier assistants, which is representative of the roles within the company. The range of experience was also representative of the company, with one FLE who had 6 months of experience (the minimum amount of required time to pass the training) and an employee who had been at the company for 26 years. Out of the 22 employees, only 3 were willing to complete the service diary. The participants who utilised the diary provided triangulation and showcased similar incidents to employees recalling from memory. A full breakdown of the FLE participants is available in appendix 1.5.

### 3.7 Data collection customers

#### 3.7.1 Sampling method

There were 27 customers who were interviewed and recruited via purposive sampling at the same 3 stores as the FLE participants. Customers were approached and were recruited, with an attempt of an equal split between male and female participants to accurately reflect the demographics of society. Participants were recruited across all days of the week and across varying times to ensure a wide range of shoppers were questioned, such as customers who shop early on a Friday, and late on a Saturday. All customers were briefed about the study and received information about confidentiality and data protection. Customers were informed it was a voluntary process and that the interview should take no more than 30 minutes. 29 customers were interviewed; however 2 participants did not identify any CCI scenarios and were not included in the study. On average, every 1 in 4 customers were willing to participate in the study, with interviews lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

#### 3.7.2 Participants

Participants were in the age range of 19-82, with an average age of 47, giving the study a wide demographic representative of the customers in the store. Research indicates age plays an important in CCI (Thakor et al., 2008; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2015), so having a wide age range of participants attempts to capture the varying buying behaviour habits and service expectations of different age groups. There were 15 females and 12 males interviewed, with all participants having the ability to recall and describe CCI with detail and provide examples. From the 27 interviews, 70 incidents were recorded, with every participant stating at least 1 example of CCI, with multiple participants being able to remember 3 or more. A full breakdown of the customer participants is available in appendix 1.6.

### 3.8 Thematic analysis

Once data was collected it was important to think about how to transcribe and analyse in relationship to the aim of the research project. CIT produces rich data that requires careful analysis in order to extract key themes and findings. Narrative interviews identified critical incident stories that needed to be organised in a systematic manner that allows for all data to be analysed without ‘drowning’ in the data (Kvale, 2007). Therefore it was important to select a technique that allowed themes to be analysed in an organised and thorough manner.

Burnard et al., (2008, p. 430) state that thematic analysis needs to be a pragmatic technique that identifies themes and categories that ‘emerge from the data’. “It involves discovering themes in the interview transcripts and attempting to verify, confirm and qualify them by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories”. Identifying the need for a pragmatic approach, the most widely utilised method for thematic analysis is the six steps identified by Braun and Clarke, (2006), which was further extended (2013) to include transcription into the analysis process.

Braun and Clarke (2006) and (2013) provide seven steps for successful thematic analysis. The seven steps identified by Braun and Clarke (2013) are:

1. Transcription
2. Reading and familiarisation
3. Coding – complete; across entire dataset
4. Searching for themes
5. Reviewing themes

6. Defining and naming themes

7. Writing – finalising analysis

### 3.8.1 Transcription

When collecting data the face-to-face interviews (audio data) were recorded via an encrypted audiotape. Kvale, (2007) states that audio recording is the most common form of capturing the spoken conversation ready for audio transcription. The quality of interviewing is often discussed, whereas the conversion of oral conversation to written text is seldom addressed. Rapley, (2007) cited by Kvale, (2007) states that transcribing interviews from an oral to a written mode structures the interview conversations in a form amendable to closer analysis, and is in itself an initial analysis. Ochs, (1979) states that translating speech and sounds into written text is a theoretically influenced practice and audio to text conversion is not a simple matter and needs to be thought about in great detail.

Orthographic transcription was used to identify whether it was the participant or researcher speaking. It was also important to utilise Braun and Clarke, (2013) adapted from the orthographic transcription key of (Jefferson, 2006) to include features such as: short and long pauses; third person speech; emphasis on words and rhetorical questions (appendix 1.7). All of these factors were carefully considered and included to help understand the perception and feelings of the participants when discussing the potentially negative incidents that FLEs and customers experience. As Braun and Clarke, (2013) state spoken language is very different from written text and capturing small nuances in the written form can be difficult, but it is important to include things such as pauses as it can often help tell ‘the story’ in a more natural form that is needed in CIT. Pauses and emphasis on words could possibly indicate distress, anger and identify the true feelings of employees and customers in difficult and negative

customer-to-customer interactions. Using the orthographic transcription key portrays a more natural conversation than other forms of transcription techniques provide, which helps to meet the research aim of understanding the experience of participants in as much details as possible.

All audio files were transcribed from the Dictaphone onto an encrypted hard-drive and backed up via the University's online system. Using a software that enables a headset to be worn and used with a pedal, all audio files were converted to text.

### 3.8.2 Familiarisation, coding and Themes

Utilising Braun and Clarke's (2013) template for thematic analysis, familiarisation of the transcripts occurred via initial scanning and reading of the documents. This was a slow process that enabled the researcher to immerse themselves in the data. Although this is classified as a separate step, familiarization also occurred whilst transcribing (Kvale, 2007).

The third stage of the process involved coding the transcriptions and adding initial comments to the interviews. As Braun and Clarke (2013) identify, there are two forms of coding that occurs, selective and complete coding. This study utilised complete coding as a means to explore the research question and identified "anything and everything" in relation to CCI (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 206). Open coding transcripts for both employees (appendix 6.1) and customers (appendix 6.2) have been included.

After initial coding, potential themes were identified, which involved sorting the codes into broad groups, for both the FLE and customers. Once the codes had been placed together with similar attributes and contents, the themes were then labelled appropriately and written up in a more comprehensive manner. Themes were conceptualised through scrutinising and choosing

the most significant ones based on frequency and conviction, in line with the study's aims. The final stage involved actively reviewing themes to refine and streamline, removing any data that was not relevant to the study. The themes are then written up and presented in the remaining chapters.

### 3.9 Trustworthiness

Although the 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research has been questioned by positivist researchers because of the concepts of validity and reliability, work has been developed to address these concerns within the interpretivist qualitative paradigm (Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Elo (et al., 2014) highlight that there is an ongoing demand demonstrating the trustworthiness and transferability of qualitative findings. Attride-Stirling (2001) highlights that as qualitative research becomes increasingly recognised, valued, it is vital to conduct it in a rigorous and methodical manner to yield meaningful and useful results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the idea of trustworthiness by introducing a four step criteria, consisting of: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Throughout this study Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness criteria has been closely adhered to via various techniques. Data collection triangulation has been utilised via the use of service diaries to increase methodological rigour and credibility of responses from participants. A criticism of CIT as a data collection method is the reliability of participants to accurately recall information, so the use of service diaries highlighted that participants incidents were similar in nature to incidents recalled during interviews. Additionally, peer debriefing consistently occurred during the study, with methodologies and research process presented at various academic conferences, working papers and research groups. This allowed for peer review and feedback, which as Guba and Lincoln (1985) identify as a valuable tool to increase dependability. In order to establish confirmability, a clear audit trail is needed to aid with

establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data. Information around consent sheets, information sheets, full interview transcripts and the coding process are attached in the appendices.

#### **4.0 CCI Typologies**

This chapter focuses on the varying CCI incidents that emerged from the customer and employee responses in the supermarket industry. The chapter consists of three main sections: the types of CCI that occur from the employee and customer perspective; the location of the CCI; and factors that influence CCI overall. Firstly, the incidents are categorised and labelled to provide clarity and to identify similarities between the two perspectives (4.1 and 4.2). This identifies the varying types of CCI and allows the research to build upon previous work within services marketing to better understand CCI in the supermarket industry. The chapter then identifies the location of the incidents within the supermarkets, giving fruitful insights into 'CCI hotspots' and areas within the store where interactions were more likely to occur. This is a key finding, pivotal for CCI management recommendations and a factor to be considered when implementing training techniques. Finally, the chapter discusses factors that influence customer interactions, such as: age, gender and physical appearance.

CCI typologies have been identified in numerous service environments since its conceptualisation by Martin and Pranter (1989). The importance of CCI typology research was further supported by Nicholls (2010), stating that CCI typologies should be explored in numerous contexts, such as the viewpoint of the FLE. The research presented here makes two original contributions: typologies in the supermarket industry, and typologies from the viewpoint of the FLE. As discussed in chapter 2, CCI typologies and categories have been utilised in work such as: Martin and Pranter (1991); Baron et al., (1996); Martin, (1996); Parker and Ward, (2000); Harris and Reynolds (2004); Nicholls (2005); and Greer (2015). Furthermore, previous research has identified broad CCI categories, such as: “overt” and “covert” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995), “protocol” and “sociability” (Grove and Fisk; 1997); “observable oral participation” (Harris, 1993); and “direct” and “indirect” (Zhang et al., 2010). These categories have derived from research in other service environments and not specifically the supermarket or grocery industry.

#### 4.1 Types of CCI

The findings showed that 49 participants witnessed or experienced some form of CCI. The data indicated that although the types of CCI from the perspective of both customers and employees were similar, there were subtle differences between the incidents (see table 4.1 and 4.2). This is a key finding and central to the research, highlighting that FLEs did attempt to manage CCI, with many suggesting they would welcome specific CCI training. Whilst the categories of CCI noticed by customers and FLEs were similar, there were major differences in where they were noticed within the store.

Analysis of the critical incidents identifies 5 main categories from both the employee and customer perspective in relation to CCI types. These are: spatial awareness, etiquette, social, assistance and employee focused.

The spatial awareness category identified that shoppers often had physical contact with other shoppers, invaded personal space boundaries and blocked the aisles preventing customers from passing. Etiquette related CCI refers to when customers perceive a fellow shopper to be behaving in a socially unacceptable manner or being ‘rude’ such as using offensive language. The social category in regard to CCI was around general pleasantries and relationships forming between customers. Assistance in relation to CCI focuses on customers helping (or failing to help) other customers in regard to sharing information or providing physical assistance to fellow shoppers. Employee focused refers to CCI that indicated the FLE was the cause of the interaction between two customers, such as a customer becoming irritated with a fellow customer because they spent too long talking to employee whilst paying for goods.

These broader categories were common across both viewpoints: customer and employee, however smaller subcategories identified different types of CCI unique to each viewpoint. For example, employees noted that customers often interacted with each other via ‘mutual moans’ which involved copying a fellow customer and joining in with their complaint, something which customers did not state. However, a unique CCI that occurred from the customers viewpoints was in the social category, classified as friendships. Table 4.1 and 4.2 showcase the different types of CCI that occurs from the data from both employee and customer perspectives. The tables identify 5 main categories, with smaller subcategories, definitions and examples being given.

**Table 4.1. - Customer Typology table**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Subcategory</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>	<b><u>Examples</u></b>
<b><u>Spatial awareness</u></b>	Blocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When customers blocked and prevented other customers from passing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blocking aisles</li> <li>- Leaving trolleys unattended</li> <li>- Talking and preventing customers from passing by</li> <li>- Blocking products</li> </ul>
	Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical contact was often a development of blocking and involved physically touching another customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being pushed passed</li> <li>- Body contact – leaning over to reach a product</li> <li>- Being hit with a trolley</li> </ul>
<b><u>Etiquette</u></b>	Socially unacceptable behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When one customer perceived another customer to be behaving in a socially unacceptable manner. This also included when two customers judged another customer based on their behaviour being socially unacceptable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer ignoring another customer</li> <li>- Too intrusive, asking for private information such as phone number</li> <li>- Smoking and loud music</li> <li>- Laughing at others</li> <li>- Touching products with their hands</li> <li>- Speaking loud enough so others will hear</li> </ul>
	Signalling behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When customers tried to control another customers behaviour by making signals to their fellow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tapping their card on the trolley to speed up the customer</li> <li>- Telling a fellow customer they are going too slowly</li> </ul>

		shopper. These included verbal signals and physical pressure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standing in close proximity to make the customer move</li> <li>- Providing instruction on what the customer should be doing</li> <li>- Suggesting to other customers they need to get more organised</li> <li>- Telling others how to behave</li> </ul>
<b><u>Social</u></b>	Passing comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generic conversations or interactions that occurred between customers briefly. Interactions such as general pleasantries or contextual comments. Many of these conversations were low in influence and did not have a great effect on the customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topical conversation – Weather, football etc.</li> <li>- Greetings</li> <li>- Humorous comments</li> <li>- Admiration for children</li> <li>- Compliments about appearance, clothing and hair</li> <li>- Humorous comments about another customer</li> </ul>
	Friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More than just generic conversations but relationships formed over a period of time between customers who did not know each other before shopping at the supermarket.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaking to another couple regularly</li> <li>- Regular meetings for coffee, friendship formed</li> </ul>
<b><u>Assistance</u></b>	Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When one customer provided physical assistance (or lack of) to another customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walking with someone to the taxi</li> <li>- Checking somebody was ok</li> <li>- Reaching a product</li> <li>- Not placing dividers down</li> <li>- Not returning papers</li> <li>- Not returning trolleys</li> <li>- Snatching a trolley</li> </ul>

	Informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When information was exchanged between customers. This also included one sided conversation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asking for directions</li> <li>- Sitting at tables without food or drink</li> <li>- Informing customers of store policy</li> </ul>
	Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When customers provided feedback and recommendations to customers about certain products. This also included unwanted product advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Giving feedback on a product a fellow customer was examining.</li> <li>- Telling customers how to use products</li> <li>- Giving instructions about a product</li> </ul>
<b><u>Employee focused</u></b>	Employees caused the CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The form of CCI involved employees being the cause of CCI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer defending staff</li> <li>- Chatting to staff leads to nice conversation with people in the queue</li> <li>- Customer talking to a staff member for too long causing irritation to the other customer</li> <li>- Saw somebody ask an employee something they did not know – copying the behaviour</li> </ul>
	Employee mistreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When customers did not approve of other customers abusing staff members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mistreatment of staff including verbal abuse or blame</li> </ul>

**Table 4.2 - Employee typologies**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Subcategory</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>	<b><u>Examples</u></b>
<b><u>Spatial awareness</u></b>	Blocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When customers blocked and prevented other customers from passing. It also included customers invading personal space and standing too closely. There were no positive forms of interaction involved within this category.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blocking the till area</li> <li>- Blocking the aisles by talking</li> <li>- Standing in front of products</li> <li>- Leaving a trolley</li> </ul>
	Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical contact is a development of blocking and involved physically touching another customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pushing another customers trolley</li> <li>- Touching another customer to ask them to move</li> <li>- Pushing other customers when near the discount section</li> </ul>
<b><u>Etiquette</u></b>	Socially unacceptable behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When one customer perceived another customer to be behaving in a socially unacceptable manner. This also included when two customers judged another customer based on their behaviour being socially unacceptable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eating food from a plate that was left behind</li> <li>- Customers shouting at each other</li> <li>- Swearing loudly</li> <li>- Customer moaning loudly about the return service</li> <li>- Arguing over a car crash</li> <li>- Leaving rubbish</li> <li>- Arguments between two families in the store</li> <li>- Touching products, smelling products</li> </ul>

<b><u>Social</u></b>	Passing comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generic conversations or interactions that occurred between customers briefly. Interactions such as general pleasantries or contextual comments. Many of these conversations were low in severity and did not have a great effect on the customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topical conversation – Weather, smell of fresh bread</li> <li>- General pleasantries</li> <li>- Humorous comments</li> <li>- Compliments such as clothing and appearance</li> </ul>
	Mutual moans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When two or more customers complained about something occurring in store. Often one customer started the complaint and another customer joined in. This form of CCI was unique to the viewpoint of the FLE.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enjoying complaining together</li> <li>- Customer joining in with arguments</li> </ul>
<b><u>Assistance</u></b>	Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When one customer provided physical assistance (or lack of) to another customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearing away a table for another customer in the café</li> <li>- Reaching a product</li> <li>- Removing litter for someone</li> <li>- Copying a behaviour of another customer</li> <li>- Not returning products such as clothing to its original place</li> </ul>

	Informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When information was exchanged between customers. This also included one sided conversation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Location of a product</li> <li>- Showing someone where the toilets are</li> <li>- Telling others how to behave, such as where to put the rubbish</li> </ul>
	Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Product related CCI occurred when two customers interacted around a product, such as recommendation or unwanted product advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cheaper products using vouchers or elsewhere</li> <li>- Chatting about good products and how the clothing looks nice</li> <li>- Recommending drinks in the café</li> <li>- Hiding products and returning later to purchase them</li> <li>- Poor quality products</li> <li>- Hoarding items</li> <li>- Telling other customers, they like their flowers or clothing that they have bought</li> <li>- Took a product off another customer at the customer service desk saving time</li> </ul>
<b><u>Employee focused</u></b>	Employees caused the CCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The form of CCI involved employees being the cause of CCI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff talking to customers going too slow</li> <li>- Staff holding a till for another customer irritates fellow customers</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Spatial awareness

### 4.2.1 Customer perspective

The first category that emerged from the data was classified as spatial awareness, consisting of two smaller subcategories: blocking and physical contact. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.0.

Spatial awareness as a whole is defined as a customer affecting another customer by entering into their private space and sometimes preventing other customers from performing a certain action as they were being 'blocked'. Within the spatial awareness category there are two smaller subcategories; blocking and physical contact. Blocking refers to customers preventing other customers from passing by, such as standing in the aisle and talking or leaving a trolley unattended. Whereas physical contact refers to touching between two customers, for example pushing someone to reach a product or bumping shoulders. Physical contact subcategory identifies that customers can touch accidentally, but also that physical contact can be a reaction to being blocked, with many examples highlighting that the customer was blocked before utilising physical contact.

#### 4.2.1.1 Blocking

Blocking was frequently referred to by customers when they were prevented from reaching products or walking down an aisle. The reasons for being blocked is wide and varied, with customers noting that other customers gather, "standing and chatting" whereas other customers leave their shopping trolleys "unattended". Frequently customers noted that they could not pass because people were chatting blocking areas of the store:

*“Couples stand and meet each other and talk. They talk at the entrance of the supermarket, they talk at the entrance of aisles and nobody moves them on” (customer 2).*

Customers commonly highlighting that they were left frustrated when they were being blocked by customers talking, highlighting that it not only occurs down the aisles, but also at the entrance to the store. Customers commented that the organisation needed to do more to manage the incidents and ‘move them on’. Customers also noted how other customers would leave their trolley unattended and “sticking out’ preventing customers from passing,

*“I have to turn around and walk back because I don’t like speaking to people and asking them to move, so I have to take the long way around” (customer 21).*

The incidents identified that the customer was blocked off by a shopping trolley and resulted in them walking around the aisle to get to their desired location because of an unattended shopping trolley, and they feared confrontation. Also, blocking was not limited to just occurring within the store, as customers stated they often saw fellow shoppers “leave their trolley in car park spaces and not return them correctly”. This highlights that although the trolley is not directly in the customers personal space, it is preventing the customer from going somewhere by abandoning the trolley.

#### 4.2.1.2 Physical contact

Physical contact is defined as direct contact between two customers, with examples ranging from gently touching someone’s arm, to customers being pushed as a fellow shopper reaches for a product. There were many incidents provided by customers that indicates physical contact

occurs accidentally, such as knocking shoulders or accidentally hitting trolleys whilst turning the corner. An example of this is when:

*“I had one bloke hit right into the backs of my legs with a trolley when he was on the bloody phone and just look up at me! Did not even apologise or acknowledge I was there I just glared at him” (customer 11).*

The use of the trolley in this incident clearly indicates physical contact between two customers, the customer acknowledged that the other customer was on the phone and may have touched the customer accidentally. However, this research identified that physical contact was often done purposively, with many incidents originally stemming from the previous subcategory of blocking. The data suggested that physical contact with customers was used as a technique to overcome customers being blocked by their fellow shoppers:

*“other customers lean on me when trying to get a product when I’m just stood there looking at something, rather than saying excuse me (...) I’ll be looking at products or trying something on in the clothing and someone will reach for something near me and almost bump in to me” (customer 11).*

*“ (...) I literally had someone lean over my shopping and grab the chewing gum(.) they were touching my arm whilst they were doing it I just glared at them and they smiled as if nothing was wrong as if it was normal” (customer 13).*

The two incidents highlight that one customer is blocking another customer from reaching a

product and they utilise physical contact to reach the product. This was similar, not only with reaching products but for trying to pass customers blocking the aisles with their trolleys:

*“I go “excuse me” and then I say “EXCUSE ME” and then I hit them with my trolley. ((laughing)) I just gently nudge. I will ask and if they can see and they can see I’m there I’ll hit the trolleys.” (customer 2).*

This identifies that the customer was being blocked by a fellow shopper, asking them to move before using physical contact to get them complete the desired action. This form of physical contact was a constant theme throughout:

*“like on one occasion a lady didn’t move when I asked her so I pushed hers (trolley) out the way and she grabbed it as if it was her possession and I just politely said “sorry you’re blocking the aisle” and she was talking to somebody she knew like I politely asked her to move first time and she was in a world of her own so after you don’t respond when I politely ask I just move your trolley that seems fair to” (customer 13).*

These incidents within physical contact are particularly interesting because they involve multiple aspects of spatial awareness, originally with the blocking of aisles and space before physical contact. It shows movement between the subcategories, in particular how one customer blocking another customer can lead to physical contact which could be viewed as a chain of events. Nicholls (2005) coined the term ‘echo-CCI’ which refers to the CCI when one customer reacts to actions by another customer, which frequently occurred when one customer blocked another customer in this study. Furthermore, physical contact between customers can be viewed as an extreme form of CCI, as Dorsey et al., (2016) highlights it is often a trigger

for rage in the supermarket environment. In their study physical contact was found to be a catalyst 18.8% of the time for rage between customers. Dorsey et al., (2016) classified physical contact as the “direct trigger” of rage, with incidents such as bumping and shoving other customers. However, this research identified that potentially, physical contact was not necessarily the trigger, but a reaction to being blocked, closer to work of Nicholls (2005) e-CCI definition. The trigger of physical contact was the blocking of space, products and locations within the store, which resulted in physical contact.

This is a particularly useful insight when it comes to managing CCI, as employees need to be aware that incidents within the spatial awareness category may become more severe the longer, they are left unmanaged. A quick intervention could potentially prevent escalation of the incidents from blocking, that results in physical contact. There were many consistencies with Dorsey et al., (2016) study that also identified shopping trolleys as a trigger of rage and start of the ‘sequence’, which often led to physical contact and anger when shopping trolleys were left abandoned. The research further indicated that shoppers became very aggressive and often violent when customers hit into each other with their trolleys.

Spatial intrusion, sharing of space and physical contact is a well-documented area within CCI (Fisher and Byrne, 1975; Booms and Bitner, 1981; Martin and Pranter, 1989; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Kennedy et al., 2015) and it is applicable to the supermarket industry. Research by Griffiths and Gilly (2012) examined the sharing of space and how customers often tried to ‘mark’ their desired space in the hospitality industry such as the spreading out of books and food items. Altman, (1975) identified that ownership of space is designed to regulate social interaction, with “defence responses” occurring when boundaries were violated, such as the physical contact between customers identified in this study. Gently nudging a fellow customer

with a trolley was not necessarily a way to mark boundaries, but a way of informing the customer to move and they were blocking the shared space. Within the supermarket industry it is harder to identify individual personal spaces, such as a table at a restaurant, as the aisles in supermarkets are often shared with multiple shoppers, thus meaning physical contact is more likely to occur.

#### 4.2.2 Spatial awareness: Employee perspective

Similar to the customer perspective, employees also noted numerous types of spatial awareness incidents. The spatial awareness category contained the same subcategories as the customers category: physical contact and blocking. A comparison of the two perspective's highlighted that FLEs noted similar types of incidents to the customers such as leaving trolleys unattended and customers pushing other customers reaching for products. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.1.

##### 4.2.2.1 Blocking

The definition of blocking from the FLE perspective is similar to the customer perspective, identifying that FLEs did notice customers blocking fellow customers. However, the data also indicated subtle differences, such as the FLE noticing customers grabbing dividers whilst queuing, and failing to notice customers standing and talking which caused aisles to be blocked. Yet, they did notice that customers can block their fellow shoppers during certain times of the day around the discounted items section. If the FLE notices it occurring, it suggests they have the ability to potentially manage the situation. As previously identified, blocking often led to physical contact and the FLE noted they witnessed similar interactions:

*“This morning there was a man who was looking for something in the chilled department but he left his trolley out and there was a woman who wanted something nearby and she just said*

*“excuse me” but said it in a way where she wasn’t smiling (.) he didn’t answer and she just put her hand on his shoulder and said “excuse me can you move your trolley” and she had a very angry look on her face” (employee 8).*

This interaction was similar in nature to the types of blocking witnessed by the customer, highlighting that employees noticed other customers leaving trolleys unattended that could block other customers. Employees not only witnessed customers blocking aisles with trolleys, but also an incident involving a customer and a pushchair. The employee stated:

*“Well there was a mother who had a pushchair and she was paying for her stuff but left her pushchair stuck out at like a 90-degree angle and was blocking an older man from getting past to sit on the chairs at the end of the till” (employee 15).*

This incident highlighted that not only did FLEs notice incidents in different areas around the store, but also failed to note of any occasions where customers blocked other customers by standing and talking. The main types of blocking to occur from the FLE viewpoint was around leaving trolleys and one a pushchair unattended, whereas customers tended to have a wider notion of what constituted blocking behaviour and indicated they wanted FLEs to step in and manage customers, especially blocking the aisles whilst talking. However, similar to the customer perspective, employees noted that blocking led to physical contact in many interactions.

#### 4.2.2.2 Physical contact

In comparison to the customer perspective, FLEs did not identify any forms of physical contact that occurred accidentally, but highlighted that physical contact was a result of customers being blocked. Again, indicating the importance of early intervention and management of the

incidents to stop the “escalation” from blocking to physical contact. Employees gave many examples of physical contact whilst queuing and stated that other customers would lean across other customers and reach for products and dividers to place on the conveyor belt. The employee stated that they witnessed a customer “*lean across a man and push past him to grab the divider just to prove a point*”. Indicating they did it because they were being blocked and prevented from reaching the divider allowing them to place items onto the checkout conveyor belt. This identified a lack of patience from the customer, as they would have been able to reach the divider if they waited a little longer, but felt it necessary to push past the customer to grab it, in order to “prove a point”. From the FLE perspective, the data suggests that customers became impatient with fellow customers frequently, resulting in them standing too close and “invading personal space”. One pertinent example occurred between two customers at the checkout, one of which was in a wheelchair:

*“she (a customer in a wheelchair) basically kept getting closer and closer and he then went to almost go back up the queue to get a magazine and she moved forward and caught his toe under her wheel and he then basically bent over and almost fell” (employee 12).*

Although this was physical contact via a wheelchair, the customer who caused the physical contact was extremely unhappy due to how slowly the customer was moving. The employee stated that the customer who had his toe rolled over was going very slowly and people in the queue were growing impatient. This is a very difficult category to manage for employees as they do not want to hurry customers creating the feeling of pressure, but also do not want customers taking too long causing queues. However not all CCI scenarios focused around the checkout area, with employees noting that customers would push each other at the end of an aisle when discounted items were present:

*“when we discount items and put them at the end of the fresh aisle sometimes, I have to tell customers to wait patiently and not push (...) they certainly try and barge passed each other with shoulders at busy times trying to see the deals” (employee 18).*

The employee discounts certain items and this causes customers to behave in a manner that they would not normally behave in, stating that the items are gone quickly, especially during peak hours. This suggests a ‘race’ to beat other shoppers, similar in nature to the first example of queuing, but this time there is a price to pay for being “too slow” – missed opportunity for discounted products. The ‘race’ and limited time available of certain products indicated in this study, sparked physical contact between customers, whether it be blocking dividers or blocking products. Time pressures is a well document area within CCI (Hui and Bateson, 1991) with Dorsey et al., (2016) identifying time constraint as a trigger for extreme forms of CCI.

On the surface of the interactions, physical contact may be due to close proximity of certain areas in the store. Martin and Pranter (1989) service intensifiers identify that CCI is likely to occur when customers are in ‘close physical proximity’ and ‘sharing time and space’. The importance of this category cannot be understated and needs attention from management, as the data suggests physical contact frequently occurs after blocking, suggesting that physical contact may be preventable. A study by Zhang et al., (2010) focused on CCI within varying industries, and produced a “fighting” category that stemmed from physical contact. Although the term fighting is used, it is mainly applied metaphorically in their typology, with the deeper meaning discussing hostility towards fellow shoppers. The study identified that ‘fighting’ occurs between customers after physical contact is initiated, indicating a “chain of events” type scenario, with fighting being the most severe. The data from both FLE and customer viewpoint indicated that it often started with customers blocking other customers, before using physical

contact to move them. According to the research, this could escalate and turn into something more serious.

Research around space ownership and “territorial marking” in third space environments, such as a cafeteria, highlights how customers perceive they have ownership of the space whilst they consume the service and products, such as a table they eat at (Griffiths and Gilly 2012). However, whilst shopping in the supermarket, it is far less visible to see the “space owned” by each individual customer in the retail servicescape. Yet, customers commonly mentioned how other customers stood too close and “invaded personal space”. The implementation of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that there is a price to pay for standing too closely, illness and spread of the disease. Whereas before the outbreak this research identified that customers frequently invaded personal space and made physical contact. The use of physical contact and trolleys being used to push customers could be seen as a tool to inform fellow customers that personal boundaries were not adhered to. In the leisure and hospitality industry, research indicates boundaries can be marked, whereas in the supermarket industry research seldom addresses this issue, although with COVID-19 some supermarkets are marking boundaries themselves. Further research is needed into space ownership in the supermarket industry, and how other customers mark their territory and how it differs from third space servicescape’s like libraries and cafeterias.

### 4.3 Etiquette

#### 4.3.1 Customer perspective

The category of etiquette is defined as when one customer perceived another customer to be behaving in a socially unacceptable manner. With a range of incidents including poor perception of customer hygiene, asking inappropriate questions and breaking supermarket

rules. Many of the incidents provided by customers had comments about how they felt, with many examples suggesting they were irritated and commented how ‘rude’ some of their fellow shoppers were. However, on occasion some of these poor etiquette CCI’s that involved two customers, led to a positive interaction with a third customer. For example, two customers laughing about poor etiquette of a third customer, creating a triangulation approach to the CCI. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.2.

#### 4.3.1.1 Socially unacceptable behaviour

Socially unacceptable behaviour involved customers perceiving fellow customers to behave in a manner that is not socially acceptable behaviour. Although many of the incidents provided came down to personal opinion, such as a customer complaining that somebody was playing music “too loud” and another customer complaining about “offensive language”, there were some incidents that broke supermarket rules. For example, customers witnessed other customers not using the equipment provided when picking fresh unpackaged produce, stating that customers just “picked them up with their hands” and that they “did not look clean – it was enough to put me off”. They stated that they saw the customer pick up the bread rolls, place them next to their face and smell them before putting the bread back, which is not something commonly done. Furthermore, this breaks the rules of utilising equipment provided by the supermarket, with clear signs asking customers to not use their hands. Another example of socially unacceptable behaviour focused on the consumption of alcohol and customers witnessing drunk shoppers within the store, which again breaks the rules of the supermarket.

Lovelock (2001) distinguishes between six types of anecdotally derived service misbehaviours of customers, one of which is classified as the “rule breaker” who purposely ignores established rules and codes of conduct. However, this category is focused on the customer perspective,

about customers not abiding to rules, and not behaving in a manner that others deemed acceptable. Lovelock (2001) identified code of conducts that customer must adhere to, which is well documented in the CCI literature, with customers not fulfilling their role in the servicescape and impacting other customers (Auld and Case 1997; Zhang et al., 2010). Harris and Reynolds (2003) identify these as “dysfunctional behaviours”, with Zeithaml et al., (1993) suggesting that customers who fail to meet expectations during C2C encounters can lead to failed service expectations overall, identifying the need for FLEs to manage the situation. Research in the leisure and hospitality industry frequently rely on other customers to enhance the service experience, with other customers helping to improve the “ambience” (Bitner, 1992; Kworntnik, 2008) and enhance the service consumption. However, in this study of the supermarket industry there appear to be many incidents where customers do not live up to expectations in terms of etiquette and minimum behavioural rules and found fellow customers to be rude.

When asking to describe CCI, many customers identified that they found fellow customers to be ‘rude’. Rudeness alone can be viewed as subjective and something that is determined by the individual, as what one customer deemed rude may differ from another customer. For example, one customer identified that they found it ‘rude’ when a customer questioned their purchase of cigarettes and deemed it to be ‘intrusive’. However, the person asking may have thought they were being informative and giving useful health advice. Furthermore, a customer identified they experienced a fellow shopper asking an inappropriate question:

*“Guys have asked for my number before (...) Yeah like they’ve asked me where I got something from in my trolley or something normal and then asked where I am from and stuff and then asked for my number (...) I felt embarrassed” (customer 17).*

The customer asking for the number may not have perceived it as inappropriate and they may consider it a normal action, but the person being asked classified it as inappropriate and that it made them feel embarrassed. Similarly, customers found it rude when they perceived that they were ignored by fellow customers when they smiled or said hello, when the other customer may not have even heard or seen them. Rudeness is a well-documented area of CCI research, with much attention being paid to customers being rude towards each other (Bitner et al., 1990; Baron et al., 1996; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Harris and Reynolds; 2004; Zhang et al., 2010; Harris and Daunt; 2013; Martin, 2016). The findings from this research indicated many similarities and this type of CCI was present in the supermarket industry.

#### 4.3.1.2 Triangulation of socially unacceptable behaviour: NCCI to PCCI

When discussing poor etiquette and societal norms being broken, the category identified that although many incidents left the customer unhappy, there were occasions when customers shared the experience with a fellow customer, resulting in a positive experience. Customers witnessed an incident, that would usually be NCCI, but because it was shared with a fellow customer it become PCCI.

When two customers observed a third it caused a triangulation of CCI, I.E, customer A and customer B acknowledging that customer C was breaking the “unwritten service rules”. Research has explored this “triadic nature” of interactions around CCI, but often focuses on the employees observing interactions between two or more customers (Langeard et al., 1981; Harris et al., 2000; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019). However, this research indicates that it can also happen between customers only. For example, when the customer witnessed another customer break the rules and pick the bread up with their hands, it sparked a PCCI about the incident with a third shopper:

*“Another customer and I witnessed somebody pick up fresh rolls not using the utensils provided, she was smelling them and putting them back and looked like she had dirty hands.. I looked at the bloke and he looked at me just as shocked and he said to her “are you going to buy any of those or sniff them all day”. She just told him to “mind his own business”. We just stood there and he said “certainly don’t fancy that anymore think I’ll get the Warburton’s instead” (Customer 12).*

The customer further commented that it put them off buying the products, but laughed about the scenario with the other customer who also witnessed the poor etiquette scenario. The incident itself was negative, however the customer indicated that the incident had positive elements associated with it by using humour and laughing at the other customer together. This incident was not in isolation and there were many examples of customers interacting (A and B) over another customer (customer C). For example:

*“We were having a laugh with another couple actually about a customer (...) it was very rude really ((laughing)) but a lady in front of me at the till was on her own and she was so dopey. Even the cashier looked at me as if to note how slow and dopey she was. There was another couple behind me and we both looked at each other and we looked at the woman and started to laugh because the woman was just so slow and so dopey ((laughing)). I know you shouldn’t really but we couldn’t help it! She said to me “what is she doing” (pointing towards the woman at the front of the queue) and I said, “I don’t know but I’m ready to strangle her” ((laughing))” (customer 3).*

This provided a more in depth CCI example about customers interacting at the expense of another customer who may not be conforming to social norms. The incident itself could be viewed as negative, with one customer agitating another customer by going slowly, however

because they could share this experience with another customer, it adopted a positive nature that focused around humour. This again highlights Nicholls (2005) work around echo-CCI and how this PCCI would not have been possible without the original behaviour, which was negative, showcasing a chain of events. Similar to the spatial awareness category, it showcases a chain of events, originating with NCCI, but moving to PCCI due to a third customer, creating the triadic CCI.

These types of incidents can be explained by indicating that severe and negative forms of etiquette related CCI can often be mitigated and diffused if customers shared the experience with fellow customers. Harris and Baron (2004) research produced a conceptual framework that identified customers as having a “stabilizing effect” on each other in certain scenarios. Their framework (figure 5) captured the essence of their research and identified that the stabilizing effect was evident in three main components: consumer risk/anxiety reduction, the enactment of the partial employee role, and the supply of social interaction.

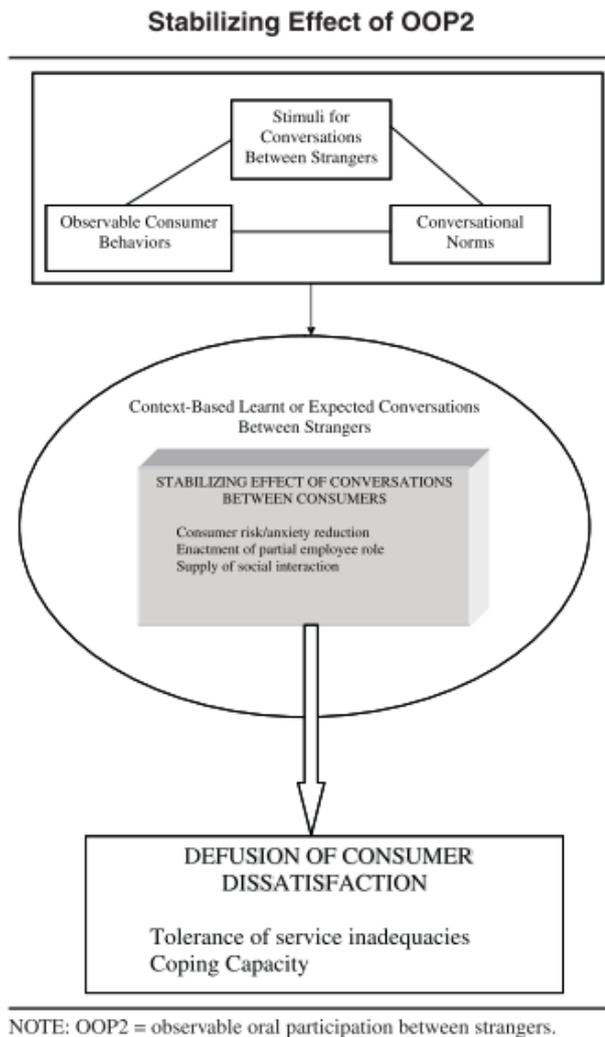


Figure 5 – Stabilizing effect of customers (Harris and Baron, 2004, p.295)

Although Harris and Baron (2004) framework focuses on the stabilizing effect in regard to coping with service inadequacies, it is not discussed in terms of NCCI. Expansion to their conceptual framework would acknowledge the impact of fellow customers as having ‘stabilizing’ effects during NCCI. This is also important in regard to the management of CCI, as customers may be able to utilise humour at the expense of a fellow customer, something which an FLE may not, identifying that in some scenarios the FLE cannot intervene and it may be advantageous to allow the NCCI.

### 4.3.1.3 Signalling behaviour

Within the subcategory of etiquette, there were examples given by customers who tried to “control” other peoples’ behaviour using signalling behaviour that consisted of verbal commands and physical pressure (table 4.3). Physical pressure has elements of spatial awareness, but involves customers standing strategically to try and alter a customers’ behaviour or to try and speed up their transaction. Verbal signals are when customers speak to try and manage another customers behaviour, both directly or indirectly by giving signals, both suitable and obvious. Although it involves large elements of informational exchange, it involves giving commands and can be seen as poor etiquette whilst shopping and often intrusive.

Table 4.3 – Signalling behaviour techniques

<b><u>Signalling behaviour techniques</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>	<b><u>Example</u></b>
<i>1.0 Physical pressure</i>	- Either using physical contact or spatial pressure to ensure a customer behaves in a certain way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pushing another customers trolley</li> <li>- Having bags all ready</li> <li>- Tapping cards in the queue</li> <li>- Standing in close proximity</li> <li>- Showcasing a behaviour in the hope it would be copied.</li> </ul>
<i>2.0 Verbal signals</i>	- When other customers use language to hurry other customers along. It can be both direct and indirect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Telling others, they’re organised</li> <li>- Speaking loud enough so others will hear</li> <li>- Telling others how to behave</li> <li>- Criticising another customer about their behaviour</li> <li>- Ask for the divider to be put on the belt</li> </ul>

Although there were strong elements of time and waiting connected with this theme, the essence of the interaction focused on signalling behaviours that were utilised by customers to alter another customers' behaviour. There is little discussion around how customers seek to influence other customers, with the vast majority of work focusing on C2E management. This research highlights that customers attempt to manage and control other customers with physical pressure and verbal commands. These incidents occurred frequently during the checkout process, where FLEs were in close proximity, indicating the possible opportunity to observe the interactions and assess the CCI. Further research is needed to highlight the impact of these techniques on other customers and the reason why customers try to control other customers. This type of management further justifies the need for CCI training, so employees can spot this behaviour and manage the situation, instead of leaving CCI management in the hands of customers who have not received training and are not necessarily worried about upsetting fellow customers.

#### 4.3.1.3.1 Physical pressure

One of the signal behaviours from the physical pressure category was to simply stand close to customers in a hope that they would be quicker with their transaction. Another was by showcasing behaviour to another customer in the hope that they would do the same. Customers indicated that they made sure a fellow customer noticed their behaviour by being quick, and standing closely:

*“ I put my stuff on the conveyor belt, bags in the trolley ready, I’m a bit OCD but the reason is when I get home I unpack it and it is in the correct place... I get my credit cards out; my bags are flapped open and I’m there ready. But what do I have to wait for? Women in front. They get their handbag, open their handbag, search for their purse, then get their credit cards,*

*pay, ah right, thank you, got it, take the receipt, take the credit cards, back in the purse, put the purse back in the bottom of the bag, say goodbye and move off (...) I therefore stand tapping my credit cards, on the handle of the trolley, as a gesture, just to show them a quicker way (...) And I've had a lady say to me before "oh I'm not that organised" well I suggest you get that organised ((laughing))" (customer 2).*

Firstly, the customer showcased what they perceived to be the correct way to behave at the checkouts by getting their bags and cards ready. They then tapped the card on the trolley to draw attention to the behaviour and let the customer in front know they were prepared and ready to pay. Little information around C2C showcasing behaviour has been explored within the literature, although research has identified that customers may "copy" other customers behaviour when making purchase decisions based on demographics, but seldom explores how customers copy behaviour.

Interestingly, this type of physical pressure was also noticed by the customer being pressured, and it had a negative impact on their experience, further enhancing that customers should not be allowed to 'educate' and 'control' other customers. A customer noted:

*"when I'm in the queue I sometimes get made to feel guilty about the amount of food I have and I feel like I have to rush and I suppose they make me do that in a number of ways (...) they ask for the divider to be put on the belt even when I haven't finished putting my own shopping (...) then they stand really closely and then they have their bags ready laid out in the trolley as if to say "look I'm ready why aren't you" (customer 2).*

The signalling behaviour techniques identified by customers was so obvious that even the customer being controlled noticed. When prompted on how they felt during the interaction, they simply stated “very stressed”.

#### 4.5.1.3.2 Verbal Signals

The most common signalling behaviour utilised by customers who were trying to change another customer’s behaviour was via the use of verbal signals, such as telling the customer what they should do, however it was often not directly to the other customer. One technique used was speaking loud enough for other customers to hear, which could be seen as avoiding direct confrontation but still trying to manage the situation. In particular this occurred when dealing with children, perhaps due to the sensitive nature of parents and child relations and not wanting to upset anyone:

*“the other day there was a child running around screaming and in the end he was literally sat on the shelving (.) then he was like grabbing the end of my trolley and his silly mother was just in her own world (...) I just said “watch it you will hurt yourself” and I said it loud enough for the mother to hear (.) she just looked up at me and kind of went “come here” and pointed to her side as if the child was a dog” (customer 8).*

This kind of management aimed to get the attention of the mother and educate her by indicating the child could get hurt, however it was done in a much more subtle way in comparison to physical contact. Within this study, the techniques often centred around not just controlling the behaviour but trying to educate them for future transactions. This could be motivated by trying to help other customers becoming more efficient, or selfishly by making them go quicker so they wouldn’t have to wait as long. Literature around customer education is well document

(Eisingerich and Bell 2015; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000), however the literature focuses on “customer co-creation” and how the organisation can educate customers (C2E), not customers educating other customers (C2C). The subcategory of signalling behaviour was unique to the viewpoint of the customer and employees did not mention it. Without the FLE mentioning this in the study, it indicated it was an action that was not managed, despite customers indicating it had a negative impact on their experience.

#### 4.3.2 Employee perspective

Regarding the employee perspective on etiquette, the FLEs had the ability to spot socially unacceptable behaviour occurring between customers, however they did not notice poor etiquette in regard to signalling behaviour. Employees did note that CCI occurs in a triadic that it could have a stabilizing effect on NCCI. FLEs identified numerous incidents that they claimed to be socially unacceptable, both from their point of view, and from customer comments. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.3.

##### 4.3.2.1 Socially unacceptable behaviour

One of the most frequent ways employees identified poor etiquette from customers than had an impact on fellow customers is by comments shoppers would make. FLEs stated that a common form of socially unacceptable behaviour they saw that irritated customers was when rubbish was left, with customers catching other customers littering and expressing their discontent. Interestingly, they noted that not only did other customer get irritated by people leaving rubbish, but customers suggested that this type of behaviour showcased a lifestyle choice and made assumptions around their home on the base of their in-store behaviour. An FLE said they had a customer approach them and furiously state that “some people have no respect” and that other customers who littered were “total animals, their house is probably a

s\*\*thole”. This was a very strong opinion and indicated the severity of the incidents witnessed by employees. This could be identified as breaking the code of conduct by customers whilst shopping, that they should use the bins provided and not leave litter in store.

One extreme example related to a socially unacceptable behaviour from a customer in the café. The employee stated they saw a customer lean over and eat lasagne from a plate that had been previously left by a customer, with the incident being noticed by other customers causing strange looks and amazement. When the FLE prompted the customer, they said that it was “untouched” and a “total waste”, indicating that the customer knew they were in the wrong and was trying to justify their actions. This type of incident was deemed socially unacceptable to the FLE and fellow customers.

#### 4.3.2.2 Triangulation of socially unacceptable behaviour: NCCI to PCCI

As identified, the impact of a third customer during a NCCI encounter can stabilize in the interaction and turn it into a positive scenario. Interestingly this was also identified by the FLE. Employees frequently noted they experienced two parties interacting about a third:

*“The thing that always gets the most attention is on a Wednesday evening a girl comes in with her mom and she puts her in the baby seat at the front of the trolley and the girl must be 12 and weigh about 12 stone. It really causes people to look, they all have a laugh” (employee 15).*

This again highlighted a situation where customers acknowledged socially unacceptable behaviour together and shared the same views that this behaviour was not normal and broke protocol. The employee identified it was a sad situation but again, the customers found it humorous and exchanged looks together. This identifies a very difficult situation for the FLE,

as they notice a customer being laughed at, but also note that customers are having a positive interaction because of it. A dilemma that currently FLEs are unaware of the appropriate action, as the FLEs in this study did not intervene and allowed it to continue. When prompted on a management technique employees stated they did not know what to do. Further research into the phenomena is needed to explore the impact of this and assess the success or failure of the technique.

A comparison of the two viewpoints within the category identified many similarities, such as both perspectives identifying that customers can display poor etiquette to fellow customers and that triangulation of the incidents occur. However, employees did not identify any signalling behaviour occurring, a unique incident from the customer perspective. Further exploration into this phenomena is needed for greater clarity, identifying if the employees are unaware of this occurring as the study suggests, or possibly turning a 'deaf ear' due to the complexity of the interaction causing management problems.

#### 4.4 Social

##### 4.4.1 Customer perspective

Customers identified many different types of CCI that focused on social interactions in the supermarket environment. Social interactions often involved spoken conversation between two or more customers, with the typology having two subcategories; passing comments and friendships. Passing comments was defined as generic conversations or interaction that occurred briefly between customers. Friendships however were more than just generic conversations, but relationships formed over a period of time between customers who did not know each other before shopping at the supermarket. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.4.

Service marketing research has focused on the social elements of customer interaction since its conceptualisation, with many frameworks identifying that social interaction is an important element of the customer experience e.g. (Bitner, et al., 1990;), however most research is focused on the social interaction between customer and employee (Soderlund, 2011). Research around social interactions in the service environment has identified the importance of other customers, with Soderlund (2011) suggesting other customers can even influence the overall evaluation of the retailer and purchase behaviour.

#### 4.4.1.1 Passing comments

One of the most common examples of passing comments revolved around general pleasantries with customers often smiling and saying hello to each other. Customers would frequently make comments about another customers child, the weather, physical appearance and make humorous remarks. These occurred frequently according to the examples given, with customers stating that they often tried to go out of their way to smile and say hello to customers as they feared some people “were lonely” and that they enjoyed trying to cheer somebody’s day up.

When questioned around the nature of the interaction, many customers did identify that they liked to talk to other customers to try and elevate loneliness. Research supported by Pettigrew (2007), who identified in an exploratory study that older customers negate loneliness through shopping and meeting other customers. Although as Nicholls and Mohsen (2015) correctly highlight, not all older customers are lonely, as Grougio and Pettigrew (2011) identified that older customers can become very sensitive about being served in a way that suggests they are lonely or need help. However, within this study customers seemed positive in their response to general pleasantries with other customers.

Customers identified that social interaction the supermarket enabled them to speak to customers and employees that they would otherwise not. Raghunathan and Corfman (2006) identified that customers often seek other interaction due to the “need to belong”, whilst Harris and Baron (2004) identified that customers engaging in conversations can result in positive experiences. This was supported by the data as customer frequently said that small talk and general conversations enhanced their experience within the store, with customer’s stating it was “nice to chat to somebody for a change rather than sitting on my own all week”.

Customers stated they often had a laugh with customers about small comments such as making jokes and “general chit chat” whilst queuing and moving around the store. Soderlund (2011) identified that conversation with fellow customers can simply help “kill the time” and add pleasure to the experience, or even help to reduce customer anxiety in many cases. This finding is consistent with Harris and Baron’s (2004) study in the railway travel setting and reveals that social exchanges between customers often take place in the form of customer conversations. The notion that customers interacted to “kill the time” and share pleasantries links to social exchange theory and that both participants can benefit from talking whilst queuing and waiting to purchase or return goods. Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) identifies that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process, that maximizes benefits and minimize costs. In this study, maximising benefits involved two customers who wanted to engage in conversation, with many examples suggesting great pleasure was taken from the social interactions. Cheang (2002) ethnography study provided insight into older consumers who regularly met at a fast food restaurant and identified that not only was it useful to help pass time, but also provided a “structure and purpose” to their day.

#### 4.4.1.2 Friendships

Many of the incidents identified in this study are focused on NCCI, however with social interactions, many of the examples are positive in nature. Customers frequently commented that other customers were pleasant and complimentary, whether it was towards their children, comments about clothing and even physical appearance such as hairstyles. The most positive interaction produced a subcategory that was unique to the viewpoint of the customer classified as friendships. Service marketing literature has identified that people within retail exchange pleasantries (McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Harris and Baron, 2004), form “temporary holiday friendships” within the tourism literature, and “purchase pals” in furniture retailers. Baron and Harris (2004) identified that there were people who were “friendship seekers” and actively looking to engage in social interaction to form friendships. This research identified that there were people who were seeking social interaction and there were also certain customers who had formed more than just shopping relationships, such as saying hello to customers they see frequently, but friendships where they regularly meet for coffee. For example, there was a customer who identified he made friends with another customer in the café, when prompted how they met and for details, they described the scenario:

*“We sit and have coffee together, it started by seeing someone who has been having coffee and they had a newspaper I wanted because they leave free papers out here that I love to read so I just went over and asked if they had finished with it and they said they had and it was during the world cup I think and I made a comment about the football and we ended up chatting” (customer 9).*

The customer indicated that they frequently met up and stayed in contact outside of the supermarket, saying that they are friends and it all stemmed from interacting within the

supermarket. Similar to spatial awareness and physical contact, friendships seem to be an example of passing comments escalating into friendships, again indicating that a chain of events can occur between CCI.

Literature has frequently identified that customers can provide social contact and friendships between shoppers, e.g. (Raghunathan and Corfman, 2006). However, little has been discussed specifically about friendships in the supermarket industry, and although evidence has showcased CCI can occur at supermarkets, little has focused on the industry in terms of social needs and friendships.

Studies around social hubs and places for gatherings has been explored and expressed via the term “third places” (Oldenburg and Brisset, 1982) where C2C social support is provided. Oldenburg (1999, p.16) describes third places as a public environment ‘that host the regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work’. Cheang (2002, p. 305) identifies the important characteristics of third places as it gives people the option to be “as anonymous, impersonal, or social as they choose to be”.

Oldenburg (1992) highlights the importance of third places, as a way of “fulfilling social needs” and research has identified that public places such as fast food restaurants, cafes and shopping centres enable people to gather away from home and work to socialise (Kowinski, 1985; Scott, 1992; Oldenburg, 1992; Cheang, 2002). Customers in this study highlight the importance of supermarkets as social hubs with many customers identifying the social contact whilst shopping, with many forming friendships. Further research is needed into third spaces, as highlighted by Nicholls and Mohsen (2015) in their age related CCI study, to understand the

suitability of supermarkets and how to foster social friendships, as the current study highlights that many customers view them as desirable and enhancing to the service experience.

#### 4.4.2 Employee perspective: Social

The FLE viewpoint indicated FLEs had the ability to identify social interactions between customers, all of which were verbal and included topics such as the weather, humorous remarks and commented about physical appearance. Employees did note that customers actively sought out social interaction from other customers, but the incidents were identified as a quick hello and social politeness, rather than friendships. There could have been friendships formed between customers, but the FLEs do not possess the ability to identify them as friendships as it would be hard to tell the difference between friendships arising from CCI and friendships from outside of the store. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.5.

##### 4.4.2.1 Passing comments

FLEs identified that they frequently saw customers talking and exchanging pleasantries, there was a wide range of comments such as chat around the weather, giving compliments to physical appearances and quick whited humorous remarks. Employees also commented that customers specifically came in for social interaction and sought out fellow customers to talk to. Customers would go out of their way to make comments to fellow shoppers about their appearance, such as a nice hair style or comment on the “cuteness of a baby”. FLEs provided many different examples around customers seeking social contact with fellow shoppers:

*“Often people come in just for a chat and to see someone else (...) as I know a few older people who shop here and talk to me and say they’re on their own otherwise” (employee 2).*

The example indicates that customers utilise the supermarket industry as a place for social interaction, as a place to talk to fellow customers and seek contact as they may be otherwise alone. Employees gave another example that suggested they witnessed a customer regularly talk to fellow customers, by stating that “the customer did not know the other customers outside of the store (...) but is fairly popular within the store”. Indicating that customers can become popular within the store with other customers and frequently interact in a social environment. This is supported by McGrath and Otnes (1995) study that identified the retail market as the locus of social interactions and exchanges. Their research highlights that although customers primary role was to purchase goods and services, customers also enjoyed “participating in the social context at hand”. However, little detail was provided in terms of comments between customers and the nature of their interactions. Further research is needed to provide greater understanding around social interaction within supermarkets, as social interactions are better understood in other industries, such as travel and tourism and hospitality (Oldenburg, 1992; Price and Arnould’s, 1999).

#### 4.4.2.2 Mutual Moans

The main difference between the two viewpoints was that while the FLE did not recognize ‘friendships’, they did identify the subcategory ‘mutual moans’ which customers did not. Baron, Harris and Davies (1996) coined the term “mutual moan” and identified that customers moaned together in their study of the retail industry. However, the study was conducted from the viewpoint of the customer, who identified that customer frequently complained and moaned with other customers. The current study identified that FLEs noted this typology to be present in the supermarket industry, and that FLEs were aware of this occurring. Employees noted they heard a single customer moan about something, and then a fellow customer join in the moan.

These mutual moans occurred not only with products, but also service processes such as queuing. An employee identified customer moaning together at the customer service desk:

*“I heard someone say “what are you here to complain about” and the other person said that they were in the queue to complain about no trolleys and the person who originally asked the question was here to complain about a staff member not being very helpful (...) honestly it is so frustrating they love to moan in twos rather than on their own they encourage each other” (employee 9).*

Harris and Baron (2004) study identified that mutual moans were in fact part of a conversational “sequence”, that started with a sharing of pleasantries or mutual moans about the service, followed by gentle inquiry about varying topics, indicating that moaning together could spark conversation between two customers. Their research identified that mutual moaning was similar to sharing of pleasantries and was utilised as a step to decide whether to engage in longer social conversation in the travel industry. Furthermore, the research identified that “consumers found social support through mutual moans and groans, which was conceived as negative interactions from a provider perspective but were valued by consumers. This was a source of social support and provided a mechanism for tolerating service inadequacies” (Harris and Baron, 2004., p. 300). This could have large managerial implications, that social contact seekers might give negative WOM to establish C2C social rapport. As previously identified by the FLE, customers actively look to engage in social interactions, and as Harris and Baron (2004) highlight, moaning can be a good way to do it.

The two viewpoints provided insight into the social interactions that occurred within the supermarket industry, however the FLE identified that customers like to moan together,

whereas the customer perspective identified that friendships occur. Customer and FLE perspectives provide different perspectives on social interactions, which highlights the need for seeking both perspectives when dealing with CCI.

#### 4.5 Assistance related

##### 4.5.1 Customer perspective

The assistance category focused on customers providing assistance to other customers, with multiple examples given, ranging from feedback on products, to offering directions to the supermarket toilets. However, the assistance category also indicates that not all assistance was wanted, appreciated and that sometimes there was a lack of assistance. This includes incidents such as giving unwanted product advice or not assisting fellow customers by moving items away from their original place. The participants frequently identified they would offer assistance and provide information to other customers via three subcategories: physical assistance, product and informational. Although many of the interactions were positive in nature, there were incidents provided that some customers found irritating and a cause of NCCI. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.6.

##### 4.5.1.1 Physical

Physical assistance is defined as when a customer helped a fellow customer complete a desired action that they appeared to be struggling with prior to the assistance. The subcategory consists of many positive examples such as walking another customer to a taxi, reaching products and checking if somebody was ok. For example, when a customer was asked if they have been involved in CCI:

*“A couple of times quite recently with various people. I’ve seen both a lady and a man in the past week that are struggling to reach a product on the top shelf and I just simply go over and help them. If I can reach it I’ll simply grab it for them. I’ve done that a couple of times” (customer 4).*

The incident highlighted that the customer frequently engaged in this type of assistance towards other customers and that they became involved because it was clear that help was needed. There were many incidents around this type of assistance, with customer fetching products for fellow customers in hard to reach places and carrying goods that were particularly heavy. One older customer gave a very detailed answer about the kind of physical help they received frequently in the store:

*“I am always getting asked if I need help sometimes the staff member will even take the stuff to the taxi and wait with me I’ve come to know quite a few people here (.) even one of the customers has taken my stuff to the taxi before which is really nice of them” (customer 19).*

This type of physical assistance showed the willingness of customers to offer physical assistance to those who require it. When prompted further around how the situation occurred, the customer provided fruitful insight:

*“I was unloading my basket onto the till belt (.) the cashier actually came around and started helping me off with my stuff and asked if I had rung for my taxi as they normally help (...) before I had time to answer this lovely young man behind offered and said he would be willing to help, he asked if he could carry my bag” (customer 19).*

The customer identified that the offer of walking to the taxi was something that happened from an employee, but because the customer overheard, they offered and stepped in. The customer asked permission from the other customer and walked to the taxi. The customer identified that they did not mind because they always feel guilty about taking the employee away from their checkout:

*“Well I know the staff and trust them but I always feel bad taking them away I think I have better things to do than to walk with me but they don’t seem to mind (.) at least with this young gentlemen he won’t get told off for waiting with me I’m scared some of the staff members will” (customer 19).*

This insight highlights the value of C2C interactions, and that occasionally customers prefer help from fellow customers rather than the employee. This customer identified that they always worry about receiving help from employees in case they are deemed a ‘burden’, whereas a fellow customer they do not mind. This further indicates the value of CCI management and the value of identifying CCI from both perspectives, especially when articulating management training schemes and techniques.

#### 4.5.1.2 Informational

Information assistance was a broad category that consisted of varied incidents such as asking for directions for a different store in the area, location of the toilets and how certain services worked. Many of the incidents were positive in nature, where customers indicated they helped a customer who had asked a question, even if it was not related to the supermarket:

*“I had someone before I entered the store ask me if knew where ((company name)) was (.) I gave them directions It was literally just around the corner I visit there quite often” (customer18).*

This identified that the customer was seeking help and the customer responded and provided correct information. When prompted further, the customer identified that they did not mind aiding as they knew the information that was being asked, which was not always the case. One customer identified that they got asked for directions to an area within the store but did not know the precise location:

*“I’ll just be minding my own business and someone will stop and ask where I get certain things from in my trolley (.) so then obviously I can’t say like aisle 5 or something so I just have to physically walk and take them. Sometimes I can’t even remember so I just have to do my best and it can take a couple of minutes to find something but when you have someone following you I can’t just stop and go “nope sorry can’t find it” and leave them ((laughing)) sometimes I can’t even find an employee to palm them off” (customer 13).*

This example highlights the complexity of dealing with CCI scenarios and the importance of managing them correctly. The first customer identified that they were happy to give directions because they knew the information, however in the second incident the customer became irritated because they were asked for help but could not provide the answer. The customer further indicated that they would have liked the employee to have helped but could not find one on the shop floor.

#### 4.5.1.3 Product

Product related assistance was mainly focused on recommending products and giving advice about products to fellow customers. There were many positive interactions associated within the subcategory with customers expressing the desire to help fellow customers:

*“If I see someone buying something I’ve bought before or something like that I try and give some advice as I think other people would want to know just like I know I would want others to let me know (.) I’m not sure I would listen but at least they’re trying to be helpful” (customer 22).*

The incident highlights that customers tried to be helpful and offer advice about products frequently, with customers making personal recommendations based on their own experience. The literature has showcased that the voice of a fellow customer can be trusted more than an employee (Harris et al., 1995) in certain scenarios due to having no loyalty towards a particular brand or organisation. There were many examples of product assistance given in this study, with customers stating: “I try and give some advice as I think other people would want to know just like I know I would want others to let me know (about a product)”. Further examples showcased that they perceive the advice to be useful and give reasons for product assistance:

*“People will want some help. They’ll be looking. Or I’m looking. I’ll ask them. If they’re doing something and I think they’re struggling I’ll help them. If someone is buying the same thing as me. I will say good choice if I’ve had it before” (customer 2).*

The examples indicate that the customer giving advice perceives it to be useful and other customers are grateful of their product recommendations and assistance. However, a common theme was consistent in the data that sometimes customers identified customers as too intrusive

and offered recommendations that customers did not want or ask for. Customers stated that they frequently had other customers trying to talk to them and give “unwanted” and advice “that was not asked for”. Numerous examples showcased this behaviour:

*“I was buying avocados and some guy gave me a tip to help get them out of the skin using a spoon and then told me to put lemon on them to stop them from going brown (...) I just sarcastically said “cheers mate (...)” like I didn’t even ask for his advice and I wouldn’t dare do that to other people I just feel like there are more know it all’s now than there ever has been” (customer 23).*

This indicated that unwanted information was often passed between customers, with the conversation being one-sided. However, the customer giving the advice may not know that it was unwanted advice and perceived themselves to be helpful. Although many incidents indicated that customers found fellow shoppers useful and accepted their help, there were incidents when customers found them too intrusive and did not want the advice. McGrath and Otnes (1995) identified a type of customer helper in their study, classified as a proactive helper. “Proactive helpers have an innate need to be helpful in the marketplace and freely offer unsolicited advice” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995p. 265). Their research identified that there were three possible outcomes of such advice; “firstly, strangers can graciously accept help and regard it as an act of altruism (Gergen, Gergen, and Meter, 1972; Staub, 1978). Secondly, when a proactive helper attempts to offer advice is that early in the interaction strangers can indicate their disinterest in accepting such an act of kindness” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 265). Finally, the advice can be rejected in the presence of the proactive helper, which can cause tensions between the shoppers. However, within this research, when unwanted advice was given the customers did not reject the advice given in front of other customers. This

identifies a new response to unwanted advice, being polite enough to listen to the advice but not following the fellow customer's advice.

The assistance related category is a well-researched area of CCI and supports the literature that customers do exhibit helping behaviour (Wagner, Hornstein, and Holloway, 1982; Jones and Foshay, 1984; Fagot and Kavanagh, 1990; Auld and Case, 1997; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Parker and Ward, 2000; Baron and Harris, 2004; Zhang et al., 2010). The category identified that many customers were positive in their interactions and provided assistance to other customers, supporting the literature that customers can play the role of "partial employees" (Bitner et al., 1997; Baron and Harris, 2004). However, not all helping interactions were well received by other customers who often found them too intrusive.

#### 4.5.2 Assistance related: Employee perspective

The FLE viewpoint from this category identified similar characteristics to the customer perspective, noting that other customers helped fellow customers frequently, however there were small but substantial differences. FLEs failed to identify unwanted product advice between customers but did identify that customers became irritated when products were moved by fellow customers. The literature around customer assistance (or lack of) towards other customers (Wagner, Hornstein, and Holloway, 1982; Jones and Foshay, 1984; McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Harris and Baron, 2004) has all been from the viewpoint of the consumer and focuses on when employees are not present. Therefore, by utilising the FLE perspective, it highlighted how the interactions within specific types of CCI identified that FLEs noted subtle differences. Within this category it was identified that FLEs frequently interrupted the CCI and offered assistance, despite many of the interactions appearing to be positive in nature. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.7.

#### 4.5.2.1 Physical

The FLE perspective identified that employees noted customers helping fellow customers by offering physical assistance, similar in nature to the customer incidents. Many of the incidents focused around a customer helping a customer who was unable to reach items because the items were too high in the aisles, or because in the café the cakes were at the back of the display. For example, an FLE identified that “quite often we get customers reaching some of the cakes for other customers if they are smaller as the stands are quite far back”. This type of assistance was very common from the FLE view, as another employee noted they see customers “passing a product from under the racking if they’re already lifting it up or perhaps reaching a product that’s on the back shelf if someone can’t reach it”. Those two examples were focused around reaching a product that somebody was unable to reach, however physical assistance was also around helping somebody complete an action and offering physical service help also:

*“Well I’ve seen people talk all of the time to each other and quite often I’ve seen people helping each other with trays in the café” (employee 6).*

When the customers were physically assisting other customers, employees frequently identified that they “made sure somebody helped the customer out”, suggesting that they felt it was “their job” and that they had an obligation to assist. This was consistent across physical assistance CCI’s, such as taking litter from two customers and clearing away tables and trays in the café. When identifying the various forms of physical CCI, employees noted the positive nature and how fellow customers appeared like they enjoyed helping, which was supported from the customers perspective. Management techniques to carefully foster CCI is needed, as

employees within this category often indicated they felt they “had to” step in because it was their job, something which warrants further exploration.

#### 4.5.2.2 Informational

The employee also witnessed customers assisting other customers in terms of informational exchange, although the subcategory did not have as many incidents from the FLE perspective as the customer view, the category had many similar elements. The two main types of information exchange occurred via FLEs stating they saw customers asking other customers questions, such as the location of a particular product, location of an area within the store or how the service process worked. For example, an employee noted:

*“On my way out of work yesterday as I was about to leave the door I heard one customer giving another customer directions to the toilet (...) Just him saying “it is by the café I’ll show you if you’d like” (employee 19).*

Similar to the previous subcategory, the employee identified they stepped in to “make sure everything was ok” and the customer was “being told the correct information” from a fellow customer. Although the employee stepped in, from the customer perspective it was identified that customers enjoyed assisting fellow customers when spoken to. Harris and Baron (2004) developed work by Harris et al., (1997) and identified the value of allowing customers to pass information on without employee interrupting and concluded customers could be a more reliable source of information and advice to other customers than organisational employees (Baron et al. 1995; Harris et al. 1995).

#### 4.5.2.3 Products

The largest subcategory focused on products, and consisted of a wide range of examples, such as recommending products in the café and giving personal feedback on the quality of products. One example was viewed as NCCI from the employee perspective, but PCCI from the customers. The employee stated they overheard a conversation between two customers where one was telling a customer where the item was cheaper not within the store but in town locally. The employee stated when they heard this, they “had to step in because I can’t have them making suggestions to fellow customers to shop elsewhere”. This is an ethical issue for the FLE forcing them to intervene. However, this supports the research that other customers may give honest opinions without loyalty to a particular store that is paying their wage. The employee suggested they could not allow custom to leave the store even if it meant a better deal for the customer, presenting an ethical dilemma in FLE and PCCI intervention. Harris et al., (1997) identified that in many cases customers were prepared to offer personal opinions to other shoppers about products, something that was rarely used by employees and supported in this current study. Davies, Baron and Harris (1999, p. 52) further stated that “consumers appear to add value to the service experience of other consumers, through offering honest opinions, independent product knowledge, and reassurance about purchase decisions that contact personnel cannot provide”.

Another product related CCI to emerge that was unique to the FLE viewpoint was customers not returning items to where they should be located, and even sometimes hiding products from other customers viewed as a ‘lack of assistance’. This differs from the etiquette category as etiquette focuses on rudeness and lack of etiquette, whereas lack of assistance is around assisting achievement of your own goals at the expense of another customer. The most common form of lack of assistance was customers picking up items not in its original place –

such as in the clothing department. Employees stated they had customers approach them and ask for a product in a different size because they were unable to locate the original location. One employee had a customer say that “people should put these items back where they found them rather than just leaving them around”, highlighting their annoyance. Customer A could be irritated by customer B because it may take longer to find the original product and cause unnecessary searching. Another employee said that customers become lazy and just leave products wherever they fancy if they change their mind about a purchase. With one employee having a customer visibly frustrated approaching them and asking them to find them the original location of the item because they just picked it up off the side, nothing their annoyance at the other customer for not returning the products correctly.

Employees noted they often found products hidden by customers, mainly to return and pick up at a later time. The employees gave examples of finding products not only left in the incorrect place but hidden in a way that they could be found only by the original customer. Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) identified this in their study of libraries, identifying a typology classified as “concealed CCI”, when people would hide library books and return at a later date. This typology is similar to the essence of their findings, however Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) identified that reason for hiding the books was to stop others from borrowing it. However, the FLEs in this study identified that it was for numerous reasons, one being to return later, but another being because customers changed their mind about products. There were therefore two differences between the customer and FLE perspectives in relation to the assistance category: customers noting unwanted advice and employees noting customers not returning products correctly.

## 4.6 Employee focused

### 4.6.1 Customer perspective

The final type of CCI to be discussed highlights that employees were often the centre and cause of the interaction between two customers, with the findings showing that not only can employees cause PCCI and NCCI, but also how customers often feel the need to defend employees during mistreatment. Research focusing on how employees facilitate positive CCI (McGrath and Otnes, 1995) and cause NCCI (Nicholls, 2005; Anaya, et al., 2016) is well documented, however no work has been done in the supermarket industry, but more on the leisure, travel and tourism industry. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.8.

#### 4.6.1.1 Employee caused the CCI

The data indicates that employees caused CCI to occur between customers in a positive and negative way. The examples provided are employee focused because in many scenarios the customer appeared to blame the employee for not managing the interaction, such as speeding up a slow customer. From a positive perspective, employees made comments to customers about the weather and made small humorous remarks which sparked conversations between customers, however, there were also many times when the employee caused NCCI. Customers often commented on other customers going slowly whilst at the checkout, with findings indicating that it was the employees' fault:

*“They’re normally the bloody problem (the employee), like the other day I was waiting to pay and the customer and cashier were talking. When I’m queuing there always seems to be a conversation going on between the customer and the member of staff and it winds me up because It literally take me two seconds to pay for mine (...) no cash just quick contactless I*

*hardly say a word to the cashier and he leaves me alone (.) I only have 20 minute break from work so I don't like to be in the store long and I always feel that others are watching and waiting so I'm quick ” (customer 5).*

This example was common, with many other customers echoing this statement, that customers and employees spend too long talking. When prompted if the employee should manage the situation and speed things along, customers who were irritated stated they should. However, other customers stated that they enjoyed talking to employees and some even knew them by name, with many having “favourites” stating that they always go to the same employee. This further highlights the complexity of managing CCI and the importance of this research, that customers are different and may have different thresholds - and so require different management. Employees need the flexibility and empowerment to use discretion when managing customers depending on the needs of each individual.

Further detail around employees causing the CCI was provided, with customers stating that fellow customers can be slow whilst paying, and that employees should “do something about it”. In particular, customers trying to redeem too many vouchers at the checkout, causing a delay:

*“That irritates me a lot I don't like people who are slow at the till and holding people up with all their vouchers and receipts and loyalty cards and rubbish. The customer was like “oh try this one and this one (...) and this one” trying to get rid of all her rubbish vouchers (.) I have my bags set up in my trolley already no messing about stuff in the trolley card all ready and bang in and out really quick no messing (customer 18).*

Customers having too many vouchers and loyalty cards was a theme throughout the data and was stated by many customers, with one claiming it left them feeling “exasperated”. The first example focuses on how the employee causes delays by talking, but this also highlights that is the retailer may also contribute to delays in the service process. Many customers suggested that employees should do more to hurry them up, even stating their frustration moved towards the employee rather than the customer being slow:

*“She had loads of bags and she was putting two things in a bag and then starting another bag and then she was coming back and putting a bit more in and I was thinking just shove it in the bag and take it HOME. The employee definitely should do something and speed them up I was like come on do your job hurry them up” (customer 3).*

Similar to the other examples, the customer states the main cause of the CCI is efficiency and that they are taking too long. The customer indicates that it is up to the employee to do something and manage the situation, highlighting that the customers annoyance started with the fellow customer, but then moved towards the employee the longer the transaction occurred, suggesting that employees then became the centre of the annoyance. The examples around NCCI and employees causing frustration for customers indicates that in many of the scenarios that customer A is irritated by customer B such as using too many vouchers or talking, but the irritation moves to the employee after they do not manage the situation and often “make it worse” by having longer conversations with customers.

There has been little research on the perception of employee response from the customer perspective, and this study supports the view that it needs further attention. There has been some research that focused on employees causing negative CCI (Nicholls, 2005; Anaya et al.,

2016 Dorsey et al., 2016) but further research has been suggested (Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019), with no studies focusing on the supermarket industry and little from the employee viewpoint.

Although employees did cause negative CCI by spending too long talking to some customers, it was also clear that employees did cause positive CCI and sparked pleasant conversation. Customers noted that employees often joined in conversation to keep the chat going, or by talking to two customers separately, and then together at the same time. Few studies have examined FLEs as facilitators of PCCI (McGrath and Otnes, 1995) but have focused more on the impact of employees in C2E interactions, rather than looking at how employees influence CCI.

#### 4.5.1.2 Employee mistreatment

The second subcategory of when the employee caused the CCI was classified as employee mistreatment, when customers took offence to employees receiving abuse or poor behaviour from another customer and they then tried to defend the employee. Research has identified that employees receive abuse from customers in many different service environments: Travel and Hospitality (Giuffre and Williams, 1994; Guerrier and Adib, 2000); airline (Hochschild, 1983; Hall, 1993; Hu, 2017); and retail (Lovelock, 1996; Harris, 2008). However, this is all taken from the viewpoint of the employee and the research focuses on how the employee perceives the abuse and the impact it has on them. However, the findings from the current study identifying that other customers can defend the employee, especially when the employee was unaware of the abuse occurring. For example, one customer defending an employee when they had another customer complain:

*“Whilst I was queuing (...) the lady in front of me starts sighing and tutting as she is unhappy with the wait time (.)the lady turned to me and said "it is a joke this is that you have to wait to hand your money over If I went to walk out I bet they would soon stop me” and laughed but I just calmly said “well it isn’t ((cashier name)) fault it is just one of those things my dear” I made sure I mentioned the cashiers name to indicate that I knew her well so they might not be too rude and the lady just kind of agreed with me and calmed down” (customer 20).*

This highlighted that a customer was unhappy with the service provided and vented their frustration at another customer about an employee. This could be viewed as trying to get another customer to agree with them about poor service, possibly trying to gain strength in numbers and gang up on the employee as previous category identified “mutual moans”. The cause of the CCI was the employee and how the one customer deemed the organisation and employee to be providing poor service, whereas the other customer took offence with the other customer and defended the employee. Lovelock (2004) contributed insights into employee abuse through exploring the suggestion that, in many instances, the customer is not simply wrong but “thoughtless or abusive” (p. 251), from both the perspective of the service employee and other customers. Lovelock (2004) research identified that other customers frequently witnessed and felt uncomfortable with customers abusing service employees. The customer defended the FLE and even identified the employee by name to the fellow customer, highlighting their relationship with the employee and that they know them well enough by first name.

Mistreatment of employees has been studied extensively from the employee’s viewpoint (Harris and Reynolds, 2004; Hu et al., 2017), highlighting that problem customers can cause distress to the employee, and high staff turnover for the organisation. Employees frequently

received abuse from customers, with Boo et al., (2013) identifying that nearly 82% of customer contact staff in the service industry encountered discourteous customer behaviour during their previous year. However, further research into CCI and employee abuse could greatly contribute to the literature. This research identified that customers did not like seeing employees mistreated, insight into their feelings during these transactions is recommended and would greatly aid management in dealing with C2E abuse.

#### 4.6.2 Employee perspective

##### 4.6.2.1 Employee caused the CCI

The FLE perspective identified that they knew they were often the cause of NCCI, when they were attempting to provide assistance in some scenarios. A full breakdown of the CIT quotations can be found in appendix 4.9. No incidents identified that FLEs purposely tried to cause a negative interaction between two customers, but occasionally did on accident. An example of this was by an employee trying to help one customer, but ended up irritating another customer:

*“We often open up new tills and choose a customer who is at the back of the line and move them to a new one (.) but often people try and go straight to the new one who haven’t been waiting. And we just have to say to them “sorry this is being held for somebody else” and they always give the customer I’m holding the till for a dirty look as if it’s their fault. I feel like the customer I’m holding it for sometimes no longer wants it and feels guilty as if they’re getting special treatment” (employee 16).*

This incident identified that the intention was to provide a good service to a customer, however it ended with both parties unhappy at the outcome. Customer A were irritated because they

missed out on the front position of the till, perhaps embarrassed by the misunderstanding, with Customer B feeling guilty because it was perceived as if they were getting special attention. When questioned further, the employee suggested this type of CCI happened often and they were aware they were doing it but it was their training that dictated this behaviour. On the surface of the training, it looks to be a good technique, as one customer is moved to the front of the queue and will be served more quickly. However, no consideration has been taken about the impact of this in relation to C2C interactions. The employee stated it made them feel “uncomfortable” and that they were just “doing as they were told”. This again highlights the importance of CCI specific training to eliminate possible NCCIs that could be avoided.

The chapter has identified the varying types of CCI that are present not only from the customer perspective, but also from the FLEs. Analysis of the two viewpoints identified that although there are similarities of their CCIs, there were also large differences between the categories. One of the major contributions comes in this chapter via a comparison of the viewpoints, with the findings indicating that customers were often involved in types of CCI that employees were unaware of, and therefore left unmanaged.

Customers stated how they received ‘signalling behaviour’ from fellow shoppers which was perceived as a negative CCI from the customer perspective. The signalling behaviour included both verbal commands such as telling the customer to “get organised” and physical pressure such as standing closely and tapping their card in attempt to speed up their fellow shopper. However, customers also noted a positive form of CCI that was not identified by the FLE, a sub-category within the social typology classified as ‘friendships’. It would be very difficult for FLEs to notice the difference between friendships that stemmed from interacting with the store compared to pre-existing friendships that were outside of the store. However, the FLE

perspective also indicated unique types of CCIs that were not mentioned by customers, in particular a type classified as ‘mutual moans’. Employees noted that if one customer were making a complaint, then other customers would frequently join in with a fellow customers complaint and support them, leaving the employee in a vulnerable spot as they became outnumbered. This type of incident showcased that how left unattended, CCI could escalate and frequently move between CCI categories, such as how customers leaving trolleys unattended and blocking the aisle, could move into the physical contact sub-category if left unmanaged. Additionally, the need for CCI management from employees was a continuous response from customers when prompted if they felt their C2C incident should be managed. Customers frequently identified the need for FLEs to step in and manage the situation and identified FLEs should be more proactive in their response, especially regarding other customers “controlling” their fellow shoppers with verbal comments and spatial intrusion. This chapter highlighted that CCI occurred in the supermarket industry from both the FLE and customer perspective, providing an original contribution to the services marketing literature. However, the chapter also highlights the need for CCI management as suggested by customers, with the data highlighting that CCI can escalate without management. Therefore, the following chapter discusses the management technique utilised by FLEs and if the techniques originated from training or personal experience.

## **5.0 Management of CCI**

When two or more customers interacted and engaged in CCI, it was important that the FLE managed the situation correctly. Within the service marketing literature there is a recognition that CCI plays an import role in the service encounter and can create a positive or negative customer service experience (Harris et al., (1995; Mattsson, 1994; Solomon et al., 1985). Left unattended, NCCI has the potential to cause negative emotions associated with the customer service experience, and as Wu (2007) identified, there are strong links between NCCI and customer dissatisfaction, further highlighting the importance of management. Additionally, the importance of CCI management was highlighted in this research with many customers suggesting FLEs should do more and manage their C2C encounter. CCI literature supports this viewpoint, highlighting that customers perceive the service organisation to be responsible for recovering NCCI (Baker and Kim, 2018), with Bitner et al., (1994) identifying that customers are likely to blame the system or employees. Furthermore, Nicholls (2005) identified that organisations may gain a competitive advantage by utilising FLEs to deal with CCI, highlighting the importance of managing customer interactions. Schneider and Bowen (1984) state organisations need to use information acquired from FLEs when making service development and service modifications due to the frequent contact with customers. However, few studies have advocated the merits of the FLE perspective and have instead focused on the customer perspective (Bitner et al., 1994; Harris, 2000; Halliday, 2002; Bejou et al., 1996), something observed by Nicholls (2010) when identifying a research agenda for CCI.

Nicholls and Mohsen, (2019, p.799) highlight the importance of FLE management and identify 5 key questions that need further exploration:

1. How perceptive are FLEs of CCI?
2. To what extent do FLEs see CCI as something which needs handling?

3. How do FLEs handle CCI?
4. How do employees feel when dealing with CCI situations?
5. What are the consequences of CCI intervention for employee satisfaction?

Although their research identifies many key factors, such as FLEs possessing the ability to identify CCI and variations in customer sensitivity to CCI, the research occurred in a non-retail environment and proposed more empirical testing was necessary. Research by Wu (2007) identified how employees could manage CCI in the tourism industry, however it focused more on strategic management with an emphasis on managing the customer profile, conveying a clear position in the marketplace, and attracting customers that are demographically compatible. Although this is applicable in the tourism and hospitality industry, in supermarkets, customer grouping is heterogenous by nature with a wide customer profile due to the commodity of goods being sold. Attracting customers by their demographic and managing customers using compatibility management is not something that could easily be achieved in supermarkets (Martin and Pranter 1989).

The main focus of research around management of customers is centred around C2E interactions and customers who misbehaved (Daunt and Harris, 2013; Harris and Reynolds, 2004; 2006; Fisk et al., 2010; Fullerton and Punj, 2004). The current research techniques focus around coping strategies (Harris and Reynolds, 2006; Baker et al., 2012; Huang and Miao, 2012) rather than proactive management techniques. Although previous research has identified theoretical tools for managing CCI, such as Pranter's (1995) compatibility scale and Martin and Pranter's (1991) service roles, seldom has research focused on practical management techniques and training within supermarkets. Martin and Pranter's (1991) service roles and Pranter's (1995) compatibility scale are both dated, and little research has focuses on managing

CCI from the perspective of the employee. Currently the techniques are based on CCI typologies from the customer perspective and little attention has been paid to how the FLEs cope with CCI daily. Identifying management techniques from the FLE perspective may highlight the strategies that are employed by FLEs whilst dealing with customers regularly and how they feel utilising the techniques, not merely what employers tell them to do.

Although there is a seldom research on frontline employees' responses to CCI, Huang and Miao (2012, p.658) identify that "literature on frontline employees' responses to dysfunctional customer behaviour in general provides insights into how employees respond to awkward customers". They point out that the literature suggests three streams of research in this area: emotional responses, job-related reactions, and coping strategies. The research presented here aims to add to the literature and identify management techniques used by FLEs when dealing with CCI.

This chapter presents a conceptual framework that showcases the varying techniques utilised by employees when dealing with CCI, taking into consideration numerous situational factors and scenarios. Factors such as the location of the CCI, the customer age and severity of incidents all play an important role in how the FLE deals with CCI. Furthermore, this chapter identifies how the FLE feels whilst CCI occurs, especially NCCI and makes recommendations for future research.

### 5.1 Managing the customer experience

Managing the customer experience is a complex phenomenon and data from this study identifies that employees managed CCI by utilising a decision-making process that is showcased by the utilisation of a management framework. Nicholls (2005) identifies that CCI

management literature has produced frameworks for assessing the relevance of different types of CCI; but does not utilise frameworks for management of interactions. Fisk et al., (1980) identifies the value of service frameworks by suggesting that they can be beneficial in a number of ways: aiding the comprehension of service experiences; making communication about diverse services much easier; identifying issues that should be considered in the design of the service delivery; and specifying relationships between the components of the service experience. The framework produced in this study identifies the various factors that emerged from the data as influential components in the decision-making process for FLEs.

#### 5.1.1 Framework for managing CCI

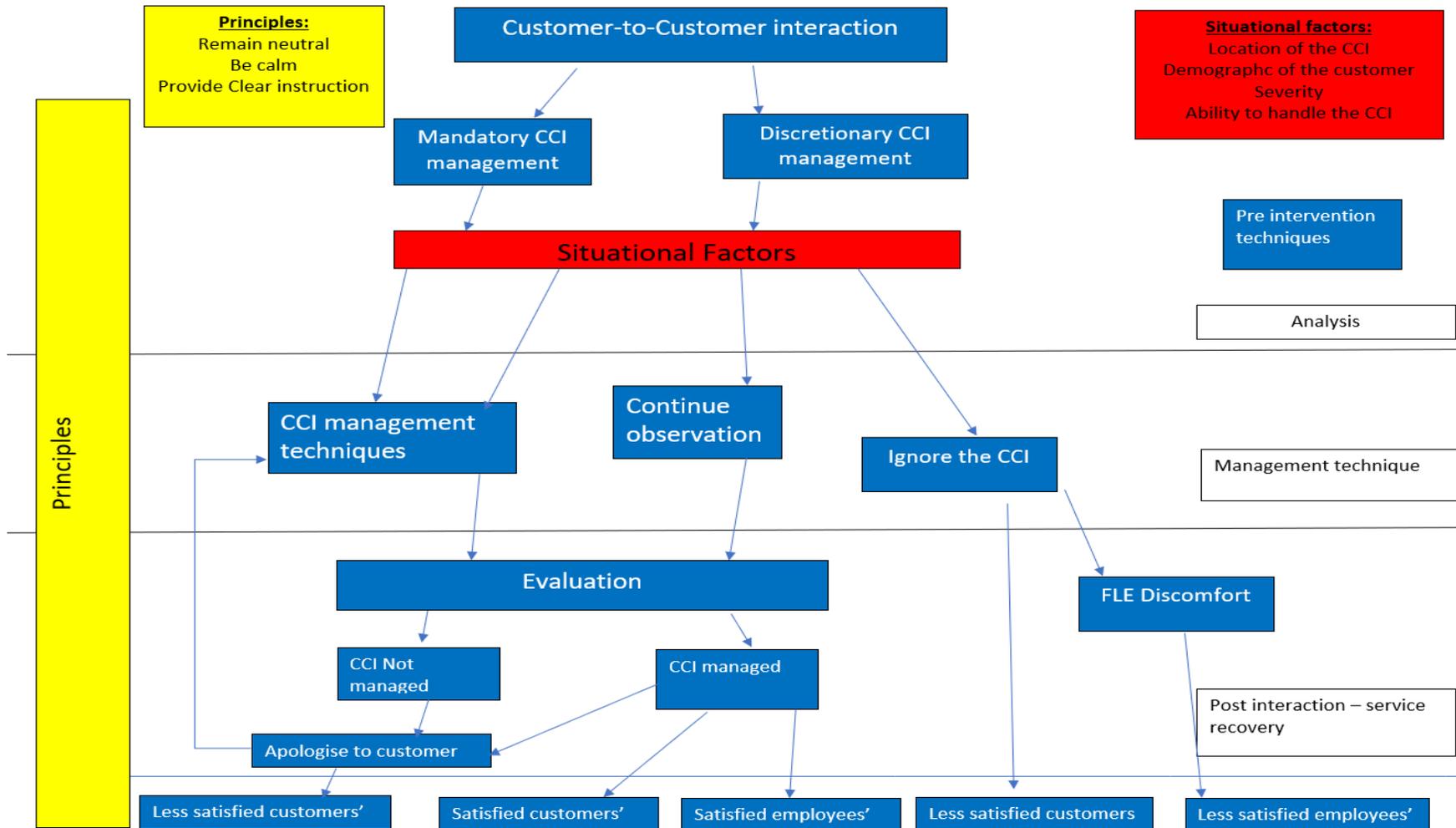
The conceptual framework below identifies the management processes that occur when dealing with CCI from the FLE perspective. It highlights that there are many factors that influence the decision-making process for employees and shows the importance of observations before dealing with CCI. Employees indicated that observing the CCI before interacting was a key management technique and something that employees tried to use as frequently as possible. This finding is particularly significant because it highlights the importance of establishing training techniques that can be utilised for the FLE when dealing with CCI. The framework indicates that employees deal with CCI by using a systematic approach that consists of three phases: assess, action and service recovery.

The initial stage of managing CCI occurs via assessing the scenario when employees would try and observe the interaction before using a management technique. Employees try to spot CCI before it happens, analyse, and observe the situation fully, gathering as much information as possible before acting. This technique is classified as the first stage of managing CCI; observation and assessment.

After observing the CCI, employees would utilise a management technique, continue to observe the CCI or ignore the CCI depending on various situational factors. Although many of the techniques utilised derive from formal training, employees stated most of the techniques used come from experience and personal judgement – even suggesting that training techniques they were told to use, hindered the customer experience, such as in the cafeteria when other customers would carry the trays for fellow customers and exchange pleasantries.

After the management of the interaction, the techniques are evaluated by employees and either lead to the completion of the CCI or identify the need to utilise another technique to satisfy the customer. If the employee is unable to identify a suitable technique or does not know what to do, they often sympathise and apologise to customers – which the literature identified as a successful technique when dealing with unhappy customers (Bowen and Johnston, 1999; Huang, 2008; Wieske et al., 2012). The framework is a process that employees use whilst managing CCI, that provides continuous feedback. And allows employees to deal with a wide range of customers at varying stages of the interaction. Service-recovery was particularly useful when the employee's original choice of management technique was not successful and utilised a feedback loop. This frequently led to employees utilising a different technique and starting the management process from the action stage, trying to gain more information.

### 5.1.1 Conceptual framework for managing CCI



## 5.2 Assessing the CCI

The first stage of the framework focuses on observing the CCI where assessment of the scenario occurs before deciding on a how to manage the situation. The findings indicate that the first stage of the assessment depends on the interaction falling into ‘mandatory’ or ‘discretionary’ types of interactions. Discretionary management of CCI is classified as when the employee has the opportunity to observe the CCI, assess the situation, and then decide on the appropriate management technique, which sometimes involved continuing the observation and not managing the interaction at all. Whereas mandatory management of CCI is when management of the situation is unavoidable. This occurs when employees are confronted with two or more customers seeking a response from the employee, such as asking the employee directly for help in regard to a C2C encounter. See table 5.1 for a full breakdown of discretionary and mandatory incidents.

Research around FLEs observing customers is mainly focused on C2E interactions, especially in regard to managing customer misbehaviour (Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Huang and Miao, 2010). Furthermore, the “boundary spanner” role identified by (Bitner et al., 1994, p.97) gives frontline employees a “unique vantage point” (Huang and Miao, 2010), highlighting that frontline employees get to observe the CCI occurring before becoming involved at an interpersonal level. However, most research focuses on illegitimate complainers, problem customers and looks at the C2E relationship, known as a dyadic interaction between two parties (Eiglier and Langeard, 1975). This was explored by Eiglier and Langeard (1975) in their servuction model and much of the service literature has focused on dyadic interactions between a customer and the employee. However, further research explores the “triadic nature” of interactions when conversations occur between an employee and two or more customers (Harris et al., 2000; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019). Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) research

identifies how triadic interactions occur and the importance of the FLE perspective when dealing with customers interacting.

Table 5.1

<b><u>Discretionary management interaction</u></b> When employees had the option to observe the CCI before deciding if they were to manage the CCI.		<b><u>Mandatory management interaction</u></b> When employees did not have the option to observe the CCI before reacting.	
<b><u>Spatial</u></b>	<u>Blocking examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blocking areas in store</li> <li>- Blocking the till area</li> <li>- Blocking the aisles by talking</li> <li>- Standing in front of products</li> </ul> <u>Physical contact examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Touching another customer</li> <li>- Pushing other customers when near the discount section</li> </ul>	<b><u>Spatial</u></b>	<u>Physical contact examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pushing another customers trolley</li> <li>- Hitting a customer with a trolley</li> </ul>
<b><u>Etiquette</u></b>	<u>Socially unacceptable behaviour examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eating food from a plate that was left behind</li> <li>- Customers shouting at each other</li> <li>- Customer moaning loudly about the return service</li> <li>- Swearing loudly</li> </ul>	<b><u>Etiquette</u></b>	<u>Socially unacceptable behaviour examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leaving rubbish</li> <li>- Arguing over a car crash</li> <li>- Touching products, smelling products</li> </ul>
<b><u>Social</u></b>	<u>Passing comments examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topical conversation – Weather, smell of fresh bread</li> <li>- General pleasantries</li> <li>- Humorous comments</li> <li>- Compliments such as clothing and appearance</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Assistance</u></b>	<u>Physical examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearing away a table for another customer in the café</li> <li>- Reaching a product</li> <li>- Removing litter for someone</li> <li>- Copying a behaviour of another customer</li> <li>- Not returning products such as clothing to its original place</li> </ul> <u>Informational examples:</u>	<b><u>Assistance</u></b>	<u>Product examples:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cheaper products using vouchers or elsewhere</li> <li>- Hiding products and returning later to purchase them</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Location of a product</li> <li>- Showing someone where the toilets are</li> <li>- Telling others how to behave, such as where to put the rubbish</li> </ul> <p><u>Product examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chatting about good products and how the clothing looks nice</li> <li>- Recommending drinks in the café</li> <li>- Poor quality products</li> <li>- Hording items</li> <li>- Telling other customers, they like their flowers or clothing that they have bought</li> <li>- Took a product off another customer at the customer service desk saving time</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Employee focused</u></b>	<p><u>Employees caused the CCI examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff talking to customers going too slow</li> </ul>	<b><u>Employee focused</u></b>	<p><u>Employees caused the CCI examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff holding a till for another customer irritates fellow customers</li> </ul>

The table indicates that many of the interactions reported by employees were discretionary incidents and employees had the opportunity to assess before interacting. However, some incidents were mandatory and required immediate action. Employees decided on the category of the CCIs based on situational factors, that included the severity of the CCI, the location of the CCI, the demographic of the customer and ability of the FLE to handle the situation. Depending on the varying situational factors, employees could either continue to observe, be forced to directly manage the interaction, or ignore the CCI altogether. The perception of mandatory and discretionary CCI were influenced by the situation factors and assessed by each individual FLE. However, there were common characteristics of mandatory CCI that required employees to directly step in, such as when physical contact occurred, or customers were in a heated argument. This is supported in the literature by Nicholls and Mohsen (2019, p. 808)

research that identified NCCI between gradual and sudden situations. “Gradual situations were classified as situations where a customer is behaving in a potentially disturbing way, but which can be tolerated, or at least given longer to see if the behaviour ceases or settles”. Whereas sudden situations occurred when customers were perceived to be behaving in a manner that could not be monitored and required immediate action. If the CCI was discretionary in nature, it allowed employees to observe and gather more information before deciding on the most appropriate action, with the data indicating that further observations were advantageous for the employees. If the CCI was discretionary in nature, it allowed employees to observe and gather more information before deciding on the most appropriate action, with the data indicating that further observations were advantageous for the employees. Additionally, when incidents were discretionary in nature, it often meant that customers were unaware they were being assessed and observed during the CCI, similar in nature to the findings from McGrath and Otnes (1995) who identified overt and covert types of CCI. This is a particularly interesting finding, as customers who knew they were being observed could potentially have a greater expectancy of the FLE to step in and manage the situation, whereas when discretionary CCI was occurring, if the customer did not know they were being observed their expectations could be lower.

The use of assessing and observing in the services literature has been explored and identified as a management technique when dealing with customers. However, not all CCIs would have been perceived by FLEs in the same way. For example, what one employee deemed as socially unacceptable may differ from another employee depending on many factors. As highlighted within the literature, customers sensitivity towards CCI varies depending on factors such as personality (Gergen, Gergen, and Meter, 1972) cultural differences and age (Small and Harris; 2014; Caber and Albayrak, 2014; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2015) could all play an important role in assessing CCI. Employees who are nervous and suffer with confidence could

turn a blind eye towards NCCI, especially physical forms of CCI due to the fear of confrontation. Additionally, extroverted confidence employees could like the challenge of dealing with CCI and therefore could have jumped in much sooner when NCCI was occurring. Although sensitivity towards CCI has been explored, such as how incidents can be perceived differently depending on factors such as confidence, the probability of incidents being noted in the first place also needs to be taken into consideration. Not all employees were likely to spot CCI occurring, or fully understand the implications of NCCI, such as one employee noticing an aisle being blocked and it prevents other customers from passing, whereas other employees not the incident but may not fully think about the impact. This type of holistic approach has seldom been explored in the services literature and needs further study to understand how employees perceive CCI in different ways.

The research on assessing situations focuses on C2E interactions around customer misbehaviour (dyadic interactions i.e. between a customer and employee). An important element of assessing CCI before managing the scenario is linked to the attribution theory and trying to understand the scenario from both customers' perspectives. Bitner et al., (1994) utilised the attribution theory when describing employees in a "boundary spanning" role to exam the dissimilarities in viewpoints between customers in the service environment. Attribution is the process by which individuals explain the causes of behaviour and events, more specifically external attribution which can be used to interpret someone's behaviour based on the situation that the individual is in, i.e. the influence of the service environment. The use of assessing the service environment is utilised by the FLE to "take in as much information" and decide what issues the customers were facing before engaging in the interaction. The employees showcase an understanding of the attribution theory and that assessing the interaction enables them to identify the different attributes between customers and manage the

interaction once the details have been gathered. This was particularly important when observations led to early intervention by the FLE, a key management skill that FLEs showcased and will be utilised in training recommendations.

This research adds to the current body of knowledge by indicating that triadic interaction allows employees to assess the information before managing the situation. During dyadic interactions (C2E) employees are forced to engage and need to manage the situation, but during triadic interaction employees frequently assessed the scenario before engaging. The findings suggest that assessing the CCI enabled employees to make better judgement of the situation and even intervene before the incident escalated. One employee summarised the importance of assessing the CCI by stating:

*“You’ve got to see what is going on first. You do not just jump in and start managing situations when there is more than one customer, you see what’s what before being rash and making decisions. You watch first” (employee 11).*

The employee highlights the reason that assessing is important, is to gather information before making decisions. The employee states that “rash” decisions should be avoided and that without observing, managing CCI can lead to mistakes made by the employee. The importance of managing customers during a triadic conversation was highlighted continuously by employees, stating that C2E interactions were much easier to deal with than CCI. Employees stated that they tried to “treat it the same” because “that’s how they’ve been trained” but it was not as simple as that. Employees identified:

*“It is definitely harder to control, because you’re not the one in control you’re simply observing another situation and have to deal with two conversations” (employee 1).*

This supports Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) viewpoint that specific CCI training is necessary for triadic conversations, replacing the traditional dyadic exchange model that is currently utilised when providing management techniques during training. The employees highlight that training focuses on techniques for dealing with one customer at a time (C2E) and CCI specific techniques are seldom incorporated.

Triadic encounters allow for employees to assess both viewpoints, utilising attribution theory to understand the viewpoints and requirements of both customers. The differing attributes between customers in this study mainly focuses on blocking and time, such as some customers liked to stand and chat, whereas other customers wanted fellow customers to move quickly through the store and not block the aisles. The employees claimed to be skilled at early intervention and tried to spot incidents before they escalated and became serious issues. This is similar to the CCI typology chapter around spatial awareness and CCI escalating between two subcategories: blocking and physical contact. Employees recognised the triggers of NCCI and managed the situation if they saw one customer do something that might irritate another. This is an important skill to have as observing customers enables employees to analyse the situation and utilise appropriate action. For example, a customer who was looking for a particular item, had left his trolley out in the middle of the aisle which blocked a lady from passing by. The lady who was being blocked off asked the gentlemen to move, but he did not hear. The customer said, “excuse me” twice, before putting her hand on his shoulder and said, “excuse me can you move your trolley”. An employee witnessed this interaction and noted that

the gentlemen did not look happy and caught him by surprise. The employee managed to step in before the interaction could escalate and neutralise the situation:

*“I just nipped in and said “can I move this for you Sir? Are you ok having a nice morning?” and I sort of smiled at the other woman as well and she mouthed ‘thank you’ and smiled at me” (employee 8).*

The employee managed to spot the situation occurring and step in before it escalated as it was noted both customers looked irritated, but they both left the interaction with smiles. This technique was successful because the employee observed and analysed before intervening before it became serious, making it easier to manage. The main strength of assessing the scenarios first is that it enables employees to perform the “boundary spanning” role, understanding the customer and decide on the correct technique.

When employees were involved in discretionary interactions, they had the chance to both observe and gain as much information from both customers. However, when mandatory interactions occurred, employees did not have the opportunity to observe, but could still assess the scenario by trying to gather as much information as possible. In particular, employees would try and gather as much information without interrupting by allowing customers to talk, both during the C2C and when asking for help from the employee. This enables the customers to talk and provide information without employees interrupting, with one employee indicating that they had a rule that would allow the customers to talk for the first 60 seconds. The employee states that they “don’t speak for the first 60 seconds of interacting, to make sure I hear their side and almost let them run out of steam”. This implied that by allowing the

customers to talk, they calmed down and were not so agitated. When prompted further the employee managed to describe an example in detail:

*“when dealing with a customer complaint, or a feud between families (...) I ask what the issue is and let them speak for as long as they need and then I give about a 10 second silence to gather my thoughts and let them calm down because they’re only agitated if they have someone to argue with but I always speak in a calming manner and let them get the ranting out of their system” (employee 18).*

This example identifies that assessing the situation can occur for both discretionary and mandatory incidents. Employees identify that allowing customers to communicate without interruption enables the customer to express themselves, provide information and aids assessment of the CCI for the employee. Employees also indicate that by allowing the customer to talk, it makes the management process easier as they often solve the situation themselves and makes them “look silly”:

*“I stand in silence and let them get it out of their system because they can’t argue with someone who isn’t shouting back, and it makes them look silly. Half the time they sort it out themselves after they’ve heard how ridiculous they’re being” (employee 14)*

Assessing the situation allows customers to provide information to the employee and the incident highlights that after more information is acquired, management techniques become clearer. This is highlighted by employees stating that customers often made themselves look silly, suggesting a more obvious technique is now visible after the customer has provided more detail, even suggesting that they “sort themselves out” indicating that customers no longer

require FLE attention. Assessment of the incident identifies that employees think engaging with customers straight after NCCI occurs should be avoided and assessment is necessary, engaging quickly after NCCI can cause more agitation.

Employees frequently chose to continue observing CCI during discretionary incidents as a way to gather more information and assess when to intervene, if at all. When mandatory CCI occurs, and employees are forced to respond, employees attempt to prolong the assessment stage of CCI management by allowing the customers to speak and gather as much information as possible, which even led to incidents “sorting themselves out” without any FLE intervention. However, this needs to be correctly implemented by employees, highlighting the importance of CCI training as customers may perceive the techniques as if they are being ignored, rather than a technique to assess.

Most employees utilised assessment techniques before managing the interactions between customers, with observations occurring for discretionary incidents being highlighted as a particularly useful technique. Observations go some way to addressing the difficulty in managing triadic conversations as highlighted within the literature (Harris et al., 2000; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2019), giving employees the chance to observe before interacting. The value of observing the interaction before deciding on the appropriate management technique has been highlighted in this study. Where the FLE can observe and has knowledge on the situation prior to managing the situation has been identified as an important step in the management process, however, where the FLE is unaware of the situation and does not spot the incident early, they had to utilise techniques that would allow for further information to be gathered such as allowing the customer to speak and asking questions. Training to help employees identify CCI occurring would provide them with examples of CCI and potentially allow for longer periods

of observations or to step in and resolve the problem before it escalated, such as in the typology chapter where blocking could quickly lead to physical contact.

### 5.3 Situational factors

When deciding on the appropriate management techniques, there are various situational factors that influence the decision-making choice for the FLE and their overall perception of CCI. These factors are the location of the CCI within the store, the demographic of the customers, the severity of the incident and the FLE's perception of their ability to handle the situation.

#### 5.3.1 Severity

One of the most influential factors that played a role in managing CCI, was the employees' perception of severity around CCI, with employees judging that some forms of CCI were more severe than others. Although the judgement of severity is subjective, employees within this study identified the judgement of severity revolved around customers' safety, the likelihood of escalation and the repercussions of non-management. When employees were observing the interactions, all employees stepped in if they perceived severe NCCI occurring, with the data indicating it was types of CCI such as physical contact, drunken behaviour or shouting between customers. Literature around CCI severity is not something that has been explicitly explored, although this research supports Nicholls and Mohsen, (2019) findings that FLEs had the ability to identify different levels of severity in regard to CCI. Their research identified that situations could escalate and required actions based on how serious the perceived CCI was, which they classified as gradual and sudden situations. Research adopted from the customer viewpoint has also been explored and showcases that severity is subjective, and that customers vary in their sensitivity to CCI, with some customers feeling strongly towards customer interaction, whereas others had a more relaxed view (Martin, 1995; Reynolds and Harris, 2009).

From the employee perspective, they frequently made judgements about the severity of incidents, in particular potentially dangerous situations for customers. For example, when an NCCI was occurring, employees identified that the severity determined their action:

*“It depends how serious it looks between them (the NCCI). I don’t really like confrontation and don’t like to be shouted at but I will step in if it gets too much and starts to cause a scene (employee 2).*

This example highlights that the employee could have potentially utilised observations without intervening, but when the incident escalated, they did eventually step in. Furthermore, the example emphasises that the severity of the CCI is subjective and that the employee was unsure on how serious the incident was, but simply that it “looked serious”.

Employees seemed to classify ‘severity’ in a number of ways, but the most important factor appeared to be a threat to customer safety or placing a customer in a dangerous position. The most obvious examples were when customers were shouting, a drunken customer bothering other customers or when physical altercation occurred. When these severe forms of NCCI did occur, employees noted they would step in “immediately”, without observation and manage the situation in a fast and swift manner, indicating that these were mandatory incidents. With employees stating that they “had to act” and disregarding mandatory NCCI was not an option. Employees further elaborated that it stemmed from their official training, not CCI specific, but types of customer misbehaviour that had elements of CCI present. However, some examples were deemed severe from the organisation’s viewpoint, but were not necessarily putting any customers at risk like the previous examples. One employee spoke about an incident in the

same manner as a severe NCCI, but it was around a customer telling another customer about a cheaper product at a different company. The employee overheard the conversation between the customers and stepped in immediately to defuse the situation without observing, indicating that they “have them making suggestions to customers to go elsewhere”. This type of incident was not deemed severe in terms of dangerous to other customers, but could potentially damage customer loyalty so the employee stepped in.

The findings indicate that employees had the ability to recognise severe forms of CCI, although if they could get away with observing and disregarding low severity incidents they would. The employees suggested that the training they received around these types of incidents was good and that “customer safety was a priority”. No employee suggested that severe incidents were disregarded, or even continued to be observed, with findings suggesting that action was always required and therefore mandatory incidents. This identified that the severity of the CCI was a strong influencer when making decision on managing CCI. Although this research focuses on the FLE point of view when it comes to CCI, it does not explore if FLEs had the ability to identify what customers deemed severe CCI. Further research is needed to identify if the severity of C2C incidents identified by customers and employees align, which could further shape the management of CCI. One possible solution could be a comparative study, with the same sets of CCI examples, asking both customers and FLEs to rank the scenarios in terms of severity. This could highlight if FLEs understand customer expectations and help employees manage incidents that are deemed most ‘severe’ and important to customers.

### 5.3.2 Location of the incidents

Whilst the categories of CCI noticed by customers and FLEs were similar, there were major differences in where they were noticed within the store, which has a big impact on the

management of CCI. Employees need to be made aware of the differences between where they perceive CCI occurring and where customers perceive CCI occurring, as many incidents may go unnoticed by employees if they are unaware that CCI is occurring within certain areas within the store. Although the literature has explored the impact of the servicescape on customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1992; Baker and Cameron 1996; Baker et al. 2002; Morin, et al., 2007), the impact of the in-store location on FLE responses is an unexplored area in the literature.

#### 5.3.2.1 Mapping CCI

The incidents have been placed on a floorplan of the store to provide a visual representation of all the incidents that have occurred, please refer to appendix (5.0). Customer-to-customer incidents have been noted down as positive and negative, colour coded and identified on the shop floor. The map does not include the café or car park because only a small proportion of the incidents occurred there. The two separate floor plans (appendix 5.1 and 5.2) highlight where the incidents occurred from the perspective of the customer (appendix 5.1) and the perspective of the employee (appendix 5.2). However, to increase clarity the two floor plans were combined (appendix 5.3) to highlight the disparity in identification of the incidents from the FLE to the customers. Incidents labelled with ‘C’ represent customers, and incidents labelled with ‘E’ represents the employee.

#### 5.3.2.2 Location of incidents - a comparative view

The floorplan clearly highlights that incidents occurred in ‘hot spots’ throughout the store, especially from the perspective of the employee. The ‘hot spot’ locations can be defined as areas where CCI will be more likely to occur, such as narrow areas within the store, places where waiting for service is likely; and areas where personal interaction is common, for example the customer service desk, checkouts and the cafeteria. The first notable factor that

stands out from the data is that the vast majority of incidents reported by employees were near the customer service desk, the checkouts and clothing department, whereas very few incidents were reported in the aisles or in the middle of the store. In contrast to this, customers noted incidents down the middle of the aisles and near the entrance to the store. This could be for a multiplicity of reasons – the first reason being very simple; that employees spend the majority of their time at the former locations. Employees who are cashiers are going to witness incidents that occur where they spend the vast amount of their working day, behind the till. Whereas in comparison, for customers large portions of the shopping experience may occur searching for products down aisles. Additionally, the perception of CCI by employees is important as some incidents will be spotted by FLEs but some may be missed. Not all employees noted CCI at the end of the aisles, so there are some concerns around the probability of employees being able to spot and manage NCCI. Many factors can influence this, such as if this type of CCI has occurred to them personally, whether they fully understand the nuances of some of the CCI, such as echo-CCI and what the impact of these interactions are.

The customer witnessed incidents are of greater spread than the employees, however they do still occur in bottlenecked spots. The customer viewpoint does indicate some areas are busier than others, such as at the tills, but overall, the incidents are much more widespread. The nature of the merchandise in a particular area will influence both customer behaviour and the degree of FLE presence. For example, the entertainment section is not a large area with numerous products and does not require constant stock replenishment, however it is a place where many products could spark conversation such as favourite movies and taste in music. Additionally, as products do not require restocking frequently and FLEs are not always present, customer may seek help from fellow shoppers as they are the only point of contact in the area. Many customers identified that they received unwanted product advice and if the employee does not

know these incidents are occurring, they cannot be managed. It is necessary to make employees aware of the CCI location from the customers viewpoint so employees can 'check in' to CCI hotspots and ensure that unwanted product advice is reduced between fellow customers. Harris and Baron (2004) identify that the amount of time spent within the service setting also influences CCI and the likelihood to engage in CCI. This is supported within these findings with the data indicating that CCI occurred in hotspots where additional time was spent.

The findings have identified that CCI can occur in 'hotspots' with many incidents occurring in places where employees are not necessarily present. The findings can aid retailers with staff resourcing and physical placement within store as currently many incidents are not spotted by employees as they occur in 'hotspots' away from the employee view. It is recommended that an FLE is made aware of the hotspots and potentially monitors aisles and around the discount section of the store to deal with NCCI. However, if staffing budget restricts this, CCI training for employees based on the shop floor may be a more suitable option. Many employees are located on the shop floor, replenishing stock, dressing the shelves and offering supports, therefore with the additional information provided by these findings, they can monitor the 'hotspots' in store. The maps indicated that CCI occurred in hotspots and that incidents were being missed by employees throughout the entire store. Further exploration is needed into this and observational research could further enlighten the service provider around CCI location. Attempts to measure or monitor CCI by the organisation may be possible with the use of security camera footage to further analyse where the FLEs rarely go.

#### 5.3.2.3 The impact of location on management of CCI

Employees clearly identified how the location of the CCI not only impacted on how they felt about managing CCI, but the location within store also had an impact on their management

technique. This is a key finding and has not been explored in the services literature regarding CCI, especially from the FLE perspective. The findings show that employees would utilise different techniques depending on where the incident occurred, such as in the middle of the store or at their customer service. Employees noted that if incidents occurred in the middle of the store, they would attempt to move the customer to a non-central location such as the customer service desk as they were worried the NCCI could be heard by fellow customers. Furthermore, employees noted that the location, such as centre of the store also had an impact on how they felt dealing with incidents this had an impact on the FLEs wellbeing and how they felt dealing with incidents which is something that needs to be incorporated into training methods. Employee 1 is a general merchandise manager who has worked in retail for over 30 years and made the comment about how the location can influence their feelings towards dealing with incidents:

*“I think it doesn’t bother me (dealing with CCI). But it depends on the severity. If they’re just at the customer service desk and they’re arguing I can cope with it, but in an open place I feel much more responsible for other customers hearing it” (employee 1).*

This indicated that the employee deals with incidents differently depending on the location and at least partly because they felt concern for other customers hearing the altercation. Additionally, it indicates they do not feel as secure in the middle of the store than at a service desk, which was echoed continuously throughout the data, an employee highlighting how they felt “safer” dealing with CCI in a familiar environment:

*“it is not as bad seeing them (customers) moan at the till but we’ve had people shouting before in the middle of the store so everyone can hear. In the middle of the store its horrible because*

*others can hear. Behind my desk I'm nice and safe, I just get anxious when I think it's going to like cause a scene" (employee 9).*

The example indicates that the employee feels much "safer" and more comfortable dealing with CCI at the customer service desk than in the middle of the store. This indicates that the CCI location effects the FLEs well-being and feeling towards managing a situation. CCI occurring in the middle of the customer made employees feel "anxious" because other customers may hear the NCCI occurring. Martin and Pranter (1991) identified that scenery is important for CCI and that often it is important to "hide information" from other customers, such as customers shouting at each other. Employees had the ability to spot this and correctly tried to shelter other customers from hearing this and move them towards the customer service desk.

Furthermore, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory refers to self-efficacy and the employee's belief in his or her ability to perform job-related tasks. Research suggests self-efficacy improves if employees are able to "exert control over one's own behaviour and social environment" (Gist and Mitchel, 1992, p.187), which could in part explain the reason behind feeling more comfortable dealing with CCI in some parts of the store than in others. Also, FLEs are likely to have more experience of CCI in some parts of the store and may feel more comfortable dealing with the incidents there. Currently, training is initially received by employees in offices away from the shop floor and then training to deal with customer issues is provided at the tills and customer service area. The main reason for this is where C2E scenarios usually occur, such as customer complaints and the returning of items. However, findings indicate that NCCI can occur throughout the store, not just in the standard C2E areas. FLEs currently do not feel as comfortable dealing with incidents away from the areas where

training was received, therefore a recommendation is to ensure that training occurs to deal with NCCI all over the store, not just at the customer service desk. Training is needed so employees can familiarise themselves when dealing with more than one customer in places they are not used to, such as aisles and the entertainment section. This will build on the self-efficacy findings about the servicescape (Bandura, 1977) and should lead to the employee feeling more confident and empowered dealing with customers.

### 5.3.3 Demographic

When deciding on a management technique for CCI, another factor that employees continuously identified was the importance of age. Age should be taken into consideration when managing CCI, as the findings from the previous chapter identified that customers had different service expectations depending on their age, overall younger customers preferred to interact less with service employees and other customers, whereas older customers enjoyed the interaction. Although, younger customers highlighted that if they did interact with other customers, they preferred it to be with customers similar in age. Also, older customers expected staff members to intervene more than younger customers, as when asked during the interviews if they would have liked an FLE to intervene, older customers disproportionately stated they wanted the CCI to be managed. This further emphasises the need for employees to be aware of this information and incorporated in to their CCI training.

The employee perspective identified that they tried to “look after” older customers, especially during busy periods and at locations when physical contact occurred, such as by the discount section. Older customers identified strong feelings towards employees, noting how “nice and friendly” they were and even referring to employees by their name, something which nobody under the age of 50 did. Employees highlighted how they gave preferential treatment to older

customers and actively identified the most vulnerable customers who were engaged in CCI. They noted how older customers can sometimes require additional help and physical assistance, especially during CCI encounters when FLEs identified that physical contact frequently occurred. Employees noted without their assistance some older customers could “lose out when customers had to compete for products:

*“I just try and watch the situation and assess everything. We have quite a few older customers and they should not lose out because people are hogging the discount goods and they’re too polite to ask” (employee 18).*

This scenario highlights that older customers may require additional help during some temporary contexts such as discounted items. Although employees noted that they should treat all customers the same, they did alter their behaviour and management of CCI because of age related factors. However, they technically broke protocol to do this. Employees need to be given the power to use discretion and their experiences to manage individual cases. For example, employee 6 identified that:

*“When on the till I think people get fed up when someone’s going too slow (...) especially older people they take ages in the queue. I try not to chat too much but I don’t do anything to hurry them up. I then apologise for the wait and laugh to the person behind” (employee 9).*

This example highlights that employees are aware of older customers and that although it may irritate a few other customers, they can always apologise afterwards and recover the problem. This was consistent across employee responses, with others even trying to actively encourage conversations between older customers:

*“I see customers talking all the time to each other like saying hello, especially early in the morning when I'm there it is a lot of older people who always say morning to each other” (employee 8).*

When the employee was prompted and asked if they intervened or got involved, they actively encouraged this type of CCI, they responded by stating they encourage older people to talk to each other “all the time”. Which supports the literature that older consumers’ frequently shop for social contact e.g. (Tauber, 1972; Gunter, 1998; Nicholls and Mohsen, 2015) so having it encouraged by the FLE is important.

When implementing a training plan utilising the framework, the importance of age needs to be expressed to employees to further heighten their understanding of management expectations. During the interviews, after customers had identified the CCI’s they had experienced, they were asked if they wanted an employee to intervene, older customers (50+) identified they did want FLEs to intervene in comparison to younger customers based on the responses to this question. This highlights the different expectations of customers and the need to treat each case individually. Furthermore, future research should identify the impact of age on FLE interactions around CCI and the outcomes of management. This would provide additional insight into customers zone of tolerance, expectations and need for CCI management.

#### 5.3.4 Ability to handle the CCI

One of the most important influencers to emerge from this study that had a big impact on FLEs management technique was their perception of ability to handle the scenario when two or more customers were interacting. When employees decided to disregard the CCI the main reason

was because they “didn’t know what to do” or were “scared to make it worse” with many suggesting “we don’t receive training for that”, further enhancing the need for CCI training. These could be defined as individual differences by employees and their ability to handle the various CCIs. Some employees may be more confident with NCCI than others, whereas some employees might not have even noted CCI occurring to assess.

When deciding on a management technique, if the employee decided to disregard the CCI, it was because of two factors, which were that employees feared making it worse and did not know what to do. Although similar in appearance, there was a big difference between the two responses. Employees who stated they were worried about making it worse, often continued observing, however if employees did not know what to do they frequently disregarded the CCI. The impact of not knowing what to do during these techniques not only led to FLEs disregarding NCCI, but according to Gist and Mitchell (1992), can affect employee’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and confidence. When an employee does not feel confident managing CCI, it can impact their self-confidence and reinforce their belief they do not know what to do and will continue to disregard the CCI.

#### 5.4 Actions

The conceptual framework identifies that employees try to assess the situation and gather information before acting and managing CCI. If the CCI is a mandatory incident, employees have to implement a management technique, whereas a discretionary incident indicates that employees have numerous options, such as continuing to observe, step in and use a management technique to deal with the situation and even disregard the CCI. This chapter aims to not only identify the management techniques utilised for CCI, but also to highlight if the management tools derive from training or personal experience. This is an important element

when developing training techniques for FLEs and identifying if the current training programme is suited to CCI. Table 5.2 identifies the different techniques FLEs utilise.

Table 5.2 Management techniques for dealing with CCI

<b>Management techniques for dealing with CCI</b>			
<b><u>Technique</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>	<b><u>Experience or formal training</u></b>	<b><u>Example</u></b>
Seeking assistance from fellow employees	When an employee asked for help from another employee/colleague within the store. This occurred mainly because they felt as if they could not manage the situation or it was not their responsibility, such as calling for a manager.	Training	“We never intervene with physical we don’t get paid enough (...) we shout for security” (employee 2).
Situation defusal	When employees would try and diffuse a situation, such as getting them to remain calm. This included remaining calm themselves and encouraging other customers not to react to other customers.	Training	“right, you either calm down or I’m going to walk away and not talk to you” (employee 1).
Offering alternatives	When employees tried to satisfy customers by offering alternatives such as a different product or service if the one they wanted was no longer available.	Training	“I offered him an alternative and was quite positive, I then showed him a few options” (employee 22).
Distraction	When an employee tried to distract the customer whilst they managed the CCI. Such as employees talking to a customer whilst ushering and guiding them in a particular direction.	Experience	A customer was blocking an aisle for another customer, so the employee distracted them to ease the situation.  “I just nipped in and said, “can I move this for you Sir (.) are you ok having a nice morning” and I sort of smiled at the other woman as well and she mouthed ‘thank you’ (employee 8).
Encourage CCI	When positive CCI occurred, employees would encourage and foster the pleasant experience	Experience	“I suppose I like to see people talking so I try

	with general remarks and pleasantries.		and encourage it” (employee 5).
Humour	Employees utilised humour as a management tool to encourage PCCI and stop NCCI from occurring.	Experience	I said “no wonder you want to get some fluffy socks like mine” and pulled my trouser leg up to show them both ((laughing)) (employee 8).
Continued assessment	When a situation continued to be observed, usually to ensure the interaction continued in a positive manner.	Experience	“You’ve got to see what is going on first (...) you do not just jump in and start managing situations when there is more than one customer (...) you see what’s what before being rash and making decision you watch first” (employee 11).

Overall the techniques that employees utilise when managing CCI are wide and varied, with the vast majority of techniques originating from personal experiences rather than official training. Official training seems to focus on negative customer interactions or around products, nothing around fostering PCCI or dealing with more than one customer at a time. Out of the 22 employees interviewed, 16 of them said they did not receive any training for CCI. The other employees suggest that the official training focuses on general scenarios that have relevance to CCI, rather than specific techniques that are focused on C2C.

Although classified as management “techniques”, the methods in use for CCI management are flexible and broad. Similar to the training employees receive for C2E management, the techniques are not scenario specific, but rely heavily on the employee using personal judgement around what technique to apply during the interaction. The previous chapter identifies the wide and varied range of CCIs that occur in the supermarket industry, so providing exact methods for specific situations is not only highly unlikely, but not desirable for service firms. Exact

methods would lead to an extensive list, with many of the techniques being tedious as CCI can take many different forms, with small details, such as the demographic of the customer, vastly altering the technique needing to be used. The framework showcases the stages employees took to deal with CCI, however from the findings employees frequently utilised their own personal experiences and made judgment calls. This supports the literature that employees need a broad skillset and service organisations should be flexible in their approach and empower FLEs to make their own decisions (Hochschild 1983; Mann 1999; Harris and Reynolds, 2006). Huang and Miao (2016, p.658) suggest that “giving employees more empowerment would reduce their negative emotions and antisocial behaviours caused by dysfunctional customers”.

#### 5.4.1 Techniques utilised from training

The data indicates that employees training for C2E scenarios does come in useful for CCI scenarios, but employees receive no training that is directly related to CCI. Table 5.2 highlights that only three of the techniques come from training in comparison to experience, although there are general principles that have been learned from training that are useful. The general principles that employees are equipped with via official training focuses on remaining neutral, being calm and making sure employees are clear with instructions. These principles were not specifically aimed towards CCI, but when dealing with customers in general around all types of interactions, mainly C2E. In general, employee's state that the training they receive is good but focuses on C2E, saying “they receive training for dealing with one customer, but certainly not two”. This was a consistent theme throughout - that despite the employees finding the training provided useful, there is not any specific CCI training and they must use general training principles and other management techniques not designed for CCI.

The three main techniques that employees state came from training were: getting customers to calm down, offering alternatives and seeking help from other employees. Employees note that these techniques are widely utilised across varying C2E scenarios and have to be used in CCI scenarios because “we don’t receive training for that sort of thing”. Employees state that “the training we receive is broad and not always applicable to managing more than one customer” and involves a general framework that allows for individual judgement. Employee 22 states “I think they give us a broad framework and then let us use our own discretion to make sure the customers are ok”. Employees note that the training in general is positive and useful, but that they would like specific training for managing more than one customer.

#### 5.4.1.1 Seeking help from other employees

A technique that employees state derives from their training is to fetch other employees if they feel they need support and assistance. The origin of this focuses on safety of the employee and involves employees getting support from security and senior members of staff. When severe and dangerous types of CCI occurs, employees say they call for senior management and security to assist them with the incidents as this is what their training suggests they do. The literature identifies that dealing with customer misbehaviour can be very stressful to employees, especially without the correct training technique e.g. (Lovelock, 1996; Berry and Seiders, 2008; Harris and Daunt; 2013; Huan and Miao, 2016). This further supports the need for specific CCI training as employees were often dealing with more than one customer at a time and identified that training had not been received. Customer misbehaviour has been identified to add stress and pressure to employees, which is made worse with a lack of training (Huang and Miao, 2016), so having two customers misbehave during severe NCCI will only add to these issues for employees. Harris and Daunt (2013, p.288) research identified that tolerance towards customer misbehaviour was “gauged via language and aggressiveness”, with

employees responses to varying “from verbal warnings, to the escalation of the issue to managers”, identifying that seeking help from employees is a technique utilised by organisations within the service industry.

Seeking help from other employees frequently occurs during severe forms of NCCI showcased in Harris and Daunt (2013) research highlighting that employee responses depend on the severity of the interaction. Fetching a fellow employee was deemed the strictest response and was utilised in this research most commonly when physical contact occurred, such as pushing each other and even fights. Employees state they never get involved and “follow training protocol” to fetch security to deal with the incident. Training identifies that if physical contact occurs, protocol is to inform security and senior management as “soon as possible”. Employee 14 indicated that being told to fetch superior members of staff is the first technique given to them during training, although not specifically for CCI, just general unpleasant situations. Employee 14 stated:

*“One of the first things we’re told about is getting supervisors or managers involved if you feel intimidated or are being abused because they have the authority to refuse service and ask them to leave with security (employee 14).”*

The employee identifies that calling for security was not a specific CCI management technique, but something utilised for different scenarios. Calling for senior management and security was a very common theme throughout. On one occasion, CCI occurred between a drunken customer causing a disturbance to other customer by shouting loudly. The solution was to call for security and have him escorted off the premises. Employee 4 recalled the incident:

*“One man came in very drunk and was being loud in the alcohol section and even a young lady said to him I don’t think you need anymore (...)so I got the lady to go and get security whilst I waited with him to make sure he didn’t cause a scene” (employee 4).*

What is particularly interesting about this incident is that although security was called, the employee adapted the training received and used another customer to help manage the situation. This occurred frequently with severe NCCI when employees had to fetch another member of staff – leaving the scene of the NCCI. The employee with this example stayed with the drunken customer and asked for help from a fellow customer who they sent to fetch security. Utilising another customer to help manage the situation is not a viable long-term solution for all forms of NCCI, however in this case it showcased a good example of an FLE utilising discretion and personal experience. Although in this case, the customer was willing to help, not all customers will be as willing to help dealing with jaycustomers.

#### 5.4.1.2 Getting customers to calm down

Employees state that one of the most common techniques they utilise when dealing with multiple customers in this study is to stay calm throughout any form of interactions when management of the incidents is needed. Although employees classify it as a technique when prompted how to manage CCI, it can be classified as a skill that may need to be utilised with a tangible technique, such as fetching another employee, rather than relying on it solely. However, employees also note that whilst they remain calm themselves, one method they utilise is to also tell customers to calm down if they are aggressive in-store, for example making comments to customers such as “you either calm down or I’m going to walk away and not talk to you”. This statement was taken by a general merchandise manager with over 20 years of customer service experience. By stating that unless the customer calms down, the employee is

willing to walk away, indicates self-confidence and a clear battle of power that can relate back to the 'Jaycustomer' trying to gain an advantage (Harris and Reynolds, 2004) and manipulate the employee with the 'customer is always right' trick.

On the surface it may seem a confrontational technique that could backfire, however employees frequently indicate it is a very successful technique, something supported by the literature. Previous research identifies that self-confidence and authority is a desirable skill to have. To be confident enough to tell other customers to calm down, otherwise they will walk away, with many staff saying that the organisation supports this view and no staff should be shouted at by customers. The training provided indicates that employees should be confident and walk away if spoken to poorly, but it is often harder in practise than theory. Having "public self-confidence" is a desirable trait in FLEs and that psychological "strength" to tell customers to calm down is something that should be encouraged with employees (Buss, 1980; Marquis and Filiatraul, 2002). Employees frequently identified that they instructed customers to calm down before engaging in management techniques, with many employees saying the technique was successful. Research around self-confidence is seldom amongst CCI studies, with the majority of research focusing on problem customers and how employees deal with sole customers who mis-behave.

#### 5.4.1.3 Offering alternatives

When employees engage in CCI management, they made reference to their training around product recommendation and made amendments to suit CCI scenarios. Employees state that in their training they are told to offer customers alternative products if the product they are after is out of stock. However, employees also use this technique to satisfy customer-to-customer complaints, such as when customers have been hording items or taking the last product in stock.

Employees suggested they perceived it to be a successful technique as they often phrased it to suggest they were giving the customer a better deal. For example, an incident involved a customer who was unhappy that another customer took all of the reduced products from the discount section. When confronted with an agitated customer, the employee offered different choices to the customer:

*“I offered him an alternative and was quite positive I might have even said “that stuff is reduced for a reason let’s get you a better one” and then showed him a few options (...) usually I don’t say that the product they wanted was not very good ((laughing)) but it does help. It makes them trust you, that you’re willing to tell the truth and have their best interests at heart. They always seem to listen to me more (employee 22).”*

The employee stated that customer was happy with the alternatives provided, as the data showed that from both perspectives, customers hoarding items and taking ownership of all the products irritated other customers and produced NCCI, so it was vital that the employee managed this type of interaction. Product ownership has been explored by McGrath (1991, p.432) who identified that in a gift shop environment, shoppers competed for “initial ownership of virgin merchandise”. The study was conducted via an ethnography and identified that shoppers “came in each month” and competed for new products against other shoppers. Although the context of the stores is different, shoppers still compete with other shoppers in the supermarket industry for products, especially if supplies are low. The issue of customers competing over low stock levels has become more relevant due to the current COVID-19 situation, for example customers ‘competed’ for sought after products during the pandemic with various reports from the media identified that pushing and even fighting occurred when products were limited and unavailable (BBC, 2020; Guardian, 2020).

Interestingly, McGrath (1991) research identified that customers got a thrill from “new products they haven’t seen before” as they competed for “ownership of virgin merchandise”. This indicated that customers competed with other customers for new products and tried to beat other customers to “virgin merchandise”. Therefore, the FLE tactic of offering alternatives that was positively accepted by customers could be due to customers being shown products that they did not know about before and could potentially feel like they’re seeing products that others do not know about because the employee has offered them, especially in supermarkets with a large number of SKUs.

This technique derived from C2E training according to the FLE responses, but has been adapted to suit CCI. Based on the response from the employees, they indicated customers were happy with being offered alternatives. However, this technique needs to be developed from their general training to a more CCI specific technique, which is supported by employees’ responses in this research and McGrath’s (1991) findings. Training should highlight the value of offering alternatives to customers, with indication that they are getting special treatment because they are getting an FLE insight. The training could indicate that the customer is gaining an advantage over other customers by having FLEs offer ‘expert’ advice, turning the negative situation of a product being sold out, into a positive one, as a good service recovery can increase customer loyalty.

#### 5.4.2 Techniques utilised from experience

The management techniques so far have derived from the official training that employees receive, however the other techniques have been generated from years of experience dealing with customers by the FLEs within this study.

#### 5.4.2.1 Distraction

A common technique that employees use to manage customers is to distract them so they may not know they are being managed, or to minimise the impact of being managed. Employees emphasised that they would try and distract customers from the initial CCI situation whilst making them complete a separate desirable action, such as physically moving customers out of the way of another customer whilst talking to them. Employees highlighted that they used this technique, usually in combination with another method of CCI management. For example, a customer was blocking an aisle with their trolley and was going to block other customers from passing around them. An employee stepped in and physically moved them out of the way, but tried to distract by asking how their day was and if they were ok, hoping they would not notice they were being moved out of the way for other customers. This form of verbal distraction was utilised frequently when physical contact management was needed, especially moving shopping trolleys. When prompted further the employee stated:

*“I just quite politely ask them to move and make a light-hearted comment about something in their trolley or about something in general. That sort of gets their trust and then I say “you don’t mind If we move this trolley or have this conversation at the end of the aisle do you?” and the always don’t mind or apologise it is just a better way of doing it than “can you move” (employee 8).*

The distraction technique focuses on engaging the customer in conversation, either about their wellbeing or contents in their trolley before asking the customer to move. The key to this technique is that the main purpose of the interaction is to move the trolley, but this is well hidden under the general conversation and the customer believe the employee is making small

talk/being friendly, rather than physically managing them out of the way. Furthermore, this technique also prevented NCCI from occurring, highlighting that employees do possess the skills that enables CCI prevention. Distracting customers can be viewed as a way of “softening” the blow, as described by the employee, such as asking them how their day was before moving them. However, the essence of that interaction was to take the customers attention away from an NCCI by preoccupying them in conversation whilst managing their behaviour. Preoccupying the customers and trying to distract them whilst a negative form of CCI occurred was a common theme in the data, for example whilst customers were waiting for other customers to bring an item to the till, employees would try and talk to the customer to “take their mind off of waiting” and distracting them from the NCCI that was occurring.

Distraction techniques are seldom expressed in CCI literature, with the main focus occurring in the general service consumption literature, especially in regard to music and how it is a successful distraction technique. The resource allocation model (Zakay, 1989) identifies that music plays an important role in reducing the negative emotions connected with queuing, as it is a form of distraction (Zakay and Homik, 1991). Zakay and Homik (1991) identify that when customers are in a situation that involves waiting, such as queuing at the checkout, they will often try to estimate the duration, with music helping to distract, leading to a positive perception of the service provided. Additionally, the resource allocation model (Zakay, 1989) identifies customers being occupied whilst waiting can result in a more positive experience, due to being distracted. A common type of CCI in this research focused around customers getting irritated when other customers were moving too slow around the aisles. The literature identifies that distracting customers with music could be a viable CCI management technique. In this research employees mainly utilised distraction techniques with general conversation to preoccupy the customer whilst managing their behaviour so they would not notice.

Future research is recommended to identify the effectiveness of distraction techniques during CCI in the supermarket industry, to not only identify the success of the technique, but to assess if general conversation by employees can be implemented in the resource allocation model. Music has proven to be a successful distraction technique (Zakay, 1989; Bitner, Hui et al., 1997; Baron and Parker, 2000), but further exploration into specific CCI contexts around waiting for other customers will be beneficial to service providers.

#### 5.4.2.2 Encourage PCCI

Another management technique that was highlighted in this research was FLEs encouraging positive CCI between shoppers. Employees noted that they would see customers engaging in CCI and if they deemed to be positive in nature, they tried to foster and encourage the interaction. Employees identified that they would see customers speaking to each other and encourage the behaviour to continue by joining in the conversation or making small remarks to continue the verbal interaction.

Facilitating this sort of behaviour between customers is crucial, as the literature identifies that PCCI conversations is influential in both patronage and service trust (Harris and Baron, 2004), especially regarding products in the retail environment. Although employees indicated they engaged to build a trust relationship between the customers in a three-way conversation, encouraging customers to talk can instigate further conversation in terms of proactive helping. Much research has been paid to the proactive helping behaviour (Zhang et al., 2010; Auld and Case, 1997) and the importance of customers becoming 'information givers' like an employee. Harris and Baron (2004) identified the value of customers interacting and stated that they can

provide each other with product or service information that can be trusted more than an employee, as customers have no loyalty to a particular store and often give honest opinions.

Employees stated that they constantly tried to engage in positive CCI and added pleasantries to customers interacting. For example, employee 5 stated they liked to show customers that they were proactive and listening to conversations, they identified that they enjoyed seeing customers talking so tried to encourage the behaviour in the hope that they continue their conversation. Throughout this research employees frequently stated they would add general comments and pleasantries to encourage CCI between customers by positively commenting on customers products, joining in general chit chat and making jokes.

Although this study supports the research and identifies that encouraging CCI is a positive management technique, on occasion the employees intervened when positive CCI was occurring, something that needs to be avoided. A café assistant, with 21 years' experience noticed a positive interaction being interrupted by an employee:

*“My son came in here and whilst I was tidying up to finish my shift, he took a tray over for an elderly couple. A colleague took the tray off him and helped the customers” (employee 3).*

When asked why the employee intervened when a positive interaction occurred the employee suggested it was universal training and general policy not to let customers carry a tray if they are struggling. “We are told to not let customers take trays if they struggle with them (...) but she probably should have left them to it as they looked happy enough”. This indicated that the employee knew the interruption during the positive C2C incident was bad for the customer experience, but it followed the protocols of the company set out via the training provided. This

highlights the importance of empowering employees to make their own judgements, to stop colleagues from disrupting positive CCI occurring when it can add such value to the service organisation. Although Harris and Baron (2004) research identified that C2C exchanges can be positive and more favourable than C2E interactions, employees in this study identified that their training suggests they must step in and “take over” the interaction if they see one customer helping another customer. This differs from current research and highlights that employees need to be given autonomy to judge the situation for themselves and receive CCI training that highlights encouraging PCCI rather than interrupting.

Tansik and Smith (1990) identified that employees who are customer facing are frequently given “scripts”, or prescribed responses during C2E interactions. However, these set of scripts are often focused on the customer to employee relationship such as A to B, but this may not be applicable when there is another customer present. Can the script technique be used by A, when B and C are interacting? There are additional levels and dimensions that are visible during C2C encounters that are simply seldom in C2E. The complexity of the relationship changes and scripting may not always be applicable in these scenes. The employee witnessing a customer carrying a tray for a fellow customer needs to receive training to educate them that this could potentially be a positive interaction, and that following specific scripts is not always necessary.

Having scripts to follow is very difficult to do during CCI scenarios due to the nature of the interactions, furthermore, even the use of scripting for C2E interactions is contentious. Humphrey and Ashforth (1994) cited in Hartline and Ferrel (1996, p.55) provide evidence that employees who "mindlessly" follow a service script are less likely to meet the needs of the customer and more likely to make mistakes. Hartline and Ferrel (1996) research identifies that managers committed to service quality should utilise behaviour-based evaluation when training

their employees, empowering service workers to make their own decisions in regard to management techniques. This supports earlier research from the customers' perspective, that showcases customers value the service encounter more favourably when employees are able to adapt to meet individual needs (Bitner, 1990; Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; Scott and Bruce, 2004). Therefore, for CCI scenarios, employees should be empowered to make judgement calls and utilise their own personal knowledge to manage the situation, rather than the current scripting in place.

Currently there is a clash between what employees are told to do and what the literature suggests. This study identified that from the customer perspective, they enjoyed interacting with other customers and the customers frequently tried to help customers where possible, something heightened by McGrath and Otnes (1995) study regarding the "proactive helper" role. However, FLEs in this study identified that their training suggests they should intervene, potentially interrupting a PCCI. Training is needed to showcase the impact of CCI and the value it can add to the service environment by encouraging PCCI to occur.

#### 5.4.2.3 Educating techniques

Another technique that derived from personal experiences, came via the form of educating customers. Employees cited they would not only try and manage customer behaviour but would also try and educate customers, in hope that it would alter their behaviour in future visits. This type of management was most frequently cited by cashier assistants at the checkout, and often focused on good practise whilst queuing. The reason why cashier assistants utilise this technique most often could be because there are certain 'unwritten' queuing rules that are always present at the checkout, such as not standing too closely to another customer or placing a divider down. These unwritten rules were identified by customers in this research and

provoked NCCI when they were not followed. Therefore, by employees educating customers around these rules, it could possibly limit NCCI between customers.

Employees on the checkouts identified they tried to educate customers so that they were not only giving them an order, but giving them a reason that would speed up the transaction.

Employees stated:

*“If people are taking too long with their cards and money and there is a big queue I will actually start to call out down the line that “can you have your cards and money ready please to save time” and that sort of speeds the process up and prepares them so its quicker” (employee 6).*

What differentiates this technique from the previous techniques, is that employees are not only managing a behaviour, but offering an explanation to the customer as to why they are giving instructions. It was acknowledged from both the customer and employee perspective that customers taking too long was a cause of NCCI and employees stated they could feel other customers getting irritated at the till if other customers were slow. Employees tried to educate customers by informing them to have their payment method ready, supporting the customer perspective that other customers should be prepared and ready to pay. Similarly, another employee tried to educate customers by informing them about placing dividers behind their shopping on the conveyor belt at the checkout. Employees stated they *“try and push the dividers as far down as possible and ask customers to put them in between shopping if they haven’t already”*. This again indicates the employee trying to educate the customers and eliminate a form of CCI as customers constantly noted they get irritated when having to place dividers down. Both of these educational techniques focused on educating customers, as a form

of CCI prevention, so they understand the protocol and prevented the NCCI occurring during future visits.

More importantly, from the customer perspective during these types of NCCI's, the data indicated that customers tried to manage their fellow customers and speed them up by standing closely, applying pressure by tapping their credit cards and making small remarks. Therefore, by having FLEs try and manage these types of CCI's, it may stop other customers trying to manage their fellow customers. This is beneficial as organisations in the retail industry can train their employees what to say, using the correct language and actions. Whereas leaving the management of NCCI to customers can be problematic, as with this research already highlighting some of the provoking techniques customers can use.

Trying to educate other customers' needs to be further developed so the FLEs understand the value of their management tactics, especially how they communicate to customers. Training is needed to ensure that customers are advised to behave in a way that benefits them and their fellow customers, without the FLE coming across as too bossy or abrupt. Furthermore, research highlights customers attribute blame to service organisations that fail to respond to NCCI (Bitner, et al., 1994; Nicholls, 2005). Therefore, not only will customers be educated to avoid forms of NCCI, but other customers will witness the NCCI being managed, which supports Baker and Kim's (2018) study that found over 90 per cent of customers deemed organisations responsible for recovering NCCI.

#### 5.4.2.4 Humour

When dealing with customers FLEs utilise humour frequently, with a quarter of the FLEs interviewed stating they use it as a management tool. Humour is defined by Meyer (2000) as a way of providing pleasure and social interactions from an audience, and “has been found to enhance marketing communication efforts, establish a rapport with customers and build strong relationships” (Ge and Gretzel, 2017, p.47). However, the focus from marketers has mainly focused on how organisations can effectively use humour within advertising to customers directly (Speck, 1990; McGraw, Warren, and Kan, 2015), with few studies focusing on humour for CCI purposes. This research identifies that humour is used by FLEs for encouraging CCI, keeping customers calm and as a way of distracting them during NCCI, making it a valuable management tool. The use of humour was not something that was provided in training, but comes from personal experiences, with employees stating that it needs to be utilised correctly and is not applicable to all scenarios as it could be classed as inappropriate during a severe form of CCI such as physical contact.

This highlights the need for role-playing techniques to be utilised during the training of CCI, so employees have the opportunity to practise before implementation. Furthermore, future research into the use of FLEs using humour is needed to identify if the positive use of humour between organisation and customer (Speck, 1990; McGraw, Warren, and Kan, 2015; Ge and Gretzel, 2017) is applicable to CCI scenarios. The examples of humour in this study can be viewed in table 5.3.

Table 5.3 The use of Humour

<u>Employee number</u>	<u>Scenario</u>	<u>Employee response</u>	<u>Type of response</u>	<u>Reason</u>
8	A customer was talking to another customer who said it was cold and the customer responded with “no wonder you’re cold in them bloody sandals”.	I said “no wonder you want to get some fluffy socks like mine” and pulled my trouser leg up to show them both ((laughing)).	Humorous comment	Make the customers laugh - “I always try and have a bit of fun”
2	Two ladies moaning about the weather saying it was too hot in a trivial manner.	I told them “it was about time we had a proper summer” and they both laughed.	Humorous comment	Encourage the scenario and conversation Make the customers laugh
3	A customer reaching a cake for another customer in the café.	I ask them if they want to pour the coffee and put a uniform on	Humorous comment	Make the customers laugh
11	After helping customers at the checkout.	If I’ve been really helpful to a customer I sometimes say “right go on get out of here I’ve given you enough information already	Humorous comment	Humorous comments – less formal than training. “I like to think it makes them feel comfortable and

				gets everyone chatting at my till”.
22	When a customer wanted a product that was unavailable due to other customers taking the product before them.	I’ll say, “oh you don’t want that rubbish” and people laugh	Humorous remark	“keeps them calm and makes them smile”.

Humour was utilised by employees and occurred by making remarks and humorous comments towards the customer. Humorous techniques were usually utilised as a precursor for other techniques previously mentioned, such as distraction and offering alternatives. A humorous technique was only utilised as stand-alone management technique when the CCI was low in severity and did not require major action. The findings suggest that FLEs utilised humour as a way of making customers smile, improving the customer experience and as a tool to defuse NCCI, before utilising another technique if necessary. This supports the findings by Meyer (2000) that identified communicators can take advantage of humour as it is a way to defuse a potentially tense situation. However, utilising human relief theory, humour, expressed via laughing, is frequently utilised to reduce tension between two or more parties in various situations (Berlyne, 1972; Morreall, 1983). Human relief theory has long been studied and suggests that humour is a very useful technique to relieve tension during awkward and unusual scenarios, even suggesting that humour may be the only option in some contexts (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004). Humour can be used as a tension relieving tool in certain situations, but is

subjective in its nature and again highlights that personality traits and personal beliefs can be an important factor when discussing CCI.

Customer to customer interactions have frequent “tension spots” where two parties both believe they are correct, or they disapprove of the other shopper’s behaviour. Additionally, it is important to note FLEs may perceive the CCI differently between themselves. One employee

Some situations can only be managed after the tension has been relieved, so the use of humour can be viewed as a way of returning the customers to a relaxed state before offering an alternative management strategy. For example, when a customer was unhappy that other customers had taken all the products, an employee made a joke by stating “you don’t want that rubbish” to which the customer laughed. The employee could then offer them alternatives and the problem was solved, without the use of humour to diffuse the situation however, the customer may not have been so accepting of an alternative product. O’Donnell-Trujillo and Adams (1983) identify that different types of laughing (awkward and simple laughing) has been found to remove tension between parties and to encourage additional conversation during unusual encounters.

Interestingly, research suggests that people find it pleasing to reduce dissonance (Festiner’s, 1957), suggesting customers will look to resolve issue and avoid conflict. However, service marketing research into Jaycustomer behaviour (Lovelock, 1994; Reynolds and Harris, 2004) contradicts these findings and indicates some customers enjoy “causing trouble” and evoking negative feelings during interactions. Further research is recommended to identify if human relief theory is applicable to all forms of CCI and further examination into the jaycustomer and how they can be managed.

However, research has focused on how the way in way humour can be used to develop emotional connection to customers and enhance brand image (Speck, 1990). Ge and Gretzel

(2017) identified that utilised correctly it can assist marketers to promote services and engage customers attention towards organisational messages, enhancing the attitudes towards a firm. This research could potentially shape CCI management techniques and help FLEs deal with customer interactions. Seldom research has focused on humour in CCI but focuses more on the organisation and advertising methods, however, findings from this study identify that it is utilised by employees and has developed from experience working in the supermarket industry. Furthermore, human relief theory suggests it could provide pioneering insight into dealing with NCCI scenarios where many employees in this study they felt they had no techniques available.

The findings about the use of humour in CCI settings provides an interesting problem for service organisations. The research findings suggest that FLEs have the capability to utilise humour successfully, providing examples of it in use and how the customer laughed and enjoyed the interaction. This was also supported from the customer perspective, as they frequently stated they had positive interactions with FLEs and other customers with humour at the centre of the interaction. However, humour is not something that can necessarily be “taught” and the research findings suggest it was utilised most often in a natural way, with many of the incidents provided in this study being passing comments, not something that could have been prepared for in training. This further supports the notion that service organisations need to empower FLEs to make behaviour-based decisions for each individual CCI scenario, a training “script” cannot be utilised for humour management techniques. Also, the ability to be ‘humorous’ could be a desirable skill to look out for when recruiting FLEs in the industry. The benefits of having an employee who is naturally funny and can use it manage customers is clear, so further research into recruitment methods that identify this skillset could be highlight beneficial to the services industry.

#### 5.4.2.5 Continued assessment

Another key management theme is that employees often did not intervene when CCI occurred, even after the incident had been witnessed. Employees utilised observation as a management technique, to use their personal judgement when to intervene or when to just continue the observation. Employees indicated that although they are encouraged to manage CCI, in some scenarios it was viewed as more beneficial to do nothing and leave the customers alone. On the surface, continued observation looks identical to disregarding the CCI, however the two techniques differ greatly. The main difference between observation and disregarding the CCI, was that with continuous observation, employees took ownership of the incident and observed to ensure customers remained happy. Continuous observations occurred when employees observed, were willing to step in, but used their judgement that it would be more beneficial to the customer to just observe. However, disregarding the CCI was when an employee noticed customers interacting and turned a blind eye, did not engage, and even walked away. The use of continued observations indicated that employees often used their judgement and felt that doing nothing was what was best for the customer. This again highlights the importance of further understanding around individual differences to heighten the understanding around why some employees continued their observation whereas others did not.

Employees noted that they would often see customers being helped by other customers who provided physical assistance and exchanged information with each other. As previously discussed, customers can play an important role in providing other customers with “authentic” information from a non-biased viewpoint, with customers trusting the voice of a fellow customer more than an employee who works for the service organisation. The employees stated that rather than intervene and disturb the interaction, they let other customers provide assistance to each other.

*“I’ve seen people talk to each other and quite often I’ve seen people helping each other with trays. I’ve actually seen one man give another man a newspaper as he knew he was waiting for it (...) like he finished with his newspaper and then goes and gives it to another man who he see’s reading it sometimes and they laughed and smiled and thanked each other” (employee 6).*

Asked if they had intervened, they stated:

*“Why would I stop something good it means less work for me ((laughing)) and like I said I’m sure they know each other anyway” (employee 6).*

The interactions presented occurred in the café and involved other customers offering assistance in the form of physical aid (carrying trays) and the passing of items (newspapers). Rather than the employee intervene they left the customers alone to interact without any assistance as no other value could be added from the perspective of the employee and may even interrupt a positive scenario. Although the employee indicated the interactions were good, the reason for not managing the situation was because it meant “less work for them”. In this scenario the customer fulfilled the duty of an employee and provided physical assistance to a fellow customer. Furthermore, employees utilised continuous observation because they felt no other value could be added as the customer received necessary information and assistance from other customers. However, employees indicated they would step in and add more information if necessary. This again showcases the difference between continuous observations and disregarding the CCI. Continuous observation showcases that employees are willing to step in, whereas disregarding the CCI, the data indicates at no point were employees going to manage

the scenario. Employee 9 stated they overheard a customer giving directions to another customer about the location of a product.

*“The other customer says something like “oh the home wear department” and then I’ll try and be more specific and jump in and be like “yeah it is on the back wall under the entertainment sign” or something like that (...) so I leave the customer to it and see if they can give the correct information and if I know they can give them more information then I will join the conversation*

*Interviewer: What about if the customer tells them everything correctly?*

*Employee9: Then I’ll either leave them to it and not say anything additional or I’ll just confirm what they say (...) you know I think customers will believe me more if I confirm what they say (employee 9).”*

The interaction and management technique specifically highlight’s that the employee utilised continuous observations, but were willing to step in and intervene during the CCI because they could add more value to the interaction. However, if enough information was provided by the customer they would have just continued to observe. Baron, Harris and Davies (1996, p.79) identified customers as being a “hidden resource” that service organisations should utilise and that customers need to be considered as valuable human resources in the service delivery system (i.e. “partial employees”). Customers in this study frequently assisted other customers, freeing up FLEs to deal with other scenarios and adding to the experience of others as customers frequently enjoyed helping each other. Interestingly, not all employees allowed customers to interact without intervention, with previous incidents identifying that employees followed their training with “scripts” and stepped in even during a PCCI. This further

highlights the need for CCI training, so FLEs can use their own ability and judgement to deal with CCI.

Within this study, employees also revealed that they felt intervening would not be beneficial to the customers in the CCI and could “make the situation worse”. Employees suggested they would continue to observe to ensure the situation did not escalate, but implied that they would not intervene as they feared it would become worse and they would “antagonise” the customers rather than help. The data suggests that employees used their judgement and had the ability to know when they should not step in and what that by doing so would further irritate the customers. This highlights the importance of employee empowerment rather than the current scripting approaches utilised in training. For example, even if customers were breaking service protocol and rules, employees used their experience and knew not to manage the CCI as it would make it worse. Employees noted that whilst working on the basket only checkout, that has a limited number of items allowed, they had customers complaining about other customers:

*“When I'm on the basket till which is supposed to be 10 items or less I can tell other customers get annoyed when other customers break the rules and have more items” (Employee 11).*

When prompted on what to do about the situation, the employee specifically stated nothing, with the reason being “I'd make the situation worse”. This was a common theme throughout the employee interviews, with numerous FLEs making the point that “doing nothing is a management” technique, identifying that there is a big difference in choosing to not react to a situation and not knowing what to do. The employee expanded on the statement of “making it worse” by saying it would not be beneficial for customer retention:

*“I could play by the rules and tell them they’re not allowed through here because they have more than the 10 items, but that will just cause more harm and could lead to the customers not coming back” (Employee 11).*

According to their general training, they should step in and inform the customer about the rule, with the employee stating that it could lead to a customer not returning. However, it could also lead to an argument between two customers, as the one customer could perceive the other customer to be a ‘troublemaker’ and trying to side with the organisation. The example highlights that although the one customer is breaking the rules, the issue for the employee is when another customer tells them not to serve them or informs them they have more than 10 items. This escalates the incident from a discretionary incident to a mandatory incident forcing the employee to react. This example highlights the need for further research into CCI and retailing, with the potential for observational research around service protocols and behaviour.

Employees noted that they had to analyse and weigh up if enforcing the rule would be more beneficial, and used their judgement, often deciding that doing nothing was the most suitable option for overall customer happiness. A specific study focusing on service rules being broken could provide fruitful insight into CCI and explore if Lovelock’s (2001) “rulebreaker” customer, has an impact on other customers, as that study mainly focuses on the cost to the service organisation. The findings from this study suggested that other customers got irritated by customers breaking “service norms” and rules set out by the organisation.

Furthermore, interesting examples from FLEs were around customers ganging up together, classified previously as ‘mutual moans’, which is PCCI. This was evident especially with employees working on the customer service desk who often noted customers ganging up on

the employees by making a complaint together. Employees stated they would often here customers say, “what are you hear to complain about” and that employees felt customers liked to moan together rather than on their own. In these scenarios’ employees decided that after observing and analysing the situation, doing nothing was the best solution to the problem, stating:

*“I do not intervene. What is the point? It would just cause an argument and it is more hassle than it is worth when people are like that (...) they just like to moan for the sake of it plus at the end I'm supposed to say can I help you with anything else? I have to always ask that and it seems pointless and sometimes it winds them up even more if I didn't help them with what they wanted, it almost sounds as if I'm being sarcastic” (employee 9).*

This incident provides detail around why employees had to utilise experience and articulate their own management techniques, as asking their set phrases and questions at the end of a C2E interaction may cause greater irritation. The employees indicated that interacting would make the scenario worse than the original CCI, as the literature frequently identifies that customers can enjoy moaning together. The response from the employee identifies that the management technique for CCI, cannot make the customers unhappier than the CCI itself.

When employees utilised continuous observations, they were adopting a unique viewpoint that is seldom discussed in services marketing literature and clearly highlights the need for CCI training. As previously discussed, Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) highlight the triadic nature of C2C interactions, where employees get to witness customers interacting. Training could help identify what to look for when CCI is occurring and utilise role-play, so employees are comfortable using observations. Many employees felt the need to step in as soon as they saw

an interaction between two customers and training could help employees take a step back and just observe. It will take confidence and patience for employees to allow customers to interact, so getting the chance to practise this in a controlled environment will be useful to FLEs. Also, service organisations have access to front-line employees who are valuable sources of information. When continuous observations are utilised, they get to witness CCI from a neutral viewpoint and gain insights into CCI that is seldom discussed in the literature. They are valuable resources to service organisations and need to be utilised by further research into their perspective across different industries.

### 5.5 Disregarding the CCI

The management techniques employees utilise vary depending on the situation, with many techniques starting with observations before making the necessary choices, although occasionally, employees decide to disregard the CCI altogether. The findings show that if employees do not know what to do during some interactions, they simply disregard the situation.

When an employee overheard an argument between customers, they identified that they “just try and play a deaf ear and act like I can’t hear them”. When asked why the employee pretended to ignore, they stated it was because “they didn’t have a solution to the problem”. This was a common theme throughout – that employees simply disregarded the CCI if they did not know what to do. This was the main difference between continuing to observe and disregarding it altogether. If the employee did not know what to do, they would simply ignore the situation and walk away from the area of the CCI. Whereas with continued observation, they knew that it was best to not engage with the CCI as it would make it worse, but remained present to ensure

it did not escalate. Employee's indicated they would speak to if spoken to, but try and ignore the situation, even walking away:

*"I'm not ignoring them if they speak to me (...) I always respond but when I hear two customers with a problem talking I don't always intervene because that's a solution I don't have how am I meant to make the fruit better quality?" (employee 17).*

The employee further expanded on the point and identified they will often walk away if the problem persists and they do not know what to do:

*"When they're complaining about something I can't help I don't see the point in me responding I just ignore it or walk away or something you know? But if I hear them talking and asking questions and I can intervene then I will yes definitely (...) I suppose I've never thought about it before" (employee 17).*

Interestingly the employee states that they had not thought about their response to NCCI before being asked for this research, indicating that they may have not realised they disregarded certain types of CCI. The data indicates that no mandatory incidents were disregarded, such as being spoken to directly, whereas when voluntary incidents occurring, some employees would disregard them. Other examples of disregarding CCI was found by employees who tried to "look busy" and act in a way that would discourage customers for seeking assistance when CCI occurred. An employee stated:

*“I just ignore it (NCCI) and pretend to be busy on the till or something I don’t know what to do its horrible really (...) I have even pretended before that I haven’t heard them” (employee 11).*

This indicated the employee acknowledged CCI was occurring but pretended to be busy so that they could disregard the CCI and not have to manage the incident. The need for employees to step in and manage NCCI is supported by the data from the perspective of the customer, where most customers did want employee intervention when NCCI occurred.

FLEs have indicated in this study that they possess the ability to prevent CCI from occurring and escalating, whereas when employees disregard the CCI, they leave the outcome of the CCI in the hands of the customers, which can be very problematic. There are clear reasons why employees may deal with customers more professionally than when customers interact with other customers, the most obvious being that it is their job and they are paid. Additionally, customers have been found to take extreme measures when they do not like the behaviour of fellow customers, such as verbal abuse and some CCIs even involved fighting (Grove and Fisk, 1997; Dorsey et al. 2016). If customers witness employees ignoring the CCI, especially when customers need support and help, it could damage the relationship between the service organisation and the customer.

Employees receive training for dealing with customers in volatile situations and are experienced dealing with customers on a daily basis. Furthermore, as a paid staff member, employees do not want to cause distress to customers as it can not only affect their job, but also the customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the organisation. However, when customers are left to manage fellow customers, there is no incentive to provide good management techniques.

The data has indicated that customers will try and manage other customers behaviours by standing closely in a queue, physical contact and making provoking remarks. Customers can manage a fellow customer as rudely and harshly as they wish when an employee disregards the CCI. When employees ignore the CCI, it could be viewed as encouraging customers to manage the situation themselves, which was identified in the previous chapter, described as signalling behaviour. Further research is recommended into the impact of employees disregarding CCI from the customer perspective, as this is seldom discussed in the literature. This research highlights that employees can be found to disregard CCI, especially NCCI so examining the impact of this on customers and how they react can be useful for service organisations and will further highlight the importance of CCI management and training.

#### 5.6 Post interaction

Even when management techniques were utilised, employees indicated that they were not always successful, and employees stated they would attempt to recover the customer experience after they perceived their original technique ineffective. Service recovery focuses on maintaining customer satisfaction and patronage after an unfavourable incident, and “recovering” the service so the customer remains satisfied with the service organisation.

There is a wide range of service recovery literature that focuses on compensation and monetary reward (Bitner, 1990; Conlon and Murray, 1996; Smith and Bolton, 2002; Grewal et al., 2008), with the service recovery also examining the importance of empathy towards customers (Tax et al., 1998; Gorry and Westbrook 2011; Kraus et al., 2012). Although these studies identify the importance of service recovery, they focus on C2E interactions and do not examine if a service can be recovered for specific CCI scenarios. The conceptual framework highlights that service recovery took place in this study via the use of empathy and apologising to customers

after they were involved in a negative CCI experience. However, it was also noted that apologising can be viewed as a technique on its own, but within this current study it was mainly utilised as a recovery mechanism and used in conjunction with another technique, which is supported by the current understanding in the literature (Grewal, Roggeveen and Tsiros, 2008).

The data from the participants suggested that not all employees had the ability to manage CCI, and the default response often came down to simply “saying sorry”. Apologising on its own was not deemed a successful technique from the employee’s perspective, with research suggesting that information and detail should be provided along with empathy rather than just saying “sorry”. For example, Grewal et al., (2008) research highlights that even offering money as a form of compensation was not enough for some customers without explanation and detail. The research highlights that during the service recovery process, even offering compensation to customers without an explanation, “has no impact on evaluations” regarding the service and likelihood to return.

#### 5.6.1 Apologising

Although the service recovery technique of apologising was used to calm the customer and make them feel as if the employee was on their side, it also was used as a way of allowing the employee time to think before choosing another technique that might be more successful than the original technique utilised. The CCI literature has discussed the effectiveness of apologising as a NCCI response tactic, highlighting that it can “sooth disgruntled customers” (Clemmer and Schneider 1989; Takaku, 2001). Furthermore, studies have looked into the use of empathy for FLEs (Kraus, et al., 2012, p.319) and how empathetic responses such as apologising “strengthens the positive effect of employee empathy on customer satisfaction, leading to more ‘symbiotic’ interactions.” Research highlights that empathy can be a pivotal

part of the service when dealing with customers as is often used as the starting point of C2E interactions, is an important prerequisite for successful service encounters (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988; Kraus et al., 2012), further supporting the conceptual framework that apologising to customers before implementing another technique was useful.

One of the most common uses for apologising was when other customers asked questions to the employees about another customers' misbehaviour and all that employees felt they could do was apologise on behalf of the absent customer, suggesting that apologising was a technique in itself. However, the conceptual framework highlights that within the data employees rarely utilised this as a standalone technique but used it as a mechanism to chain techniques together within the feedback loop. Without providing any information and simply apologising, employees stated customers were left "unsatisfied" with the response. Employees identified that the technique of apologising was used when they were unaware of other CCI techniques to utilise. For example, there is nothing that could be done about a customer leaving their shopping to go and grab another item, yet customers still expected an action to be performed, supporting the literature that customers view service organisations as responsible for recovering NCCI (Bitner et al., 1994; Baker and Kim, 2018).

Not knowing what to do in certain situations added stress to FLEs job roles and indicated they simply said 'sorry'. Taking on the emotional blame as highlighted in this research links back to emotional labour, which can cause stress (Taylor and Kluemper, 2012; Hu, et al., 2017) and dissatisfaction at the workplace (Dormann and Zapf, 2004; Huang and Miao, 2016). Although apologising reduces tension and makes customers more "forgiving" for poor quality service (Thompson et al., 2005; Hodgson and Wertheim 2007; Krause, et al., 2012), without utilising another technique or explanation it was not classed as successful service recovery. There were

numerous examples of employees utilising apologies in an attempt to recover a poor experience for customers that were not the employees' fault, such as products being moved by customers.

Employee 7 stated:

*“I think customers get annoyed when people leave items in the wrong place or put the sizes not in order or hang them up incorrectly (...)so people will see a pair of shoes on the side and like the design but want a different size and because someone has moved them they don't know where anything is (.) people often ask me where I can find it and say stuff like “people should put these items back where they found them rather than just leaving them around” (employee 7).*

This incident indicated that the customer was unhappy with another customer and expected the employee to present a solution. The employee however only apologised and indicated that they “can't do anything other than apologise. Which is annoying”. This supports the framework, highlighting the need for FLEs to receive training to showcase that apologising should be used as part of a feedback process and not a tactic on its own. Training could highlight that although apologising is needed and has a place in the service delivery, it should be utilised with another technique. The data indicated that employees in this study frequently adopted this approach and that not only did employees apologise, but they would often use other management tactics, such as agreeing with the customer (when a product was moved):

*“I say “oh I am sorry it is annoying isn't it. It happens to me all the time in other stores I wish people would put it back where they found it. Sometimes you're just in a rush aren't you and put it back wherever is easiest” or something along those lines. I try and take them to the correct place and find the products for them” (employee 13).*

The first thing the employee does is apologise to the customer, but interestingly they also tried to defend the other customer and explain why they might have left the products there, helping the current customer to understand the situation in a clearer manner. The data indicated that apologising alone was utilised by employees, but providing an apology along with understanding and an action approach could be more favourable for customers. The employee apologises for the other customers' actions but also defends them as they are not present and cannot defend themselves by explaining their reason and even suggesting that they have done this themselves. This could be a very useful technique to incorporate during training scenarios for FLEs.

Employees need to be exposed to CCI types, so they understand it from both perspectives and the reasons why customers act, react and behave in a certain way. This will enable the employee to understand both sides of the CCI, such as being able to explain to the customer why a fellow customer did not return the item to its original place, providing explanation instead of just apologising. For example, Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) library study indicated that customers frequently attempted to hide library books from fellow customers to return later and collect. Providing additional information and understanding as well as saying sorry was deemed a successful technique for employees:

*“Firstly I sympathise with them and agree that it is wrong and not right which I think is good because it feels like I'm on their side, especially if I say it is happened to me then they seem to trust me more (.) then I also give a reason why the other customer may have left the stuff where it is and that we can all be in a rush sometimes, even themselves, which helps them to forgive the other customer a little easier” (employee 13).*

The employee identified the reasons behind the methods utilised, and how it is important to chain management techniques together, not use them as stand-alone methods. The employee first apologised to get the customers to realise they are on their side, and to state that the employee has experienced the same issues when they shop, helping to build trust. The employee then starts to defend the other customers to help the customer imagine the thought process and that everybody makes mistakes and there may be a reason why the customer moved the items. Finally, the employee offers a solution and helps locate the original location of the product and offers alternatives if they are out of stock – a more developed technique than merely apologising and providing no solution, something which needs to be encouraged for all customer facing roles within a service organisation. This example identified that employees need to be empowered to help chain techniques together, and although apologising does have a role in the service recovery, it should not be relied upon as a standalone action.

### 5.7 Employee perceptions of CCI training

Overall the techniques utilised by employees for dealing with CCI mainly derived from experience, whilst the techniques that did originate from training were not CCI specific but had to be adapted to C2C scenarios. This caused many issues for the FLEs in this study, such as the use of scripting which led to interruption of PCCI. Although this study did not measure the effectiveness of the techniques, it identified many unique forms of management tools aimed at dealing with more than one customer at a time.

The factor that seemed to influence the employees feeling towards CCI was where the incident occurred, with employees feeling safer dealing with scenarios at the customer service desk than middle of the store. Future role-play training needs to occur not only in regular C2E contact

spots, such as checkouts, but throughout the store, as findings from this study indicated NCCI was widespread. For example, employees could role-play CCI scenarios using examples from this study, implemented via virtual reality. It would allow FLEs to practice dealing with CCI in a controlled, comfortable environment that could boost confidence and encourage empowerment. It would further allow FLEs the opportunity to practice techniques in the locations this study revealed as uncomfortable to employees, such as down aisles and middle of the store, in the comfort of their training classrooms.

The data indicated the importance of empowering employees to be flexible in their approach using discretion to deal with a wide range of CCI types. The data showed that many of the scripting methods provided by the organisation to be more of a hindrance than a help, such as stepping in when two customers were having a PCCI. Empowering employees in an environment to practice dealing with multiple customers can help boost confidence and get FLEs used to dealing with more than one customer at a time. The conceptual framework provides guidelines that employees can follow to identify the correct course of action, however employees need to be given control of the situations and the service organisation should empower their employees. Hartline and Ferrel (1996, p.56) states empowerment is needed to “give employees flexibility to make on the spot decisions to completely satisfy customers.” With research even suggestion that empowering employees can heighten job satisfaction and performance, with evidence by Bowen and Lawler (1992) suggesting employees respond quicker to customer situations.

When further questioned, employees were quick to identify the training overall was good within the company, and they felt equipped to deal with one customer, but not two. However, many of the training techniques that were provided to them for C2E scenarios could be utilised

for C2C, but heavily relied on employee intuition and experience to make the technique applicable. After attempting to deal with the C2C incidents, employees were asked if training was provided – table 5.4 provides an overview of the responses.

Table 5.4 Organisational training

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Was CCI training received?</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	Yes	“It all comes down to your general training. It is all to do with your focus whether it be with a customer or a colleague or both at the same time. So yes, I suppose you could say yes it is.”
2	No	“I’ve definitely been trained to focus on the customer (...) but I don’t think I’ve been trained to handle more than one customer at a time or large parties (.) I think that comes from experience”.
3	No	“It certainly wasn’t something I had received training for I just used experience to try and sit on the fence and be neutral. I do feel equipped here (...) but I wouldn’t put that down to training - my training occurred over 20 years ago (.) I’d say that it is more experience than anything else
4	No	“I just do it. I’d call it being excellent at my job and experienced ((laughing)) but yes previous experience”.
5	Yes	“They tell you to give as much detail as possible. In the training they do sort of role playing like this where you have to chat to customers and make sure they’re ok and always ask them if there is anything else you can help them with”.
6	No	“No not really”.
7	Yes	“I think our training identifies the importance of each and every customer and that if we saw a customer being subject to a poor experience we need to step in and intervene”
8	No	“Don’t think anyone told me about it”
9	No	“No, I think that’s a bit specific for [[company name]] ((laughing)) there is no training for dealing with miserable moaning people who have nothing better to do ((laughing)) I didn’t see that section in the employee handbook”.
10	Yes	“I think it was discussed at my training briefing years ago”

11	No	"I don't think so. We don't get taught anything like that. It is common sense"
12	No	"No not at all the situations given in training are quite standard and nothing like this (.) plus they give some advice like asking the customers "if there is anything else I can help them with" and sometimes it just seems totally pointless".
13	No	"No nothing like that I think it is just experience and using common sense which often gets forgotten about".
14	Yes	"We get told how to manage customers yes with the step by step process we go through. I think so it all sort of gets covered in the same thing and a lot of the principles can be applied to other situations it is just about making sure the customer leaves happy."
15	No	"Certainly not ((laughing))"
16	No	"Not to do with managing queues and customer like that no. I could receive training on customers interacting most definitely. Experience definitely not training".
17	Unanswered	-
18	No	"Something I've picked up on the way".
19	Yes	"The company do provide good training and I think the training I receive as a manager is a much better standard than the generic training".
20	No	"You don't get proper training here ((laughing)) I started around Christmas time and they were so busy I was just told to shadow someone else and see what he does which I wouldn't call official training and I think he shadowed somebody else before that so I think I shadowed someone who did not receive proper training either ((laughing))"
21	Mixed	"We receive good training here and how to manage customers and they make us feel part of the staff (.) probably not customer to customer like that but it is very specific so I'm not sure. I suppose more training would not hurt but I doubt that will happen".
22	No	"No, I don't think so I just use my judgement".

The table (5.4) indicates that over half of the employees stated they do not receive specific CCI training and felt it would be necessary to receive some. Encouragingly, employees were very keen and willing to accept training for CCI, with many stating it would be useful and give them additional confidence dealing with the interactions, which is consistent with Nicholls and Gad Mohsen (2019) findings. This is an important factor to consider when recommending FLE CCI training, as employees showcased a willingness to receive the training. When asked where their management techniques originate, the majority of employees developed their own technique

for CCI based on experience and dealing with customers frequently. Other studies have adopted a similar enquiry around employee training and analysed if training was received for dealing with customers. Ro and Wong (2011) study identified that over 60% of their participants (FLEs in hospitality industry) did receive training for C2E situations, with 80% of employees using guidelines or company policies to make decisions. Similarly, employees within this study stated they adopted a step-by-step process similar to the conceptual framework:

*“We get told how to manage customers yes, with the step by step process we go through. I think so it all sort of gets covered in the same thing and a lot of the principles can be applied to other situations it is just about making sure the customer leaves happy.”*

This example indicated that it was not necessarily a technique that helped manage CCI, but more that it was principles given to the employee at training, identifying an underlying philosophy that employees can use, similar to the service recovery approach. This supports the findings that discretion and empowerment must be given to employees to utilise the training technique they deem most applicable to the scenario. When employees stated training was provided, it was adaptations to the generic training, not specifically CCI training meaning a lot of the methods utilised came down to employee judgement. Employees stated that the training could be applied and altered based on each specific situation. However, a couple of employees gave examples of very poor training experience provided, with employee 20 indicating that no training was provided at all, let alone CCI training. When asked about the training received for CCI they stated:

*“You don’t get proper training here. I started around Christmas time and they were so busy I was just told to shadow someone else and see what he does which I wouldn’t call official*

*training, I think he shadowed somebody else before that - so I think I shadowed someone who did not receive proper training either”(employee 20).*

This example indicated the employee did not receive training and was told to just shadow an employee and follow them around, but worryingly the employee they were following also did not receive proper training. It will be useful to shadow an employee in conjunction to official training, so the employee gets to witness the management techniques in practise rather than just the training room.

Furthermore, managers interviewed in this study also highlighted that they did not know how to manage some forms of CCI, and they received more training than FLEs such as customer service assistants and cashiers. This highlights that ‘more training’ does not necessarily mean better equipped to deal with CCI. Despite managers highlighting their training is “more in depth” than standard training, they were not better equipped to deal with CCI than other FLEs, highlighting that CCI specific training is needed. The training provided by the company can be classified as principles: remaining neutral, being calm and making sure employees are clear with instructions. These principles were provided to employees during training but were aimed towards C2E interactions, not CCI specific, but should be utilised when managing CCI.

### 5.8 Employee comfort in dealing with CCI

Employees were asked to state how they felt about dealing with C2C interactions and gave some very interesting responses, especially when dealing with negative CCI. Overall employees were certainly affected by CCI and that the response varied based on their personal capability of managing the scenarios. If the employee felt able to manage CCI, they were much less effected by the incidents and on some occasions enjoyed the challenge of managing NCCI.

However, overall, the data indicates that employees did not enjoy dealing with negative CCI and found it a source of anxiety, stress and even became embarrassed. However, when positive CCI occurred, employees noted they enjoyed interacting and engaging with other customers, indicating it was one of the reasons they worked in retail.

	<u>How the employee felt about CCI</u>		
 Negative interaction  Positive interaction	<b>Disliked the interactions</b>	<b>Neutral to the interactions</b>	<b>Enjoyed the interactions</b>
<u>How the employee responded</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Horrible (.) gross and embarrassed for the other customers</li> <li>- Irritating I feel like I'm in catch 22</li> <li>- I don't like it as I can feel the pressure growing</li> <li>- Well it's not the nicest of things</li> <li>- I don't really like confrontation and don't like to be shouted at</li> <li>- I got slightly anxious as I was on my own</li> <li>- A little embarrassed</li> <li>- Not great but I try not let it bother me (.) I just feel awkward really</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I think it doesn't bother me</li> <li>- Fine (.) a little awkward I guess but nothing too bad</li> <li>- Absolutely fine it didn't bother me</li> <li>- Ok - it is part of my job</li> <li>- I don't mind really my job to isn't it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good (...) like I'm enjoying my shift and I'm a morning person anyway and like to try and share my good energy</li> <li>- I love it that's why I'm here working</li> <li>- Felt good because I like to help people like that</li> <li>- Empowered actually in a weird way like I'm in control</li> <li>- Great I loved it ((laughing))</li> </ul>

The responses from the employees indicated that some disliked managing negative CCI, with responses indicating it caused anxiety and was “the least favourite part of the job”. However,

not all negative CCI's caused unpleasant feelings for employees, a minority of employees did enjoy it. Yet, the data indicated that the majority of negative interactions with customers resulted in negative emotions for the employee, so it is important to identify why some employees enjoyed the NCCIs and others did not. Research around employees' emotional wellbeing and response to problem customers is well documented, with research focusing on how customers can cause emotional strain on employees (Baker et al., 2012), cause stress (Taylor and Kluepfer, 2012; Hu, et al., 2017) and dissatisfaction at the workplace (Dormann and Zapf, 2004; Huang and Miao, 2016). However, little research has focused on more than one customer and the impact of CCI on FLE wellbeing, with most research focusing on the impact of problem customers on FLEs (Tadic and Hughes, 1998; Holman, 2004).

One of the biggest findings from this research evidenced in this section is around how employees felt dealing with CCI and that employees who felt able to deal with CCI had much more positive feelings towards dealing with customers in comparison to those who did not feel able. The data suggested that employees who felt confident and "well equipped" to deal with CCI enjoyed their interactions and indicated it was "why they worked there". Employees who were unhappy with dealing with more than one customer at a time gave indication that they were not well equipped, although for deeper understanding further study is needed. However, from the data gathered in this study, it was perceived that employees who felt well equipped to deal with CCI had greater positive emotions towards CCI scenarios, further enhancing the need for specific CCI training.

Additionally, the individual differences of the FLE such as personality, experience within the job and other situational factors need to be taken into consideration. FLEs all have different traits, experience of dealing with customers and cultural differences, indicating that their action

towards CCI and how they feel will differ. Employees who are extroverted and confident with confrontation may have positive feelings towards dealing with a loud customer, but an FLE who is naturally shy may feel incredibly anxious towards the same situation. Although the findings within this research indicated it was down the severeness of the situation, further research into the FLE differences need to be explored in order to provide a greater understanding of individual differences.

#### 5.8.1 Negative feelings

Most FLEs reported negative emotions when faced with NCCI situations, with the range of responses to CCI being broad and varied. Employees stated that when dealing with other customers they felt: “awkward”; “embarrassed”; “slightly irritated”; and one employee described it as “horrible”. To feel awkward indicates that something is uncomfortable and that the situation is not too pleasant, whereas to state that the interaction is “horrible” really implies that the CCI had a big impact on the employee. The difference between feeling awkward, in comparison to horrible, comes down to the severity of the situation in which CCI occurred. The scenario where the employee described it as awkward was one customer shouting and becoming irate so that other customers had to listen, whereas the incident that made the customer feel “horrible” was a third-party incident, where other customers were laughing at the expense of another customer.

Overall, dealing with CCI incidents had a negative impact on how the employee felt and there were far more responses from employees stating they disliked CCI occurring than enjoyed it. The source of the problems from the data indicated that employees felt worse on their own, when they were underprepared, and when they did not know what to do. For example, employees identified that customers often insulted a fellow customer present at the service environment, such as asking an employee to quieten another customers child, laughing at other

customers, asking them if all customers were this rude and even if all customers “smelled that bad” - placing the employee in very difficult scenarios. These types of incidents often made the employees feel awkward and even some suggested that they felt as if they were being shouted out and it made them feel “anxious” and “embarrassed”.

Employees who disregarded the CCI and felt unable to manage the NCCI were the employees who had the strongest negative feelings towards CCI in general. These situations are wide, varied and very unpredictable to try and provide training for each individual case of NCCI, so empowering employees with the confidence and experiences to manage these are vital and having the opportunity to role-play NCCI in training environments are vital.

#### 5.8.2 Positive feelings

When CCI was positive, a theme to emerge was that FLEs enjoyed interacting with other customers and joining in the conversation with humorous comments, general chit chat and contextual remarks, indicating that they originally got into the retail industry for “these types of situations”. An example of an employee feeling positive after NCCI was when the employee had a customer shouting loudly enough to cause a disturbance with another customer. The employee reacted by remaining firm and calm, standing in silence and fetching for a manager – all appropriate techniques. These management tools are a combination of official training and experience; when asked how they felt dealing with the loud customer, the employee stated “empowered, I feel like I’m in control”. The employee managed to remain in charge of the situation because they had methods, they frequently utilise, chaining numerous techniques together and not relying solely on a single management type. In contrast, an employee who did not enjoy dealing with NCCI stated that they did “nothing” when other customers were

laughing at another customer because they did not know what to do, pointing out they felt as if they had a dearth of CCI management techniques.

The data clearly indicates that managing CCI has an impact on employee wellbeing and can cause serious discomfort to employees, therefore it is vital they are equipped with correct CCI management techniques to use in those scenarios. Employees in this study cited anxiety, increased stress and some indicating it was enough to put them off the job entirely during NCCI situations. Other research has further developed the impact and identified: a lack of sleep (Hughes and Tadic, 1998; Harris and Reynolds, 2003;) moodiness whilst working (Boyd, 2002; Yagil, 2008), headaches, and in extreme cases nausea (Fitzgerald 1993; Sev'er 1996; Arnold and Walsh, 2015). Not only will it benefit the customer having employees able to manage CCI and provide solutions, but the data indicated that when CCI is managed successfully it can also enhance employee's wellbeing.

### 5.8.3 Disparity of view: Positive vs negative feelings towards CCI

The data indicated there is a clear relationship between the employee's ability to manage CCI and the employee enjoying the interaction. This identified that the better an employee is equipped to deal with CCI, the more positive their feelings are about it. The employees who stated they enjoyed NCCI were proactive in their approaches and felt adequately equipped to deal with customers. In comparison to employees who disliked NCCI, they stated they did not know what to do and often did not intervene and frequently disregarded the CCI. Employees who stated they enjoyed CCI mainly focused on PCCI, although a minority of employees did enjoy NCCI. This shows a willingness of FLEs to tackle difficult situations that are often presented managing CCI.

## **6.0 Summary and Conclusions**

### **6.1 Thesis Summary**

The study began by highlighting the importance of understanding the customer encounter from both the customer and organisation perspective, due to the competitive nature of the retail environment and the impact of satisfied customers on both patronage and spending behaviours. Background information on social nature of service consumption was explored and identifies how the FLE perspective is seldom explored. Additionally, the impact of CCI on the FLE is introduced and highlights how single customers can impact the FLE, but little research has focused on the impact of more than one customer and how to manage the situation. The chapter then identifies the originality of the study and provides the research question, aims, objectives before providing a thesis outline and structure.

Chapter 2 described and presented varying ways that the services marketing literature has attempted to capture the customer experience via the use of service frameworks and experience models. The literature highlights that there are many factors that influence the customer experience, including the physical servicescape, ambience and social interactions. Out of the three, social interactions involving more than one customer has received the least attention, especially in the supermarket industry. Additionally, current understating highlighted that although research has focused on how employees can deal with one customer, it seldom explores the techniques utilised for more than one customer. The literature review identifies the impact of CCI in several different environments and highlights the importance of exploring the phenomena in the supermarket industry. The literature highlights that although understanding of CCI has been developed in the past 30 years, little research has focused on the FLE perspective, in both the ability to identify CCI and how it can be managed. Research has focused on the impact of C2E interactions when dealing with problem customers, but

research has not addressed the impact of multiple customers on FLEs wellbeing and the management techniques employed.

Chapter 3 described the research methodology and highlighted the methods utilised within the study that captured the research aims and objectives. The research philosophy was examined to highlight the importance of foundationalism when conducting qualitative research and how the epistemological and ontological stance can greatly impact the direction of research dealing with participants. The use of Critical Incident Technique was examined and reviewed to determine the applicability in relation to CCI and identified the previous use across similar studies. Sampling methods were identified and discussed in relation to the two groups of participants in the study, highlighting the varying job roles of FLES, the demographic of both groups and how the participants were recruited.

Chapter 4 of the study identified the unique and varying typologies from the customer and employee interviews, including a comparison between the two data sets, some that is rarely done in the services literature and is another unique contribution. The chapter highlighted how customers are often involved in types of CCI that employees were unaware of and even discussed how CCI occurs in hotspots throughout the supermarket. This is a new and original finding that had not been explored in the services literature, especially the use of CCI mapping. The chapter identified that from both perspectives CCI could be placed into 5 groups: employee focused, etiquette, assistance, social and spatial awareness. Despite the overall categories being the same, the types of interactions from both perspectives differed. Customers frequently identified the need for FLEs to step in and manage the situation and identified FLEs should be more proactive in their response, especially regarding other customers “controlling” their fellow shoppers with verbal comments and spatial intrusion. Customers identified that

“friendships” were formed in the supermarket, which is not something that was identified by FLEs, although within the social category they identified that customers enjoyed “mutual moans” which indicated CCI could be viewed as NCCI to the FLE, but also PCCI to the customers. Greater emphasis on CCI is certainly needed and evidenced in the chapter, with customer frequently citing that employees can often make the situation worse and cause NCCI. Overall, there were many different types of CCI present in the supermarket industry and it helped further develop the understanding of CCI in retail.

Chapter 5 presented the conceptual framework for managing CCI and identified the various techniques and factors that influence the decision-making process for employees when dealing with CCI. The framework highlights how managing CCI is a process and that there can be logical steps employed by employees for dealing with multiple customers simultaneously. The framework makes a contribution to the current understanding of management around CCI and also identifies techniques that can be utilised by employees within industry working on the front-line in the service environment. The chapter highlights the importance of empowering employees and how management techniques used in the study originated from experience rather than official training. Although the official training provided by the organisation in this study did supply to the FLEs with ‘principles’ that can be adapted and applied to CCI, however, employees identified that they would be willing to receive CCI training and that it would be beneficial in their role. The chapter concludes by assessing the impact of CCI on employees, highlighted how CCI impacted employee well-being and the importance of FLEs feeling able to manage the CCI.

At the start of the research, the question was asked, how do front-line employees (FLEs) effectively identify and manage customer-to-customer interaction in the UK supermarket

industry? This research aimed to address this research question in an attempt to increase the understanding of the service experience from the FLE perspective. It is important to review the aims of the study and identify how each were met based on the data presented

This study aimed to:

- Discuss what ability FLEs possess to identify CCI in the supermarket industry.

The results from the data indicated that all 22 FLEs interviewed had the ability to identify and describe CCI. Employees were aware that customers frequently interacted with fellow customers and managed to provide pioneering insight into the challenges faced by front-line workers in retail.

- Categorise the types of customer-to-customer interactions occurring in supermarkets.

The types of CCI occurring in supermarkets have been analysed and presented in table 4.1 and 4.2, clearly identifies the various typologies present from both viewpoints. The incidents have been analysed utilising Braun and Clark's (2013) thematic analysis and placed into typologies that highlights the similarities and differences from the two viewpoints. This comparison is a unique approach to CCI and addresses the call for the FLE viewpoint in comparison to the customer viewpoint approach normally utilised within the marketing literature Nicholls and Mohsen (2015). Overall, the two viewpoints both identified 5 types of CCI present in the supermarket industry.

- Gain insights into how FLEs experience CCI.

The data in chapter 5 highlights that FLEs have a wide range of feelings towards experiencing and managing CCI. Most FLEs did experience negative emotion towards NCCI, although some employees viewed it as a 'challenge' and something they enjoyed. One clear finding was that

their perceived ability to manage the situation was a big factor in their experiences towards CCI scenarios, with much discomfort originating with a lack of knowledge or ability to handle multiple customers interacting. This finding has significant importance to both industry and academics, highlighting the challenges that employees face working on the front-line, and how dealing with multiple customers at once caused major discomfort including anxiety and stress.

- Conceptualise a framework of the approaches FLEs utilise to manage CCI in the retail industry.

At the start of chapter 5 a conceptual framework is presented to identify the process that is used by FLEs dealing with CCI. The framework is a vital tool that shows that there are many different techniques to deal with CCI and that employees need to feel empowered to use their own experiences and discretion to deal with the wide range of incidents. However, the framework can be utilised to provide different techniques to FLEs across industries. Additionally, this type of conceptual framework can be tested in various other industries and can help further understand the decision-making process for employees who face multiple customers in their role.

## 6.2 Original Contribution

### 6.2.1 Types of CCI

The findings from this study identifies that CCI is present in the supermarket industry from both customer and employee perspective, with varying types of interactions. The typology tables (tables 4.1 and 4.2) in chapter 4 highlights that CCI occurred via 5 categories: employee focused, etiquette, assistance, social and spatial awareness, with all 5 categories being present from the customer and employee viewpoint. Research from both the customer and FLE viewpoint is a major contribution to the services literature as few studies have adopted this approach, which allowed for a comparison between viewpoints and types of CCI occurring.

This comparison has not only developed the understanding of CCI types in the literature, but also will aid the management of CCI within industry. Research focusing on CCI in the supermarket industry is an area that has been relatively unexplored, but this research identified CCI was present and that customers frequently experienced interactions with fellow shoppers. An extensive review of the literature identified that supermarkets had been studied in terms of trolley rage (Dorsey et al., 2016) and customer misbehaviour (Lovelock, 1994; Berry and Seiders, 2008), but not in terms of CCI, indicating that this contribution helps develop the current understanding of the topic.

Overall, when identifying the varying types of incidents, the findings are supported by the literature and identify that customers can be useful resources for an organisation, in particular by helping other customers (Fagot and Kavanagh, 1990; McGrath and Otnes, 1995; Grove and Fisk, 1997; Harris and Baron, 2004). Customers helping fellow customers was present in the supermarket industry, with physical assistance, product recommendation and informational exchange all taking place. However, unwanted help occurred and needs to be monitored by employees as customers frequently noted other customers offering advice that was not wanted and classified it as a negative factor around their customer experience. Additionally, controlling behaviour was frequently identified by both customers and employees, although cited much more frequently by customers than employees. This type of behaviour has not been explored in the CCI literature, as most form of management focuses on FLEs managing customers, whereas this research identified that left unattended, customers would try and manage other customers. This develops the current understanding of CCI and suggests that although shoppers can be helpful, they can also cross the line with assisting other customers.

A major contribution from this study is that it discovered FLEs possess the ability to identify CCI and have experienced it in the supermarket industry. Research has focused on the FLE in the customer experience literature, such as dealing with problem customers (Hartline and Ferrel, 1996; Huang and Miao, 2016) but few studies have adopted the viewpoint of FLEs when identifying CCI. Although FLEs identified similar types of CCI to customers, there were substantial differences comparing the two viewpoints. In general, FLEs noted more incidents around products than customers did, with FLEs stating that customers gave plenty of advice about products, evening making recommendations to shop in other stores. The main difference between the two viewpoints (customer and FLE) was that the FLE did not recognize ‘friendships’ occurring between customers but did identify the subcategory ‘mutual moans’ which customers did not. This highlights that some forms of CCI were left unmanaged by employees who did not even know that certain types of CCI was occurring between customers. Without noting all types of CCI from the FLE perspective, it identifies that they are left unmanaged and organisations do not know the impact of these encounters without FLEs identifying the severity of the scenarios.

### 6.2.2 CCI Mapping

Another original contribution came via the locations of the interactions between customers, which is something that is seldom explored in the literature. The floorplans are unique to this study and provided a visual aid to help with CCI and locating the various types of interactions between customers. The floorplans identified that employees and customers perceived CCI to occur in different locations, with FLEs identifying incidents closer to the checkouts and service desk than customers, who identified that CCI also occurs down aisles and middle of the store.

The perspectives of both customers and FLEs identified varying “hotspots” throughout the store, where both perceived and experienced CCI more frequently than in other areas. Customers frequently identified ‘hotspots’ in terms of social gatherings, such as by the front entrance and end of the aisles, which involved blocking due to talking to fellow customers. Whereas employees frequently identified ‘hotspots’ around areas within the store where employees are frequently located and contact with customers is regular, such as near the customer service desk and checkouts. This type of finding is pivotal for training purposes and can aid in the allocation of staff within store, as many incidents went missed by FLEs and were unaware of CCI occurring in the store that was identified by customers, such as the entertainment section or end of the aisles. Another major finding focuses on how the location affects FLEs feelings and responses to CCI occurring within the service environment. The data indicated that employees preferred dealing with CCI, in particular NCCI, in environments they were familiar with and received training at, such as the customer service desk. Employees noted how they felt uncomfortable dealing with NCCI in the middle of the store and frequently tried to navigate the customers back to their training locations. This is a major contribution and shapes the future of CCI training delivery.

### 6.2.3 Management of CCI

This study highlighted that FLEs frequently tried to manage CCI and would engage in situations with multiple customers. Employees identified a wide and varied range of techniques, ranging from distraction tactics to calling for senior management employees. Much research has focused on CCI management from the organisational perspective and identified that employees can adopt roles, however this research enhances the understanding of the literature and showcases techniques that FLEs used when managing CCI. The research highlights that there are many techniques that FLEs use when dealing with customers and that

it depended on the nature of the incident and type. The research identified two types of CCI from a management perspective, classified as discretionary and mandatory CCI. Employees identified the importance of observation that was only possible with discretionary CCI.

#### 6.2.4 Conceptual framework for managing CCI

The conceptual framework provided in chapter 5 identifies is a major contribution to both the services marketing and HR literature and identifies the process taken by FLEs when dealing with CCI. Although frameworks have been utilised to capture the customer experience, no frameworks identify CCI management techniques. The frameworks showcase that CCI management occurs via observation and analysis, a management technique and then evaluating the success of the technique. Service recovery was then utilised by the FLE if they perceived the original management technique to be unsuccessful. Service recovery was frequently utilised creating a feedback loop, identifying that FLEs had the ability to perceive the success or failure of their management technique and frequently chained techniques together. Additionally, the framework highlighted that there were certain factors that influenced the management of CCI, such as: the location of the CCI, the severity of the incident, the customer demographic, and the ability to manage the CCI.

The techniques identified from the FLEs were further analysed and discussed if they originated from training via the organisation, or from personal experience. The data indicated that the techniques came from personal experience, with many employees identifying that they did not receive training for specific CCI training. The training that was received by employees did have a role in managing CCI but focused on general principles that were originally geared towards C2E but have been adapted for CCI. The contribution highlighted both the need for CCI training, and the importance of employees to provide feedback to the organisation around

their experience and techniques. The participants in this study identified techniques provided from the organisation that frequently focused on scripting and standardised answers to deal with one customer. However, the study identifies that empowering employees to utilise discretion is needed with CCI due to the wide range of incidents occurring within a triadic conversation. The HR literature has identified the value of employee empowerment and flexibility, but has not been widely adopted within the CCI literature. This study explained the value of empowering employees and identified it as a suitable technique for managing multiple customers.

Employees also highlighted a willingness to receive CCI training, which is something seldom explored. The data showed that employees were open to receiving training and stated that CCI training would be a useful concept to be covered. This builds on another major contribution around how the FLE felt towards managing CCI, as many employees had negative emotions towards CCI due to a lack of training and perceived ability to manage the situation. Although the literature identified the impact of problem customers and misbehaviour (C2E), this study recognised C2C as being something that can negatively impact employees. The findings showcased that most participants in this study felt negative towards managing CCI, with very few indicating they enjoyed it.

The research question was to identify how front-line employees identify and manage customer-to-customer interaction in the UK supermarket industry. The original contribution identifies that FLEs do possess the ability to identify CCI and attempt to manage the situation. The conceptual framework showcases that managing more than one customer at a time is a complex phenomenon and requires additional training by the service provider, empowering employees and then trusting them to make the correct decision. This research shows that currently

employees are often left feeling negatively towards CCI scenarios, with many incidents leaving the employee anxious, irritated, and embarrassed, not something that is sustainable over a long period of time and can risk employee burnout.

## 6.3 Limitations

### 6.3.1 Methodological: CIT and Service Diaries

Whilst this study advances the understanding of CCI from the FLE perspective in the supermarket industry, it is useful to also consider some of the limitations of the study. Despite the CIT being well suited for this current research study, there are some limitations and weaknesses associated with the method. Michel (2001) identifies that it is a natural retrospective technique, which can lead to recall errors by the participants. This study relied on trusted participants' memory and recollection of incidents in the supermarket that may not have been accurate or truthful, especially from the FLE perspective if they felt their competence of their role was in question. Although a service diary was utilised to combat this issue, a low percentage of FLEs in the study completed the service diary, with only 3 participants utilising them, with limited data. Future studies utilising this method should more greatly emphasise the importance and use of service diaries to minimize recollection errors and bias. Although the use of service diaries could have increased the trustworthiness of the study, the use of peer reviewing the coding and findings is recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1985) to increase the credibility of the data. Member checking could have been utilised through the process of member checking the thematic table and discussion.

Additionally, there is a potential for a biased sample due to the sampling method used when recruiting participants to the study. Martin (1995) identified that some customers are more likely to engage and interact with fellow customers, which indicates this could occur with self-

selection regarding interviews and CIT. The participants that agreed to be involved in the study could also be the customers who would have been more likely to have had interactions and/or to have noticed interactions.

### 6.3.2 Location and organisation

The findings within this study are exploratory in nature and in-line with other studies for the number of interviews collected (Gremler, 2004; Saunders and Townsend, 2016), however the study may not be generalisable to other locations within the U.K and in other countries. and data collection occurred only in central parts of the country. Although the GDP of the area is in-line with national average, a wider spread of locations across the country would have enhanced the study and understanding of CCI. Although there were three different locations, they were all within a 50-mile radius and in the West Midlands, something which could have an influence on the type of CCI and similar shopping habits. Additionally, the data collection focused on a single organisation and could benefit from multiple supermarket organisations.

Although an in-depth review of the literature was conducted, a literature review can never be truly complete. CCI is a complex phenomenon that has been studied by many different disciplines. Although this study examined CCI within the services marketing and HR literature, greater understanding and depth could have been examined within the events and tourism literature. As Nicholls and Mohsen (2015) highlights, the topic has not yet received extensive conceptual consideration and may not yet have located its 'frontiers'. Customer to customer literature is on the boundaries of many disciplines, but has not been fully explored, with the expansion of CCI and its acceptance by other disciplines, the area will continue to grow, develop and establish itself in other research areas.

## 6.4 Recommendations

The research recommendations can be split into two main outputs: further research areas that enhances and develops the services marketing and HR literature; and FLE training suggestions on how companies can approach CCI management with practical recommendations.

### 6.4.1 Future Research

#### 6.4.1.1 CCI management success

Although this study identified FLE management techniques, additional research is needed to test the success and customer perception of these techniques. This research highlighted that employees used many different techniques to manage customer interactions, however additional data is needed to identify if the techniques were successful, in particular, from the customers' viewpoint. This research asked FLEs to identify the techniques they frequently used, with many employees suggesting they worked well, however their perception of the success could potentially be different to what the customers perceived to be successful. Additional research would focus on gathering insights into how the customer experienced such techniques and start to rank the effectiveness of the management strategies. Baker and Kim (2018) identify that customers perceive the service organisation to be responsible for recovering NCCI, which was supported within this study. This study identified that customers perceive the organisation to be responsible for CCI management, with many stating they would have liked an FLE to step in and manage their C2C experience, which identifies they may also have a preferable technique the FLE should have used and a desirable outcome of the CCI. Further research into the customer perspective on management techniques would deepen the understanding of the success or failure of certain techniques and help service organisations refine their management of CCI. A suggestion would be a comparative study of perceived effectiveness of management techniques from the customer and FLE perspective.

#### 6.4.1.2 FLE skills and traits

Another interesting area for research focuses on FLE traits and skillsets that are potentially more suited to C2C facing roles within the service environment. Harris and Daunt (2013) identify that employees' psychological strength should be taken into consideration when hiring FLE, with many organisations targeting these skillsets with recruitment and retention strategies. Psychological stress tolerance and "self-confidence" is a recommended area for future study within CCI literature, as the effect of more than one customer on employee's self-confidence needs greater understanding. This study identified that dealing with CCI caused negative emotions about certain scenarios, with employees citing the feeling of stress and anxiety, however some employees did enjoy confrontation and CCI management. Although this often came down to the perceived ability to manage the situation, further research into FLE traits and psychological stress tolerance factors could identify desirable recruitment factors.

#### 6.4.1.3 Conceptual framework testing

Although this study identified a conceptual framework for how CCI is managed, future testing is needed to identify the applicability in other service environments outside of retail. Martin and Pranter (1989) identified seven service intensifiers that indicated the likelihood of CCI to be present in certain industries, with CCI being explored in travel and hospitality (Giuffre and Williams, 1994; Guerrier and Adib, 2000); airline (Hochschild, 1983; Hall, 1993; Hu, 2017); and retail (Lovelock, 1996; Harris, 2008). The conceptual framework needs to be tested in industries where FLEs experience CCI frequently and examine if the framework is still effective outside of supermarkets. This will help FLEs deal with CCI and identify if any of the components within it are supermarket specific.

Further understanding is needed into the FLE perception of factors that can influence CCI from both customer and employee perspective. It is important to examine the factors that were identified within this study such as age, appearance and gender and further explore how these factors affect tolerances and perceptions of CCI and management. Although studies have focused on age and gender (Schmidt and Sapsford, 1995; Nicholls and Gad Mohsen, 2015), most studies study focus on the customer perception, whereas this research indicated those factors played important roles in the FLE management of CCI. Employees frequently noted they would alter their management techniques based on age and gender and further understanding would enhance the conceptual framework provided.

Originally identified in the servuction model (Eiglier and Langeard, 1977), employees possess a unique viewpoint to CCI encounters, with Nicholls and Mohsen (2019) identifying it as the triadic nature of interactions. This study frequently identified that triadic interactions occurred, with varying types of CCI scenarios being witnessed by FLEs. Many examples were given of two customers (A and B) making comments or laughing about another customer (customer C) which left the employee in a difficult situation. Additional research into triadic interactions from the customer and employee viewpoint would deepen the understanding on how the customers and FLEs feel dealing with these types of interactions.

One major original contribution to the literature was the identification of ‘signalling’ behaviour exerted by customers. This research showcased that via verbal comments and physical pressure, customers tried to alter fellow customers behaviour and control how they wanted them to behave. Research has focused on fellow shoppers trying to educate other customers (Eisingerich and Bell 2015; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000), however the literature focused on “customer co-creation”, whereas this research highlighted a more controlling nature. Further

research into this type of CCI could identify the reason why customers exert this kind of behaviour and could help organisations prevent it from occurring as the customers receiving the signalling behaviour identified it as a factor that negatively impacted their customer experience.

#### 6.4.1.4 Spatial awareness

Further research is needed into space ownership in the supermarket industry, and how other customers mark their territory and how it differs from third space servicescape's like libraries and cafeterias. Research around spatial intrusion and "territorial marking" has been explored in other environments, such as cafeterias'(Griffiths and Gilly 2012). However, little research has focused on spatial intrusion and marking in the retail and supermarket industry. This study identified that spatial intrusion was common and that fellow customers stood too closely and invaded personal space. One recommendation is to conduct observational research to gain further understanding on how customers can mark territory like other industries such as hospitality and leisure. This recommendation may have wider policy impact due to the social distancing measures and experiences based off the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 6.4.1.5 The impact of individual differences

Further research is needed into the impact of individual differences regarding the ability to spot CCI and how employees feel dealing with CCI. Currently, the literature focuses on how age and 'readiness' impacts CCI and the acceptance of other customers, but seldom explores how personality, paranoia and other internal factors can also play an important role in the experience of CCI. Within this study Interestingly the FLE has varied feelings towards CCI, with the main differences appearing to be temperament and ability to manage/experience. However, additional research into individual characteristics could further develop the need for traits and

psychological testing in the recruitment process, especially regarding the HRM literature when recruiting employees on the front-line.

#### 6.4.2 Practical recommendations

Although there have been theoretical recommendations for the further understanding of CCI, management and the impact on the employee, practical recommendations are also made to enhance the customer experience and FLE management of CCI in the supermarket industry. The practical recommendation can be broken down in to 4 main categories: training adaptation, staff allocation, FLE recruitment and evidence-based management (EBM).

##### 6.4.2.1 Training adaptations

A major recommendation for the supermarket industry is to adapt the current training provided by the service organisation and include specific training techniques for CCI management. Training recommendations involves incorporating specific CCI into induction and FLE training guides, which is viewed as a three-stage approach:

1. Provide FLEs with a list of CCI management techniques.
2. Allow role-playing techniques to be conducted in a training environment.
3. Provide examples of CCI management from this study with empirical evidence and discuss possible techniques, emphasising the importance of discretion to encourage empowerment.

1. Educate employees in CCI management techniques.

The first recommendation is to make employees aware of CCI and management techniques available to them based on the examples provided in this study and employee experiences. One

of the main findings from this research identified that employees who did not deal with CCI is because they were unsure of what to do and could not identify a suitable management technique. The conceptual framework needs to be adapted to make it more concise and easier for FLEs to read and understand, giving them examples of CCI scenarios moving through the framework and being appropriately managed.

2. Allow role-playing techniques to be conducted in a training environment.

Research has identified the value of utilising role-playing techniques in training scenarios to help increase communication, confidence, emotional stability and creativity (Lane and Rollnick, 2007; Falola et al., 2014; Servotte et al., 2019). Many management techniques in this study stemmed from experience with many employees identifying that they had to develop the techniques over years of C2C encounters instead of having the opportunity to practice the management technique in a controlled training environment. Role-playing techniques would allow FLEs to practice utilising techniques given to them, receive feedback and make small adjustment in their delivery of the management techniques and increase their confidence.

Additionally, role-playing should start in a training room, but should be practised within the store, around areas where CCI is likely to occur. One clear finding from the study identified that FLEs felt more comfortable dealing with incidents at the customer service desk and checkout in comparison to the middle of the store. Currently FLEs receive training in an office away from customers, before shadowing employees at the customer service desk or checkouts (depending on their role), however employees should also role-play and receive training in the middle of the store where CCI frequently occurred. Employees noted they tried to manage customers away from the middle of the store as they felt uncomfortable, however receiving

training in this location and throughout the store would enable them to practice CCI management in many different locations so they are prepared for CCI wherever it occurs.

3. Provide examples of CCI management from this study with empirical evidence and discuss possible techniques, emphasising the importance of discretion to encourage empowerment.

The third stage in the training process should focus on building confidence and showcasing the importance of empowerment when discussing CCI techniques. Employees should be provided with CCI scenarios from this study and asked to choose the appropriate management techniques discussing as a group the reasoning behind their choices and possible outcomes. The focus is on the possibly of chaining techniques together, with an emphasis on service recovery and using discretion to choose the most applicable techniques. Employees will get the opportunity to choose their own techniques, discuss within the controlled environment and identify possible outcomes and the need for further management.

#### 6.4.2.2 Staff Allocation

Another key recommendation is to service organisations and managers around the allocation of staff around the servicescape to ensure C2C incidents are witnessed and managed, as many incidents within this study occurred when no staff were present. One simple recommendation is to ensure that all staff are trained in CCI, regardless if they are in a service heavy role or not. Employees who replenish the stock in the aisles may not interact with customers as frequently as employees behind a checkout or the customer service desk, but are in a prime location for spotting and managing CCI as the customer viewpoint indicated CCI occurred frequently in the aisles and middle of the store. Staff should be trained and made aware of CCI so if they notice it occurring, they can observe and potentially step in. Additionally, staff may be

allocated in different areas of the store where CCI is likely to occur, such as allocating an additional member of staff to the discount area to monitor and manage C2C interactions. However, due to budget restraints, it could be beneficial to have employees walk by various CCI 'hotspots' (as noted on the CCI maps appendix 5.0) when arriving or leaving their shift, or when it is possible to leave their service position to check on the areas. Possible CCI 'routes' and walkways could be developed to ensure that CCI is consistently managed and under control.

#### 6.4.2.3 Evidence-based management (EBM)

The final recommendation is to utilise EBM when constructing training session to utilise employee experience and feedback for CCI management. The FLEs in this study identified a wide range of experience dealing with CCI, with employees showcasing an understanding and ability to remember and recall CCI scenarios, something also found in the CCI study by Nicholls and Gad Mohsen (2019). EMB has been shown to improve organisational effectiveness (Damore, 2006; Briner *et al.* 2009) and FLEs within this study should contribute to the development and training of CCI management. FLE knowledge around CCI is clear within the study, however the organization does not current implement any EBM techniques and are missing out on years of insightful views from the front-line perspective that could enhance the customer experience.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1.0 - Customer Roles (McGrath and Otnes, 1995)

		<b><u>Role description</u></b>	<b><u>Example</u></b>
<b><u>Overt</u></b>	Help seeker	The help-seeker would actively seek information from other shoppers.	A woman is buying a present for her husband asks another man for advice.
	Reactive helper	The reactive helper would offer advice to other customers when prompted.	A customer has another customer approach them and ask for product advice.
	Proactive helper	The proactive helper, unlike the reactive helper, offers advice without any prompting from other customers.	"In Target, a lady was buying toys, I told her Farm and Fleet had them for like \$2 less."
	Admirer	When consumers feel compelled to express their admiration for a particular product.	"A young woman came into the department and really looked like a model to me... a couple of women stopped her and told her things like "I wish I had the body for that".
	Competitor	Customers participating as contestant trying to 'out-do' other shoppers. Such as trying to reach the last product.	"Every time I picked up a pair of tights, she would pick up the same pair after I checked the size. After about three minutes, it became a race".
	Complainer	This shopper type usually voices dissatisfaction to an unacquainted shopper about some aspect of the purchase situation.	A male in the retail store always complained that the p.a. system annoyed him and that he was going to tell the members of staff that they should not make announcements from them in the future.
<b><u>Covert</u></b>		<b><u>Role description</u></b>	
	Follower	The most common covert role observed was that of the follower. In this situation, shoppers literally "tail" strangers in stores and physically move with their unacquainted influencer.	In regards to three men in a lingerie store: "after a few giggles and random remarks, the men [WM, early 20s] decided to follow around the best looking women they could find and then once she picked something out they would choose that as the item to purchase for what I think would have been one of their girlfriends" (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 267).
	Observer	Similar to the follower, but the observer adopts a stationary position and watches the purchasing behaviour of others around them, often directly	"Whenever a person looks at shoes they look at the price on the bottom first. But also, after one person looks at the price, another will wait to see if the first person wants it, then as soon as it is put down,

		using cues from these purchases to make their own selections.	the second person will look at the price on the bottom too” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 268).
	Judge	When the customer communicates an expression of his or her personal values or agenda (although not to the consumer directly involved) in the context of a stranger's purchase. Strangers are often oblivious to these interactions.	[In a gift store] “I was looking through the birthday cards as was a young girl [WF, late teens] and an older woman [WF, early 60s]. The girl found a card and bought it. This all seemed very normal until the older woman seemed to have an over-whelming curiosity. She picked up another of the same card, read it and looked horrified. With this horror she turned to look at the young girl with an evil stare. [The assistant looked at the card. The card] had a cartoon of a woman on the front. It read "Me, for your birthday? Nothing!" On the inside it read "That's right, for your birthday I am giving you me wearing nothing!" (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 268).
	Accused	The study noted that in certain purchasing situations consumers are aware that their purchases may be judged by others, regardless of whether any judgment is rendered. Occasionally the shopper will take on the value-expressive role of the accused, guiltily avoiding any consumers who might act as potential judges by concealing the products on which they feel they may get judged.	“I would catch a glimpse of someone with a piece of very skimpy lingerie and they would have it balled up in their hands so others would not notice their purchase” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 268).
	Spoiler	This role is when influential shoppers (albeit unknowingly) dampen another consumer's enthusiasm for either a specific product or for the shopping experience. Although spoilers are oblivious to their effect upon other shoppers, their actions disparage decisions and have clear negative behavioural consequences on consumer observers.	“A customer [WF, early 40s, in a drugstore] had a gift box set of Love's Baby Soft... Just then three very loud and obnoxious teenage girls [WF, mid-teens] came traipsing into Cosmetics. Girl #2 walked up with a box of the Love's Baby Soft. She said to Girl #1: "Remember when you gave me some of this for my 11th birthday? It smelled so good. I guess everybody gets it when they're little.” The lady did not make the purchase in the end based on these comments” (McGrath and Otnes, 1995, p. 268).

Appendix 1.1: Participant information sheet



Worcester Business School

**Worcester Business School**

University of Worcester

City Campus

Castle Street

Worcester

WR13AS

Dear participant,

I am a PhD student at Worcester University who is researching interactions that occur between customers in U.K supermarkets.

As part of this research project, confidential interviews are needed and we would be extremely interested and grateful to hear your views.

At the beginning of the interview you will be asked if you consent to take part. **Your anonymity is ensured throughout the entire research process and no sensitive information shall be shared including your name and location.** There is no obligation to take part and if you do take part, you have the right to stop participating in the interview at any time, and to have your responses discarded. All data will be stored confidentially and securely and will be used for the University research purposes only.

Please see overleaf for more details on the Participant Information Sheet, and please contact [a.kay@worc.ac.uk](mailto:a.kay@worc.ac.uk) if you have any queries/concerns.

Yours sincerely,

*Alex Kay*

## Participant Information Sheet

- ***What is the purpose of this research?***

The purpose of the research is to explore the types of interactions that occur between customers in the U.K supermarket industry. The information will be used to produce classifications before examining employees' views on the interactions, how they managed the incidents and how they felt dealing with the issues.

- ***What is 'customer-to-customer' interaction?***

Customer-to-customer interaction can be defined as any form of interaction between two or more customers (not in the same party) at the supermarket.

- ***What if I don't want to take part?***

You are under no obligation to take part. Before the interview commences you will have the opportunity to opt out.

- ***What exactly will I be required to do?***

You will be asked a series of open questions, so the experience should feel like a structured conversation.

- ***Is there any risk to myself participating?***

There is no foreseen risk to you participating.

- ***How will my responses be recorded?***

The interview shall be audio recorded using a laptop and smartphone before being manually transcribed.

- ***How long will it take?***

This should take no longer than 20 minutes.

- ***How exactly will my anonymity/confidentiality be ensured?***

- Your anonymity is ensured throughout the entire research process. Especially when the interview is transcribed and information is disseminated. You will be made reference to regarding gender and age – your name will never be mentioned. No specific location shall be noted in the published results.

- ***How will the results of the research be disseminated?***

- The interview is part of academic data collection and will be used in publications across numerous journals, workshops, conferences and as part of a PhD thesis.

- ***What do I do if I want to stop half way through?***

Let myself know during the interview if you would like to stop and if you would like to have your responses discarded.

- ***How will my data be stored?***

It will be stored anonymously on a secure server at the University of Worcester, stored on a local laptop and backed up to an external hard drive, both of which encrypted and password protected.

- ***I have some more questions or concerns, who should I contact and how?***

Please contact myself at [a.kay@worc.ac.uk](mailto:a.kay@worc.ac.uk).



### Appendix 1.3 - Interview plan: Employees

As the interviews are semi-structured the questions are just a guide and varied among participants.

#### *Before the tape*

- Introductions
- Thanks
- Explain project including anonymity
- Any questions

#### *Start tape*

##### Data that is collected at the start

- Age
- Gender

##### General background questions

- What is your job role at the company?
- How long have you worked at the company? Did you work elsewhere in retailing?
- If so, how long have you worked in retailing?

##### CCI Incidents witnessed

**The following shall only be used if the participant is unsure about the phrase ‘incident’ or ‘interaction’.**

**An incident is described as one that makes a significant contribution, either positively or negatively, to an activity or phenomenon. In terms of this research, an incident will be a time where an interaction occurred between two customers).**

**An interaction is classified as times you have witnessed customers interact such as face-to-face conversations, spoken about products, communicated whilst in a queue or asked about information on certain products between themselves etc.**

##### *Questions (and probes) for employees*

##### Identifying and explaining the incidents

1. Can you describe a customer-to-customer interaction you witnessed?
  - Did it seem a negative or a positive experience based on what you heard or their body language?
2. Did you become involved? How?
  - Can you remember how you felt whilst managing the incident?
  -
3. If they think they do not witness any incidents – is it because interactions between customers do not occur, or if they are not trained in spotting the incidents?
  - If they do notice CCI occurring but do not intervene, I ask them why?'

### Personal experience and training

1. Can you recall any training for CCI management?
2. Has this helped you to manage CCI?
  - Why/ Why not?
3. Has previous experience helped you to manage CCI?
  - If yes, in what ways?
4. How do you feel whilst negative CCI occurs?

Thank you very much for your help I really do appreciate it. Anything else you would like to add?

*Stops tape.*

### Appendix 1.4 - Interview plan: Customers

As the interviews are semi-structured the questions are just a guide and varied among participants.

*Before the tape*

- Introductions
- Thanks
- Explain project including anonymity
- Any questions

*Start tape*

#### Data that is collected at the start

- Age
- Gender

#### General background questions

- How frequently do you visit this supermarket?

#### Personal CCI Incidents

- Can you tell me the last time you interacted with a customer in the supermarket?
- Can you please describe the incident in as much detail as possible?
- How did you feel?
- Do you actively seek out other customers to interact with or try keep yourself to yourself?

#### Location of CCI incidents

- Where have you interacted with other customers?

#### Employees role in managing CCI

- Has a member of staff ever intervened when you have been interacting with another customer? If so, can you describe what happened?
- If no, would it have made a difference if an employee intervened?
- What could they have done?

Thank you very much for your help I really do appreciate it. Anything else you would like to add?

*Stops tape.*

## Appendix 1.5 FLE breakdown

Participant number	Date	Age	Gender	Time	Store	Location of interview	Job Role	Years worked	Training provided	Number of incidents provided	Service Diary
1	16/03/2018	55	F	10.00am	A	Staff canteen	General merchandise Manager	32	Yes		3 Yes
2	16/03/2018	58	F	11.15am	A	Staff canteen	Customer Service advisor	18 (12 company)	No		4 No
3	16/03/2018	52	F	12.30pm	A	Staff canteen	Café assistant	21	No		6 No
4	03/04/2018	49	F	12.15pm	A	Staff canteen	General merchandise assistant	30 (14 company)	Yes		4 No
5	03/04/2018	60	F	3.15pm	A	Staff canteen	Bakery	5	Yes		3 No
6	04/04/2018	18	M	11.45am	A	Café	Café assistant	2	No		4 No
7	04/04/2018	24	M	3.30pm	A	Staff canteen	Clothing	6	Yes		2 No
8	06/04/2018	27	F	8.45am	A	Staff canteen	Online shopper	1	Yes		2 No
9	06/04/2018	24	M	10.15am	A	Staff canteen	Customer Service advisor	4	No		4 No
10	07/04/2018	53	F	11.30am	A	Staff canteen	Customer Service advisor	17	Yes		3 No
11	07/04/2018	60	M	1.15pm	A	Staff canteen	Cashier assistant	1	No		5 No
12	16/04/2018	30	F	9.15am	K	Staff Canteen	Cashier assistant	4	No		4 No
13	16/04/2018	49	M	9.45am	K	Staff Canteen	Clothing	7	No/Yes		3 No
14	16/04/2018	58	F	11.15am	K	Staff Canteen	Customer Service advisor	15 ( 1 company)	Yes		3 No
15	16/04/2018	62	F	12.00pm	K	Staff Canteen	Cashier assistant	26	No		3 Yes
16	18/05/2018	23	F	4.00pm	K	Staff Canteen	Café assistant	5	No		2 No
17	18/05/2018	33	M	4.45pm	K	Staff Canteen	Produce	6 months	No		2 No
18	03/06/2018	56	F	8.45am	A	Café	Checkouts Manager	21	No		3 No
19	03/06/2018	51	M	9.30am	A	Café	Deputy Store manager	15 years (10)	No		3 Yes
20	03/06/2018	47	M	2.30pm	A	Staff Canteen	Car park attendant	3	No		3 No
21	12/06/2018	54	F	1.30pm	B	Staff canteen	Cleaner	17	No		3 No
22	14/06/2018	63	F	2.30pm	B	Staff canteen	Produce	5	No		2 No
							<b>Number of participants</b>	22			
							<b>Total incidents</b>	0			
							<b>Average age</b>	46			
							<b>Number of Males</b>	8			
							<b>Number of females</b>	14			
							<b>Location K</b>	6			
							<b>Location A</b>	14			
							<b>Location B</b>	2			

## Appendix 1.6 Customer breakdown

Participant number	Date	Day of interview	Age	Gender	Time	Store	Location of interview	Number of incidents provided		
1	15/03/2018	Thursday	24	M	2.35pm	A	Meeting room	3		
2	15/03/2018	Thursday	60	M	3.45pm	A	Meeting room	3		
3	15/03/2018	Thursday	75	F	7.25pm	A	Café	3	<b>Number of participants</b>	27
4	15/03/2018	Thursday	76	M	8.05pm	A	Café	3	<b>Total incidents</b>	70
5	03/04/2018	Tuesday	55	M	8.15am	A	Meeting room	3	<b>Average age</b>	47.037037
6	03/04/2018	Tuesday	22	M	10.00am	A	Meeting room	2	<b>Number of</b>	12
7	03/04/2018	Tuesday	68	F	4.15pm	A	Meeting room	3	<b>females</b>	15
8	04/04/2018	Wednesday	33	F	5.30pm	A	Meeting room	4	<b>Location K</b>	6
9	04/04/2018	Wednesday	61	F	7.30pm	A	Meeting room	3	<b>Location A</b>	16
10	06/04/2018	Friday	19	M	11.45am	A	Meeting room	3	<b>Location B</b>	5
11	06/04/2018	Friday	28	M	1.00pm	A	Café	3		
12	07/04/2018	Saturday	34	F	2.45pm	A	Meeting room	2		
13	07/04/2018	Saturday	37	M	4.00pm	A	Meeting room	3		
14	16/04/2018	Monday	41	F	1.30pm	K	Café	2		
15	16/04/2018	Monday	69	F	3.30pm	K	Café	2		
16	16/04/2018	Monday	71	M	4.15pm	K	Café	3		
17	18/05/2018	Friday	21	F	10.00am	K	Meeting room	2		
18	18/05/2018	Friday	54	M	10.45am	K	Café	2		
19	18/05/2018	Friday	81	F	11.45am	K	Café	2		
20	03/06/2018	Sunday	86	F	10.15am	A	Café			
21	03/06/2018	Sunday	27	F	11.15am	A	Meeting room	3		
22	03/06/2018	Sunday	42	M	1.30pm	A	Meeting room	3		
23	12/06/2018	Tuesday	19	F	9.45am	B	Meeting room	2		
24	12/06/2018	Tuesday	37	F	11.15am	B	Meeting room	3		
25	12/06/2018	Tuesday	82	M	12.45pm	B	Café	3		
26	14/06/2018	Thursday	27	F	10.15am	B	Meeting room	2		
27	14/06/2018	Thursday	21	F	11.30am	B	Meeting room	3		

## Appendix 1.7: Orthographic transcription

Symbol	Feature	Explanation of use
Name:	The identity of the speaker; turn-taking in talk	The <del>speakers</del> name, followed by a colon signals the identity of a speaker. Interviewer: To identify when the moderator/interview is speaking. New line is started for every time a new speaker starts.
""	Reported speech	When the interviewee quotes speech from another person.
(.)	Micro pause	Indicates a short pause for trail of thought, uncertainty etc. Usually less than a second
((...))	A longer pause	A pause that is a few seconds or more (precise timing of pauses is not necessary).
((...))	Context added in the middle	For example: ((Laugh)) and ((coughs)) signals a speaker laughing or coughing during a turn of talk.
((inaudible))	Inaudible speech	When it cannot be clearly heard what is being said. This can often be if interviewing more than one person at a time or mumbling/background noise.
-	Hyphen	Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance.
[[Location]]	Gives geographical location of incidents	Identifies if the incidents happened in a different geographical location than where the interview takes place for example: a customer being interviewed in X states that someone cut them up in [[Y]].
[Location within store]	Gives location of incident within store	For example a shopper had somebody push into them at the [customer service desk].
??	Rhetorical question	If the person asks a rhetorical question or sounds unsure of their response.
<b>BOLD</b>	Bold text	Emphasis - Indicates shouted or increased volume speech.

Appendix 4.0 Spatial awareness: Customer perspective

<b><u>4.1 Spatial awareness</u></b>	<b><u>Example quote</u></b>
4.1.1 Blocking	<p>“It does annoy me when people are so bloody slow. The people who have two trolleys when you can’t get past them chatting”...</p> <p>“Mothers(...) you’ll get some of them who like to stand and chat to other mothers (...) like it is some community I don’t know but surely they can’t all stay together but there are like little bottlenecks who block the aisle”.</p>
4.1.2 Physical Contact	<p>“Some customers they take ages sometimes blocking the view for other customers. I just barge past them in the end and shove my way in. They always look at me funny but I don’t care.”</p> <p>“Well occasionally I’ll have people barge past me without saying excuse me or apologising which is rude (...) I had one bloke hit right into the backs of my legs with a trolley when he was on the bloody phone and just look up at me! Did not even apologise or acknowledge I was there I just glared at him in a pissed off manner”</p> <p>“They reduce the produce at some point during the day but it is usually rubbish that people don’t want and people seem to just herd and crowd around the area and act like animals like I’ve seen people push by people to try and grab products and like be very impatient and I’m like Christ are you that desperate for a bargain?”</p> <p>“other customers lean on me when trying to get a product when I’m just stood there looking at something, rather than saying excuse me (...) I’ll be looking at products or trying something on in the clothing and someone will reach for something near me and almost bump in to me”.</p> <p>“ (...) I literally had someone lean over my shopping and grab the chewing gum that is above my shopping so I had to move out the way (.) like just wait your turn and then they picked up the checkout divider and held it whilst I was putting my shopping away as if they were trying to make me go quicker (...) if anything it made me go much slower and just wound me up (...) they were touching my arm whilst they were doing it I just glared at them and they smiled as if nothing was wrong as if it was normal” (customer 13).</p>

Appendix 4.1 Spatial awareness: Employee perspective

<b>4.1 Spatial</b>	<b>Example quote</b>
4.1.1 Blocking	<p>“This morning there was a man who was looking for something in the chilled department but he left his trolley out and there was a woman who wanted something nearby and she just said “excuse me” but said it in a way where she wasn’t smiling (.) he didn’t answer and she just put her hand on his shoulder and said “excuse me can you move your trolley” and she had a very angry look on her face”.</p> <p>“Well there was a mother who had a pushchair and she was paying for her stuff but left her pushchair stuck out at like a 90-degree angle and was blocking an older man from getting passed to sit on the chairs at the end of the till”.</p>
4.1.2 Physical Contact	<p>“One that happens a lot is people get annoyed when the person in front doesn’t put the partition down in between their items and I once had a woman literally lean across a man and push passed him to grab the divider just to prove a point”.</p> <p>“when we discount items and put them at the end of the fresh aisle sometimes, I have to tell customers to wait patiently and not push (...) they certainly try and barge passed each other with shoulders at busy times trying to see the deals”.</p> <p>“There was a man at the checkouts with a lady behind him and she was in a wheelchair (...) he packed his stuff really slowly and was trying to redeem loads of vouchers and pay on card and stuff and the woman behind almost sighed and tutted (.) she basically kept getting closer and closer and he then went to almost go back up the queue to get a magazine and she moved forward and caught his toe under her wheel and he then basically bent over and almost fell to exaggerate it and then another man behind the lady said “where is the sniper??”</p>

## Appendix 4.2: Etiquette Customer Perspective

<b>4.2. Etiquette</b>	<b>Example quote</b>
4.2.1 Socially unacceptable behaviour	<p>“Guys have asked for my number before (...) Yeah like they’ve asked me where I got something from in my trolley or something normal and then asked where I am from and stuff and then asked for my number (...) I felt embarrassed”.</p> <p>“Well outside there are always a few youngsters hanging around sometimes smoking but their language is vile and if I’m with family members and friends it is quite unpleasant”.</p> <p>“A woman kept picking up the bread rolls and was literally smelling them and putting them back it was disgusting she didn’t look like she had clean hands either if you get what I mean”.</p> <p>“Well at the tobacco desk I just bought myself some roll ups and a new lighter and some cheeky man (.) obviously a man telling me I’m wrong told me that it was a horrible habit and that I needed to quit (...) lecturing me like he was my dad I just thought it was rude”.</p> <p>“Another customer and I witnessed somebody pick up fresh rolls not using the utensils provided, she was smelling them and putting them back and looked like she had dirty hands.. I looked at the bloke and he looked at me just as shocked and he said to her “are you going to buy any of those or sniff them all day”. She just told him to “mind his own business”. We just stood there and he said “certainly don’t fancy that anymore think I’ll get the Warburton’s instead”.</p>

<p>4.2.2 Signalling behaviour</p>	<p>“When people go slow (...). I stand tapping my credit cards, on the handle of the trolley, as a gesture, just to show them that someone without being aggressive, is to show them a quicker way, and people in front will always look and see and get their credit cards out ready. And I’ve had a lady say to me before “oh im not that organised” well I suggest you get that organised ((laughing)) but 90% of that is definitely women.”</p> <p>“ I put my stuff on the conveyer belt, bags in the trolley ready, I’m a bit OCD but the reason is when I get home I unpack it and it is in the correct place... I get my credit cards out; my bags are flapped open and I’m there ready. But what do I have to wait for? Women in front. They get their handbag, open their handbag, search for their purse, then get their credit cards, pay, ah right, thank you, got it, take the receipt, take the credit cards, back in the purse, put the purse back in the bottom of the bag, say goodbye and move off (...) I therefore stand tapping my credit cards, on the handle of the trolley, as a gesture, just to show them a quicker way (...) And I’ve had a lady say to me before “oh I’m not that organised” well I suggest you get that organised ((laughing))”</p>
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Appendix 4.3: Etiquette Employee Perspective

<u>4.3 Etiquette</u>	<u>Example quote</u>
<p>4.3.1 Socially unacceptable behaviour</p>	<p>“I saw another man reach over and eat lasagne off of a plate that was on a table next to him that a family had left”.</p> <p>“I’ve picked up like empty bottles from the side and chocolate bar wrappers and people say to me “some people have no respect” and one said “total animals some people are they probably leave rubbish around their house too it is probably a s**thole”.</p> <p>“There is this one customer who always comes in and tries to talk to everyone but I'm sorry they absolutely stink (...) I feel sorry for the other customers because when they’re waiting behind them in the line or down an aisle it is so obvious and people really can’t hide it on their faces ((laughing)) it really is horrible and it has a wide spread you can smell it for ages I don’t know why they don’t wash”</p>

#### Appendix 4.4: Social Customer perspective

<b><u>4.4 Social</u></b>	<b><u>Example quote</u></b>
4.4.1 Passing comments	<p>“I meet several ex colleagues from work and football is always a talking point (...) there was a chap I used to work with, funny enough asked if I support Charlton still (.) and he is a West Bromwich Albion (WBA) supporter so we had a long discussion about the demise of WBA. Ummm and things like that. I don’t go out to interact but if it happens it happens, if it don’t, it don’t”.</p> <p>“I’ll always look to smile at people and say hello to them I think it is good to socialise and say hello to some people as I think people can be lonely and one friendly interaction may be enough to cheer somebody’s day up”</p>
4.4.2 Friendships	<p>“I have almost made what I would call a friend here I normally come in on a Monday after dropping the grandkids at school and treat myself to a breakfast and a coffee whilst ((partners name)) is at Italian classes so I come in here and kill some time (.) and I now sit with ((customer name)) and we have a chat and he is a friend that I have made through ((company name)) so I would say that is probably the best example that I can think of”.</p> <p>“I would say I have about 4 or 5 people and couples that I say hello to and they always ask how I am and what I am up to and stuff it is quite nice I’ve made some very nice friends in here really and it has given me a new lease of life”.</p>

#### Appendix 4.5: Social Employee perspective

<b><u>4.5 Social</u></b>	<b><u>Example quote</u></b>
4.5.1 Passing comments	<p>“I also think people might talk to each other as a way of passing time whilst queuing as sometimes when returning something it can be a couple of minutes wait time”.</p> <p>“I see people having general conversation in the queue or asking people what was wrong with the product if they’re waiting to return something (...) it is normally older people who will chat to each other or make comments about things.”</p>
4.5.2 Mutual Moans	<p>“Yeah it can be anything really the other day I heard someone say “what are you hear to complain about” and the other person said that they were in the queue to complain about no trolleys and the person who originally asked the question was here to complain</p>

	<p>about a staff member not being very helpful (...) honestly it is so frustrating sometimes they just like to complain about anything really and just take their day out on us sometimes”</p> <p>“Two ladies who were chatting about the weather together just in front of my desk about how hot it had been (.) they were both picking up the paper and started talking (...) they were both moaning about the weather”</p>
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#### Appendix 4.6: Assistance Customer Perspective

<u>4.6 Assistance</u>	<u>Example quote</u>
4.6.1 Physical	<p>“I am always getting asked if I need help sometimes the staff member will even take the stuff to the taxi and wait with me I’ve come to know quite a few people here (.) even one of the customers has taken my stuff to the taxi before which is really nice of them”.</p> <p>“It was when It was bad weather and (.) the lady was struggling with her shopping and I helped her get some stuff from the shelves”.</p>
4.6.2 Informational	<p>“This morning I had someone before I entered the store ask me if knew where ((company name)) was (...) I gave them directions It was literally just around the corner I visit there quite often.”</p> <p>“I’ll just be minding my own business and someone will stop and ask where I get certain things from in my trolley (.) so then obviously I can’t say like aisle 5 or something so I just have to physically walk and take them.”</p>
4.6.3 Product	<p>“Yeah I always see people trying to talk to me just asking for products or giving me unwanted advice but I try and keep my head down and ignore it if I’m honest”.</p> <p>“Like the other week I was buying avocados and some guy gave me a tip to help get them out of the skin using a spoon and then told me to put lemon on them to stop them from going brown (...) I just sarcastically said “cheers mate (...)” like I didn’t even ask for his advice and I wouldn’t dare do that to other people I just feel like there are more know it all’s now than there ever has been.”</p>

Appendix 4.7: Assistance Employee Perspective

<u>4.7 Assistance</u>	<u>Example quote</u>
4.7.1 Physical	<p>“Well I’ve seen people talk all of the time to each other and quite often I’ve seen people helping each other with trays in the café”.</p> <p>“Well I see customers talking all the time to each other like saying hello and reaching products”.</p> <p>“Quite often we get customers reaching some of the cakes for other customers if they are smaller as the stands are quite far back”.</p> <p>“ A customer passing someone a product from under the racking if they’re already lifting it up or perhaps reaching a product that’s on the back shelf if someone can’t reach it”.</p>
4.7.2 Informational	<p>“On my way out of work yesterday as I was about to leave the door I heard one customer giving another customer directions to the toilet (...) Just him saying “it is by the café I’ll show you if you’d like”.</p>
4.7.3 Product	<p>“Yes, I’ve heard it all here sometimes it’s about vouchers that we send them and sometimes they even recommend cheaper products and it’s that point I have to say something”.</p> <p>I’ve had a customer come up to me before by the discount section and say that a customer has taken “all of the best stuff they were there waiting do you have any more you can’t let them take all of the stock” and I just had to reply that they were perfectly allowed to do that and we did not have any more discounted stuff today”.</p>

Appendix 4.8: Employee focused Customer Perspective

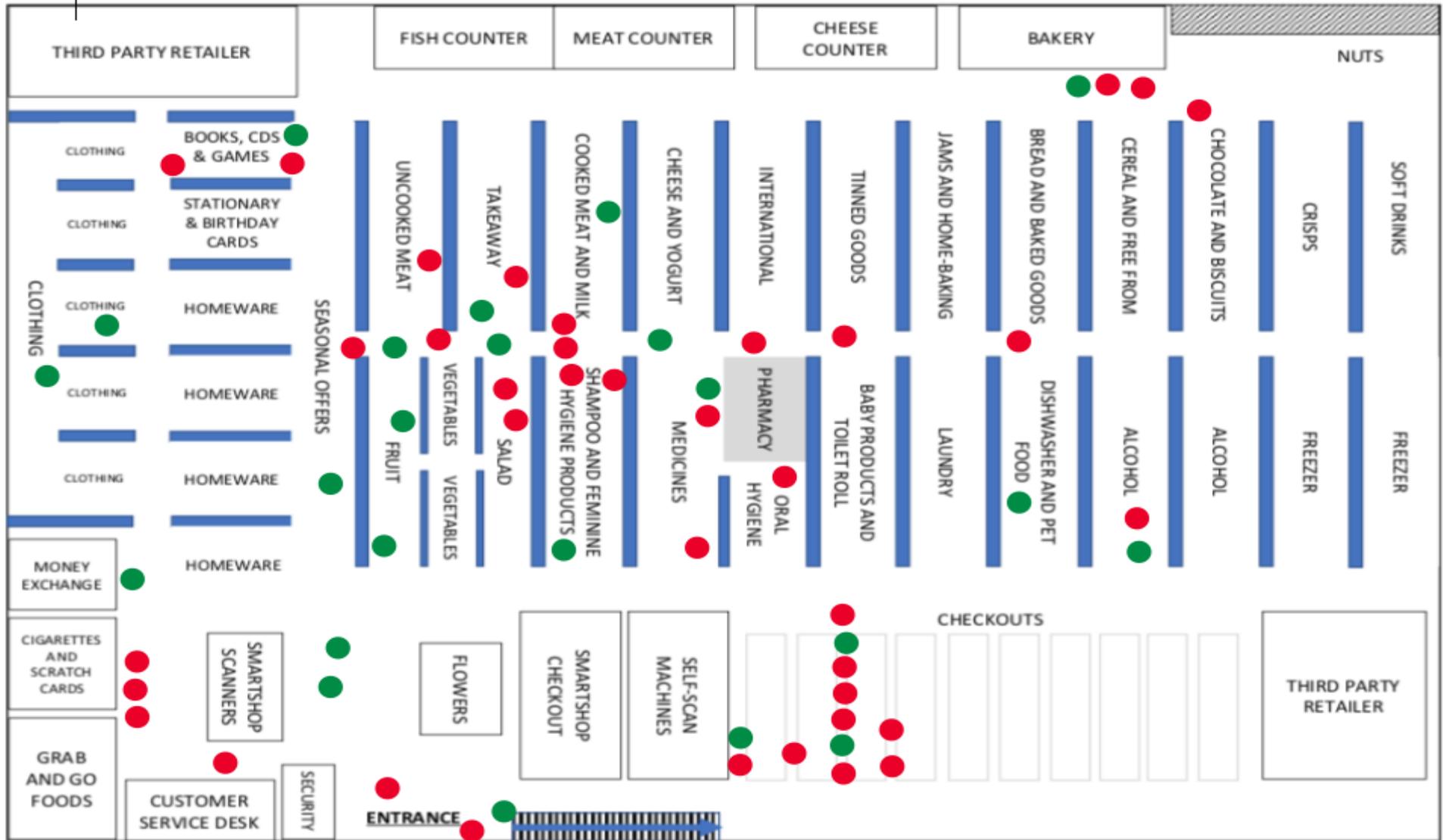
<u>4.8 Employee focused</u>	<u>Example quote</u>
4.8.1 Employees caused the CCI	<p>“Employees are normally <i>the bloody problem</i>, was waiting to pay and the customer and cashier were talking for ages”.</p>

4.8.2 Employee mistreatment	“The other day we were waiting in the queue and something was wrong with the till and a man in front of my wife and I was sort of shouting and moaning to us that things were going slow and I just said “it isn’t the cashiers fault mate there is not a thing they can do they’ve asked for help and we’re just waiting for the manager” and he was saying that they should do something about it “I said what? Things break no need to lose your rag” and he just stood there. The other customer annoyed me because he was blaming an employee for something that was not their fault”.
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Appendix 4.9: Employee focused Employee Perspective

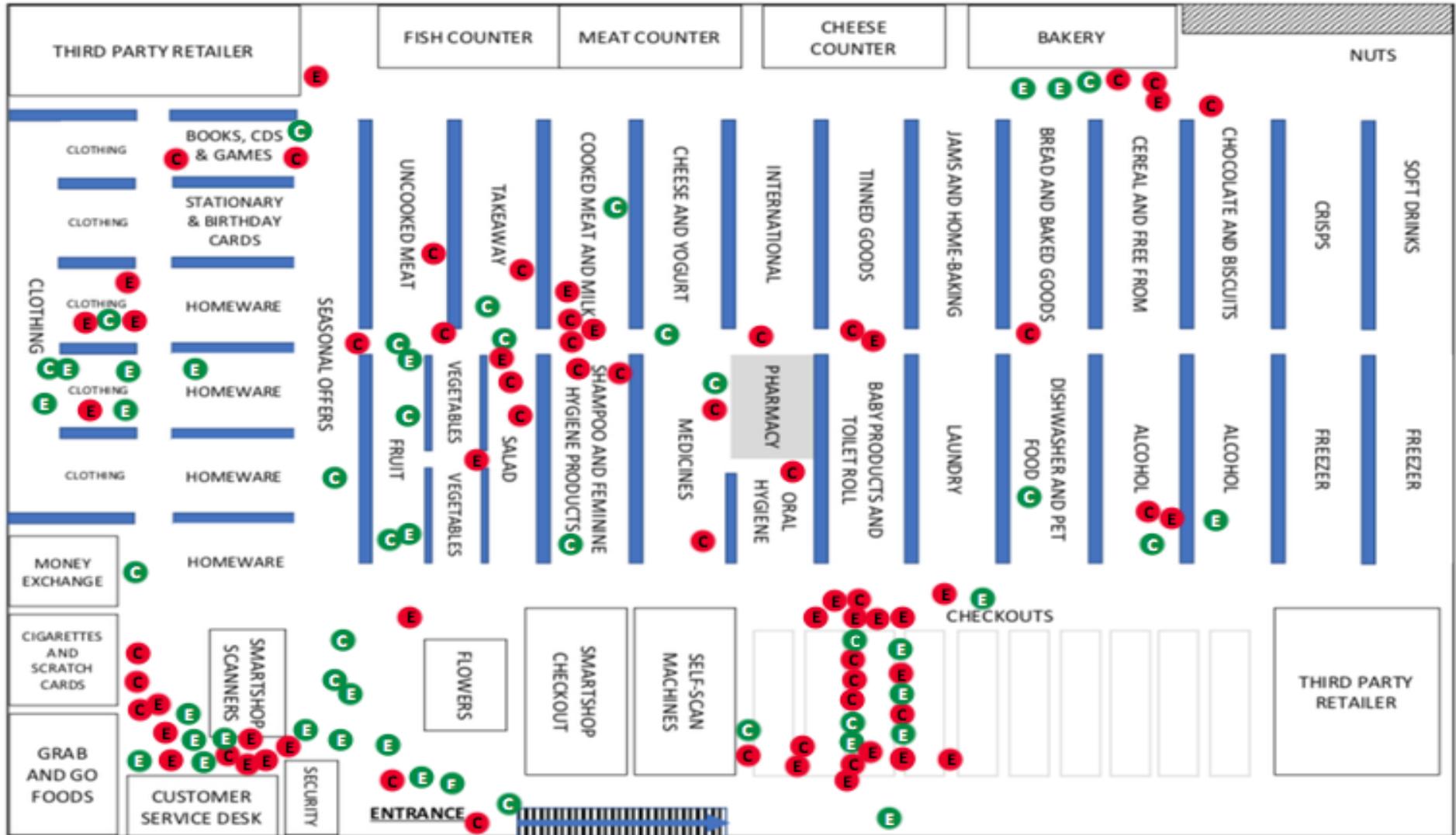
<b><u>4.9 Employee focused</u></b>	<b><u>Example quote</u></b>
4.9.1 Employees caused the CCI	“So, we often open up new tills and choose a customer who is at the back of the line and move them to a new one (.) but often people try and go straight to the new one who haven’t been waiting. And we just have to say to them “sorry this is being held for somebody else” (employee 16).

Appendix 5.0 CCI Mapping  
 Appendix 5.1: Customer incident locations'





Appendix 5.3: Combined Incident mapping (Customer and Employee)



Appendix 6.1: Open Coding Employees'

**Key**

Positive interactions

Negative interaction

FLE technique to deal with incident

How FLE felt dealing with incident

Was training received for C2C

Transcript	Initial coding
<p><b>Interviewer: have you ever witnessed two customers interacting with each other?</b></p> <p>Employee1 (manager): <b>The main thing you see is people trying to get into the queue before anybody else. They're not interested in who is behind them. (...)</b> the most common would be just seeing people trying to find the shortest queue or if a new queue is opened people literally <b>cut each other up trying to get to the shortest queue or the new till first</b></p> <p><b>Do the company provide any specific training on how to deal with customers interacting with each other?</b></p> <p>Employee1: I suppose it all comes down to your <b>general training</b> anyway its all to do with your focus whether it be with a customer or a colleague or both at the same time. <b>So yes I suppose you could say yes it is.</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: So if you saw two customers interacting with each other asking each other about a product. Would you let that play out or would you intervene and try and advise on the product?</b></p> <p>Employee1: It would depend on how it would play out if the customer was giving them the right sort of information that the other customer needed to know I would leave them to it. (...) <b>I don't receive training for when to step in and when to leave customers interacting.</b> We get training to make sure every customer has found what they're looking for so I <b>think its</b></p>	<p>Initial coding</p> <p>Location of C2C: Queuing Competition between customers Spatial awareness Form of C2C: Competition between customers Form of C2C: Pushing in queue</p> <p>Training focused on C2E Success of current training: Broad training</p> <p>Leave customers to interaction if positive Customer playing staff role Customer empowerment Down to employee experience Form of C2C: Helping another customer</p> <p>Employees ability not based on training/ Down to employee experience</p>

<p>experience that dictates actually sometimes its ok to let customers interact. (...) you just have to read the situation.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Does it come down to training or experience?</b></p> <p>Employee1: Experience knowing when to step back or knowing when to get involved.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Could you tell me any other times you've noticed customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee1: I've seen customers have full on slanging matches especially working on checkouts as the manager there. I've had to go up to them and say "can you please calm down, you're in a public place, there's children around".</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel intervening?</b></p> <p>Employee1: I think it doesn't bother me. But depends on the severity I think. If they're just at the customer service desk and they're arguing I can cope with it, but in an open place I feel much more responsible for other customers hearing it. Also I've had it so they then start turning on me and shouting. I just put my hand up and say "right, you either calm down or I'm going to walk away and not talk to you" and 90% of the time they will calm down. But if they don't, they're just told to leave or we just walk away and leave them. (...)</p> <p>Employee1: I got called to the desk one day and I said something and he said to me "you've been really rude to me" and he walked away and was really nasty and angry to me. But when I stopped and thought, what he said, he was right, what he said I did, I actually did. You know when you stop and think after?? Fortunately he came round the corner and I said "excuse me I need to apologise to you" and he said "no don't start" and I said "no seriously, it wasn't until you told me what I've done and I stepped back and looked at myself and that's not me" and I said "that's not me" but it actually was and it made me realise we have to re-evaluate how we interact with customers</p>	<p>Managing the incident: Employee experience</p> <p>Experience over training</p> <p>Form of C2C Verbal interaction: shouting Management technique: Calm spoken instruction Management technique: Respect others Calm when intervening</p> <p>Location of intervention matters</p> <p>Management technique: Authority/Respect Management technique: Calming nature</p> <p>Management technique: Self reflection</p> <p>Management technique: Empathy with customer Management technique: Self reflection</p>
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Employee1: I was getting something out the desk for somebody else and this woman made a remark about the uniform or extra helpers or something. And I said “sorry we’re all serving” and she said “is there anyone who can help?” and I replied “sorry we’re all serving” and she said “don’t shout at ME” and she said it loud enough for others to hear as if she wanted others to notice. I replied “I’m not shouting at your madam but you can see we’re all busy- but I’ll tannoy someone from clothing for you and we’ll get somebody” so I tannoy someone from clothing and she was dealing with a customer so this customer stood around for ages and I heard her say to another customer “oh forget this I’m going” and the next minute there was a tannoy saying can a member of GM please come to the desk. And I sort of looked up from the till knowing it was this woman and the customer I was serving must have heard it all and said to me “oh don’t worry you get some like it wherever you go” ((laughing)). The lady told customer service that we were all stood behind the desk doing nothing, that we were rude and ignored her. But we hadn’t but that was just the mood she was in. Even the other customers that were left said you cant serve her if you’re serving us.

**Interviewer: What do you think the influence of her on others around her were?**

Employee1: They looked at her as if she was just rude. She can clearly see that staff were busy with other customers. I also think it annoyed customers because she was trying to get served before them. It’s a form of queue cutting without physically stepping in front of them. I see this all the time, the battle to be served first.

I just turned around and said we’re really sorry but someone will be with you we’re just all serving at the moment. She asked again, and I just said “sorry but we’re all serving”.

**Interviewer: My final question is when you’re managing one customer you have the power and control, do you find it harder to manage another interaction between two customers or more?**

Employee1: I treat it exactly the same, but that’s because how I’ve been trained, but it is definitely harder to control it, because you’re not the one in control you’re simply observing another situation and have to deal with two conversations. Those two are the ones going at each

Lack of staff complaint  
 Management technique: Explain situation  
 Secondary interaction

Management technique: Calming the customer and explanation  
 Management technique: More personnel  
 Form of C2C: Secondary interaction  
 Customer support staff  
 Form of C2C: Laughing at another customer  
 Customers sticking together

Form of C2C: Secondary interaction  
 Form of C2C: Queue pushing

Gaining an advantage

Management technique: Authority/respect  
 Management technique: Apology for the wait

Feeling like a lack of control

Implement same training for C2E for C2C  
 Form of C2C

<p>other. When they're having a go at me I feel in control, but more than one customer especially at each other is a very hard situation to deal with. <b>You try and treat it the same but you cant</b>, one can calm down and the other cant or they can both gang up and turn on you. It has been known that they become friends and they start on you. <b>They wanted to have a fight and you've intervened so now they're on the same side</b>. That can happen, doesn't happen very often but it can.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: You're in a unique management position with nearly 30 years of experience. Do you think regular front line employees will intervene when other customers are interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee1: I honestly think they'll turn a blind eye, because its not what they're trained to deal with. They're certainly not equipped to deal with it.</p>	<p>Effect of intervening</p> <p>Lack of training</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: In as much detail as possible can you tell me the most recent time you saw customers interacting</b></p> <p>Employee2: <b>Two ladies who were chatting about the weather together just in front of my desk about how hot it had been</b> (.) they were both picking up the paper and started talking (...) <b>they were both moaning about the weather but in a positive way</b> ((laughing)) they both said it was too hot for them but were smiling when they said it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you feel the need to step in and manage the situation?</b></p> <p>Employee2: <b>I'm not sure if you would class it as managing the situation but I told them "it was about time we had a proper summer"</b> and they both laughed</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of any other incidents?</b></p> <p>Employee2: <b>At Christmas time when the queues are really big and people start to lose patience with each other</b> (.) (...) <b>push in front of each other and argue</b> (...) the queues can sometimes go all the way up the aisle into the middle of the store which <b>blocks other shoppers and quite often I've seen people push someone else's trolley out of the way to get to a certain product and</b></p>	<p>Form of C2C: General chat about weather Form of C2C: Positive interaction Form of C2C: Joint moaning</p> <p>Management technique: Agreeing with customers Management technique: Humor is important</p> <p>Form of C2C: queuing Other customers become irritating Time of year can influence C2C</p>

<p>maybe not put the trolley back and that always starts arguments</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee2: Well it depends how serious it looks between them (...) I don't really like confrontation and don't like to be shouted at but I will step in if it gets too much and starts to cause a scene (...)</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel during these interactions?</b></p> <p>Employee2: Well its not the nicest of things ((laughing)) not something I expect to deal with whilst at work in a supermarket (...) it does not take much for it to escalate from people arguing to an actual <b>FIGHT</b> (...) because that does happen honestly (...) [[names colleague]] <b>has had a fight before at the service desk over someone cutting in front of them (...)</b> basically a customer was unhappy with something in store so I think they were in a bad mood anyway (...) they were waiting in line and as he went to talk to [[names colleague]] somebody else stepped in and asked a quick questions (...) they put their hand on that persons shoulders and said something like "I was here first" and the other person basically said "don't touch me" and pushed him back</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did [[names colleague]] intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee2: No we never intervene with physical we don't get paid enough (...) shout for security they were both escorted off the premises (...)</p> <p>Employee2: I'd say customers get on quite well here (.) often people come in just for a chat and to see someone else as I know a few older people who shop here and talk to me and say they're on their own otherwise (...) There is one lady who comes in and she always sits and has a chat to me (.) I always ask her who she has seen in the store and she will name a few people that she</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Blocking the queue Form of C2C: Trolley rage</p> <p>Management of C2C: Intervention depends on severity FLE doesn't like confrontation so avoids negative C2C</p> <p>FLE doesn't like negative C2C</p> <p>Negative C2C not expected as part of job Type of C2C: Physical altercation</p> <p>Customer was in a bad mood more sensitive to C2C Employee noticed customer mood Type of C2C: Physical altercation Provoked reaction Queuing</p> <p>Intervention: Not paid enough Intervention: Call for security Intervention: Escorted off premises</p> <p>Form of C2C: General chat Form of C2C: Social contact</p>
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<p>speaks to (...) she doesn't know them outside of the store but she's quite popular in here</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever manage the situation between her and others?</b></p> <p>Employee2: I wouldn't say I manage the situation but sometimes I join in the conversation between them especially if they're in my queue or near me (.) I think if I build up a relationship and they start to trust me they're more likely to give feedback report problems and speak to me in a nice manner if they have an issue (.)</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you ever have any training for managing customer interaction? Or is it more down to your experience?</b></p> <p>Employee2: Well I've definitely been trained to focus on the customer (...) but I don't think I've been trained to handle more than one customer at a time or large parties (.) I think that comes from experience on getting to know people and how they react</p>	<p>Age as an influence of C2C</p> <p>Form of C2C: Making friends</p> <p>Managing the incident: Join in positive interaction</p> <p>Managing the incident: Build trust of customer</p> <p>Managing the incident: Engage in positive interactions because it will make negative interactions easier to manage</p> <p>Training: Trained to focus on customer but not C2C</p> <p>Experience used over training</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok my first question is quite simple can you tell me the last time you saw two customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee3: Ok yes of course just before leaving for my lunch break there was a nice young man about mid twenties clearing away a table for an elderly lady because she was walking with a stick</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I should ask if you intervened but I suppose there was no need?</b></p>	<p>Form of C2C: Physical assistance</p> <p>Managing the incident: No need for the sake of it</p>

<p>Employee3: No need at all (.) the lady seemed happy she smiled and thanked him and he was doing it on his way out of the store</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ahh that's a nice example (.) does stuff like that happen often?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: I suppose when I think about it the café customers always seem happy to me (...) quite often we get customers reaching some of the cakes for other customers if they are smaller as the stands are quite far back (.) I try and get it for them but sometimes we are quite busy so its useful having an extra pair of hands ((laughing)) I'm tempted to ask them if they want to pour the coffee and put a uniform on</p>	<p>Positive environment Form of C2C: Physical assistance  Managing the interaction: Customer does the employee job Managing the interaction: Humor</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's a good example! It's nice to hear some positive ones</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: Yeah they do all sorts (...) youngsters get a bad name but my son came in here and whilst I was tidying up to finish my shift he took a tray over for an elderly couple</p>	<p>Age as an influence of C2C Form of C2C: Physical assistance</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did a staff member intervene?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: Yes ((colleague name)) took the tray off him and helped the customers themselves</p>	<p>Interfered during C2C: Completed the task</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you think that was a good idea or should ((colleague name)) have just left them to it?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: Well we are told to not let customers take trays if they struggle with them (...) but she probably should have left them to it as they looked happy enough</p>	<p>Interference is mandatory: although customers could manage</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you think she felt dealing with the situation?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: She probably didn't even realise what she was doing</p>	<p>Positive C2C FLE did not even notice intervening</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of any negative customer to customer interactions?</b></p>	

<p>Employee3: Ummm some of the most common things that annoy us are the same as customers like leaving dirty cups and trays out on the table</p>	<p>Spot the problem as a FLE Form of C2C: Leaving cups on table Broken rules</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: You think that annoys customers?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: Most DEFINITELY (...) I've seen a customer stop another customer before and ask them to tidy their stuff away as it makes our (the staff) jobs harder (...) and begrudgingly they did but they were not happy about it</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Ask them to complete an action Form of C2C: Verbal interaction about rules Form of C2C: Do it to make staff job easier</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did you see this and do anything about it?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: I saw it yes but didn't do anything because the customer listened to another customer (...) I've asked someone to do it before and they've said "isn't that your job?" so when I see a customer helping out I try and leave them to it</p>	<p>Intervene: Did not intervene with negative C2C Wary of upsetting customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What other interactions do you remember?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: I've seen two grown men arguing over newspapers in the last month or so (...) we get around 6 newspapers a day that we put out and there's some people who take a couple of the newspapers home and some have them even when they're not reading them because they're eating don't put the newspapers back (...) and occasionally people go up to other people and ask if they can read the newspapers and this one time a man asked if he could take the newspaper back and the other guy insisted he wasn't finished reading it even though he wasn't at the time (...) so the other guy said to him "you're not reading it now though it doesn't mean you can keep a hold on it until you fancy reading it" and just grabbed it off of him (...) and the guy who originally had it called me over and asked if I could get it back</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Breaking rules Form of C2C: Verbal interaction Made a friendly request but rejected  Form of C2C: Asking employee to intervene</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee3: I calmly explained that if he wasn't reading it he should put it back (...) I knew the</p>	<p>Staff intervened and asked the customer politely</p>

<p>customer and knows that he's done stuff like this before (...) one time I caught him eating food from a plate that had been left behind by another customer</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Off of another customers plate?? Hang on (...) firstly how did you feel managing that situation? Did previous training help?</b></p> <p>Employee3: The newspaper one?? That wasn't a nice situation (...) I felt like I had to pick a side (.) this certainly wasn't something I had received training for I just used experience to try and sit on the fence and be neutral (...) I explained to the customer that it was the rules and I'm sure the other man didn't mean to sound rude</p> <p><b>Interviewer: tell me about this food scenario?</b></p> <p>Employee3: Well it really is as simple as it sounds I saw another man reach over and eat lasagna I think it was off of a plate that was on a table next to him that a family had left</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Wow that is strange what happened what did you do? Did you see it?</b></p> <p>Employee3: Yep I watched him do it as I was clearing (.) it was quite late at night maybe about 7.30ish (...) I just said to him did you eat that from another person's plate?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did he say?</b></p> <p>Employee3: He tried to justify it saying it was untouched and it was a total waste so he thought he may as well have it (.) it probably doesn't surprise you to say he comes in often and is a bit of an odd ball</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I did not expect that (...) do you think other customers noticed?</b></p>	<p>Staff knew the customer from previous experience</p> <p>Staff intervention: Did not enjoy intervening Staff: Felt as if they had to choose a side between customer Staff: Experience based not training Staff: Made decision based on rules</p> <p>Form of C2C: Stealing food from someone else's plate (another customer witnessed rule break)</p> <p>Staff intervention: Asked if they had just witnessed what they thought they had for confirmation</p> <p>Staff member knows the customer Staff member expects this kind of behaviour</p> <p>Other customers witnessed form of C2C</p>
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<p>Employee3: I think another customer might have seen it because he didn't even try and do it on the sly or quietly</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee3: Nothing! I just asked him if he'd eaten at all today and he assured me that it was untouched and not that disgusting (...) ok mate ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Wow I really did not expect that (...) If another customer did see how would that make you feel as an employee?</b></p> <p>Employee3: I'm not sure actually that's a good question I'd probably be a little embarrassed (...) I wouldn't know what to do?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you feel equipped to manage these incidents between customers? (...) even though that is an extreme case</b></p> <p>Employee3: Well I don't think any training can account for that do you?? ((laughing)) but I do feel equipped here yes (...) but I wouldn't put that down to training my training occurred over 20 years ago (.) as you mentioned earlier I'd say that it is more experience than anything else</p>	<p>Staff intervention: Did not intervene</p> <p>Staff member felt embarrassed</p> <p>Staff training: Not applicable Staff management of incidents down to experience Training out dated</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: I'll start off with an easy question about other customers (...) can you tell me the last time you saw other customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee4: The most common form of interactions that take place is probably product recommendation (.) either customers asking for help or the vast majority of customers giving advice without being asked ((laughing)) sometimes it's wanted and sometimes its not</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So customers talking to each other about products?</b></p> <p>Employee4: Yes giving bits of advice if they have the product already and if it suits them for example with clothes (...) but also on where it is cheaper in the town elsewhere</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Verbal interaction product recommendation Form of C2C: Forced conversation Some customers don't want to be spoken to</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so trying to help them save money?</b></p> <p>Employee4: Yes I've heard it all here ((laughing)) sometimes its about vouchers that we send them (store in case study) and sometimes they even recommend cheaper products from (names two stores) and its that point I have to say something ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So do you intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee4: Yes of course I do I cant have them making suggestions to customers to go elsewhere ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p> <p>Employee4: I just pretend I didn't hear the cheaper part and ask if they want help and that sort of thing</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel doing so?</b></p> <p>Employee4: Fine (.) a little awkward I guess but nothing too bad</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Have you been trained to intervene or do you just do it?</b></p> <p>Employee4: I just do it (.) its common sense really</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Anything else?</b></p> <p>Employee4: People normally chat about general things or apologise for being in each others way (...) sometimes I see customers both look at each other if there is a screaming child (.) people seem to agree that its annoying and that they understand the other customer (...) if a mother isn't controlling her child and they're making a lot of noise (.) one customer can look to</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Compliment on product Form of C2C: How to save money – other store recommendation</p> <p>Form of C2C: Verbal how to save money</p> <p>Intervene because other company is being recommended: losing custom</p> <p>Intervention: Ask if they need assistance</p> <p>Feeling awkward with negative C2C</p> <p>Experience says intervene</p> <p>Form of C2C: Verbal: Pleasantries</p>
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<p>another customer and they sort of nod at each other that the child is being too noisy ((laughing))</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Other customers screaming child</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you intervene?</b></p>	<p>Form of C2C: Shared experience/thoughts</p>
<p>Employee4: No not at all</p>	<p>No intervention</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How come?</b></p>	
<p>Employee4: Well what would you say? Be quiet to a 2 year old?</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Good point (...) any other stories?</b></p>	<p>Does not think the situation could be managed</p>
<p>Employee4: I've seen a few people drunk on a Saturday morning before (.) in particular one man came in very drunk and was being loud in the alcohol section and even a young lady said to him I don't think you need anymore</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Drunk Rule breaking Verbal Shared experience Policing from another customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee4: I was on my way to the staff room for break but I went and spoke to him and asked if he was alright (.) he was clearly drunk and causing a scene and the other lady said to me he shouldn't have anymore (...) so I got the lady to go and get security whilst I waited with him to make sure he didn't cause a scene</p>	<p>Intervened because it was causing a scene</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel whilst doing this?</b></p>	<p>Asked customer for assistance Fetched security</p>
<p>Employee4: I found it funny to start with but then got slightly anxious as I was on my own and he was much bigger than me</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: How did it end?</b></p>	<p>Anxious when dealing with the incident Isolated</p>
<p>Employee4: I just spoke to him and kept him occupied until security came and then I left it with the security guard who walked him out</p>	

<p><b>Interviewer: How did you think he influenced the other customers?</b></p> <p>Employee4: Like me I think (...) funny to start with (.) well they seemed to find it funny and then a little concerned the louder he got (.) I even had one man come and wait with me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you receive training for this situation?</b></p> <p>Employee4: You must be joking ((laughing)) drunk people definitely don't come up in the handbook</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you know how to handle the experience then?</b></p> <p>Employee4: It happened to a friend of mine who worked here and he left the customer to get help and the customer actually leaned on a shelf and knocked about 10 bottles of wine off</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh so you used a previous scenario to help you?</b></p> <p>Employee4: I'd call it being excellent at my job and experienced ((laughing)) but yes previous experience.</p>	<p>Kept the man engaged and focused on them whilst help arrived</p> <p>The interaction made other customer concerned Customer backed up employee</p> <p>No training for extreme incidents</p> <p>Experience due to a colleague story</p> <p>Previous experience helped dealing with incident</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time you have seen customers interacting between themselves?</b></p> <p>Employee5: Just before I came up I had a customer ask for their bread to be sliced and another customer say "oh I didn't realise you could do that" and then pick up a bloomer and say "can I have it done too please" and then turn to the other customer and say "you taught me something new today" and they seemed to have a bit of chat between each other for a couple minutes</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	<p>Form of C2C: Copying a customer Verbal interaction</p>

<p>Employee5: I cut the bread for them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you mind doing it?</b></p> <p>Employee5: Not really it can be annoying when you get a massive queue of people waiting for certain things particularly on a Saturday or something like that when you have loads of other jobs going on as well such as the timer beeping and products need to be taken out and some members of staff are on break or something and you are running things on your own it can be really stressful but I guess that's just the industry in general now wherever you turn you just see cutbacks and that sort of things</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you do when there is a big line of customers and perhaps they are getting annoyed?</b></p> <p>Employee5: (...) I make sure I'm running around and working quickly so they can tell I'm doing my best and I'm very specific like I say to them I'll be 45 seconds or however long I'll be which is better than saying "I'll be with you in 2 minutes" because 2 minutes can literally mean anything really can't it whereas 45 seconds sounds as if I'm being specific for a reason and it seems to keep them happier</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Does that work? That's an interesting technique actually being specific who told you that? Training?</b></p> <p>Employee5: They tell you to give as much detail as possible if you're certain on the answer but they don't give you specific things like that it is just something I have picked up that seems to work for me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Very interesting (.) can you think of any other incidents?</b></p> <p>Employee5: Well customers always comment to each other about the smell (...) they just say that they enjoy the smell of the bread and stuff like that it normally happens in the fresh bread</p>	<p>Employee completed what was asked</p> <p>Doesn't mind interacting depends on circumstances</p> <p>Dealing with incident on own</p> <p>Management technique: Be specific Management technique: Look busy</p> <p>Technique comes from training</p> <p>C2C Verbal interaction about store atmospherics</p>
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<p>section or whilst people are choosing which bread rolls they want (...) sometimes I've actually heard people say it whilst walking by</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you get involved?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I suppose I smile and say something like "its lovely"</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Why do you think you get involved?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I don't know to show that I'm listening and available if people need me (...) and I suppose I like to see people talking so I try and encourage it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Are you told to manage the situation and interact?</b></p> <p>Employee5: By my manager?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes and just training in general</b></p> <p>Employee5: Yes my manager always wants us to engage with the customers and get involved but I wouldn't say that it is training (.) well actually in the training they do sort of role playing like this where you have to chat to customers and make sure they're ok and always ask them if there is anything else you can help them with and that sort of things</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel managing the incidents?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I don't mind the nice conversations its dealing with complaints that I do not like</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of any other customer-to-customer interactions?</b></p> <p>Employee5: (...) ummm its not verbal but one main complaint that customers have is when they touch the bread and don't buy it so they put it back</p>	<p>Joins in C2C interaction with verbal confirmation</p> <p>Get involved to encourage C2C and people talking</p> <p>Training encourages C2C</p> <p>Likes positive C2C does not like negative C2C</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: What normally happens?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I hear people complaining to each other that they just saw somebody touch the bread and even smell it before putting it back (...) I've actually had customers come and give me pieces of bread that they don't think should be on sale anymore as its been touched by someone they don't think is hygienic</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I apologise and remove the product</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel doing it?</b></p> <p>Employee5: A little embarrassed but I don't care I'm more worried that I don't want to touch the dirty product ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think you should receive training to stop that from happening?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I don't know (.) its hard to spot so probably even harder to train someone (...) I think the training we receive is good but not as specific to each department as it used to be I don't think well that's what I hear from management that they do the training now rather than [[colleague name]] who used to be a specific store trainer</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Why is that?</b></p> <p>Employee5: I don't know I don't really think its my job to interrupt customers but I'd say the training we receive is quite good and helps (...) plus my manager is really hands on and has been here for like 15 years so they always help me (...) I'd say she gives me sort of unofficial training which helps as much as the [[Brand name]] training scheme it is a good place to work really I think the training is good</p>	<p>Form of C2C: Unwritten rules being broken they complain to FLE and other customers</p> <p>Form of C2C unhygienic broken rules Returned bread to employees that other customers will see</p> <p>Management technique: Empathise and apologise</p> <p>Feel embarrassed Also don't want to touch the product</p> <p>No training as it is hard to spot that kind of incident Training is not as in depth Lack of trainer in store</p> <p>Good training especially from manager Unofficial training better than store training</p>
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<p>Employee6: Well I know some customers talk to each other and I think they've even made friends that they see outside of [[company name]]</p>	<p>Relationship building – friendships formed</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh really can you describe what you mean and how you know?</b></p>	<p>Seeing customer talk</p>
<p>Employee6: Well I've seen people talk all of the time to each other and quite often I've seen people helping each other with trays and in I've actually seen one man give another man a newspaper as he knew he was waiting for it (...) like he finished with his newspaper and then goes and gives it to another man who he see's reading it sometimes and they laughed and smiled and thanked each other</p>	<p>Physical assistance</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ahh so it was obviously a positive interaction</b></p>	<p>Passing on products</p>
<p>Employee6: Yes definitely (.) but I think they're friends outside of here too as I've heard them talk about the golf together and I think they play at the same course I'm not too sure</p>	<p>Relationships formed</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok there's a few incidents there ((laughing)) thank you its good! (...) so firstly then the first interaction is another person helping someone and giving them a newspaper?</b></p>	<p>Passing products</p>
<p>Employee6: Yes basically the one customer knew the other customer always reads the same paper as him and when he was going he gave the newspaper to the other customer (.) it's a complimentary newspaper we put out and its always first come first serve and we only have one copy of each</p>	<p>Looking out for another customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: ok that makes sense (.) did you get involved or intervene</b></p>	<p>Did not intervene because there was no need to</p>
<p>Employee6: No there was no need to (.) technically I think the customer is supposed to put the paper back on the rack but the customer was helping another customer</p>	<p>Customer was helping</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So that's the reason you didn't intervene because the customer was actually helping?</b></p>	

<p>Employee6: Yes that's right (.) why would I stop something good it means less work for me ((laughing)) and like I said I'm sure they know each other anyway</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Because of the golf comment?</b></p> <p>Employee6: Yeah the spoke about golf at [[location]] so I think they're friends now or they might say hello just because they know each other from here which is a pretty cool thing</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you get involved and make a comment</b></p> <p>Employee6: No not really (.) maybe speak to them about golf to be friendly but not when they're talking to each other I'd feel noseey ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of any other incidents since you've started here (...)</b></p> <p>Employee6: when I'm on the till I think people get fed up when someone's going too slow (...) especially older people they take ages in the queue and we get a few people popping in for a take away coffee on their break from work and some older people like to have a chat or take ages sorting themselves out ((laughing)) like I notice all the time that older people like to chat to me and people behind are clearly not happy from their faces</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you do anything about it?</b></p> <p>Employee6: I try not to chat too much to them but I don't want to look rude (.) after all they are a paying customer just as much as someone else (.) I don't really do anything to hurry them up I just try not to encourage them (...) I also then apologise for the wait and laugh to the person behind (.) it sort of says I know they were slow without actually saying it and the person seems ok as long as you acknowledge the other person was slow and that its not a normal thing for us to stand and chat whilst they're waiting if that makes sense</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So you do intervene in your own way (.)</b></p>	<p>Friendship</p> <p>Join in but in a light hearted gentle way</p> <p>Customers going too slow Demographic intensifier: Age Intensifier: limited time due to work Customers chatting irritate other customers</p> <p>Cant do too much because they don't want to look rude</p> <p>Apologise to other customers Acknowledge that the other customer is slow</p>
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<p>Employee6: Yes I try and speed the customer up in a none obvious way and then make a light hearted comment to the next customer and sort of apologise</p>	<p>Speed the customer up in a subtle way</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Were you trained to do that?</b></p>	
<p>Employee6: No not really it just makes sense to I think</p>	<p>No training</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel whilst this is occurring</b></p>	
<p>Employee6: (...) I'm not sure a little bit anxious (.) it's almost like having an itch that you cant scratch ((laughing)) if that makes sense?? Like I can feel the pressure building and the customer and I are getting stared at for taking too long but there's nothing I can do about it (...) especially when I have to ask if there is anything else I can help them with it just seems stupid that we always have to ask that</p>	<p>Anxiety increased</p> <p>Script training</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: ((laughing)) that makes perfect sense (.) I suppose people talking to you and slowing the line down is a separate incident from people taking too long with their cards?</b></p>	
<p>Employee6: Yes I think it's unfair the tarnish them with the same brush (.) people who are sociable and like a chat doesn't necessarily mean they're slow getting their cards out (...)</p>	<p>Slow people talking</p> <p>Slow people taking ages getting cards out</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you manage the card situation? Is it possible?</b></p>	
<p>Employee6: Actually if people are taking too long with their cards and money and there is a big queue I will actually start to call out down the line that can you have your cards and money ready please and that sort of speeds the process up and prepares them so its quicker</p>	<p>Technique utilised to speed customer up – making sure they are prepared</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Is that a technique you were taught?</b></p>	
<p>Employee6: No just something I thought would be useful as my mom used to run a market stall and say it about cash when it was busy and I've seen a few of my colleagues here use it now</p>	<p>Gained from experience not training</p>

<p>although I don't think it sits too well with management ((laughing)) they don't want to hear us shout down the line I don't think ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel doing it?</b></p> <p>Employee6: Ah I don't care I'm used to it from helping mum out on the market for years</p>	<p>Does not mind doing it</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time where you see customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee7: Yes sure (.) normally around the changing rooms people telling other people they look nice (...) usually ladies telling other ladies that something looks nice on them when they come out of the changing rooms which is always nice and seems to get a smile from them (...) and I've seen people comment on the display manikins as well like standing and admiring them and making comments which is good really as I do quite a bit of the merchandising ((laughing)) but I don't actually come up with anything creative I get told what to do and just dress them accordingly</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So when people are commenting on outfits and items it is normally positive experiences?</b></p> <p>Employee7: Yes definitely (...) I haven't heard anyone slagging off someone else in an outfit I don't think that's particularly something nice to do and don't think many people would either (...) something I've never seen or heard of</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you think you would do if you did see that?</b></p> <p>Employee7: Someone being nasty about an outfit someone was wearing?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes</b></p>	<p>Pleasantries – people complimenting each other  Location – changing rooms  Complimenting the display and agreeing with each other</p>

<p>Employee7: I don't know what I'd say but I know I'd say something (...) as you can see I'm not the most standard looking person and would take great offence to someone being nasty about the way people judge others (.) it is something I really don't like</p>	<p>If they saw a negative interaction they would jump in and correct it</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Have you been trained on any of this?</b></p>	
<p>Employee7: I think our training identifies the importance of each and every customer and that if we saw a customer being subject to a poor experience we need to step in and intervene (...) but doing that without offending the other customer would be a hard thing (.) thankfully it is never happened to me</p>	<p>Training identifies the value of each individual Trained to step in if they see a poor experience occurring</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's very interesting (...) how do you think you'd feel dealing with a situation ?</b></p>	
<p>Employee7: I wouldn't mind because I think I'd be standing up for something I'm passionate about (...) but then another colleague might not say anything</p>	<p>Does not mind about negative interactions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's interesting (.) rather than hypothetical situations can you remember any other times that customers interacted?</b></p>	
<p>Employee7: I think customers get annoyed when people leave items in the wrong place or put the sizes not in order or hang them up incorrectly</p>	<p>Leaving items in wrong place</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok there is a few points there (...) could you describe them in more detail and provide me with some examples of when you've seen this or intervened?</b></p>	
<p>Employee7: The most common is probably shoes being placed on their own rather than with the rest of their sizes (...) so people will see a pair of shoes on the side and like the design but want a different size and because someone has moved them they don't know where anything is (.) same with tops really they like the design but because people might change their mind and are lazy and don't put them back in the right place people often ask me where I can find it and say</p>	<p>Clothing Items not where they should be  To lazy to return items</p>

<p>stuff like “people should put these items back where they found them rather than just leaving them around”</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I was going to ask if you intervene between the two customers but you can't because two customers aren't present?</b></p> <p>Employee7: Yeah so it is stuff that people have done before that irritates other customers and I can't do anything other than apologise which is annoying (.) I've had customers try and hide products before (...) like one evening our card machines were all down and it was only cash that was being accepted and a women said she had the last size in a top but we couldn't put it through the till because she didn't have cash (.) so rather than asking us to keep it behind the counter she said ok no problem (...) went and hid the top and then came back later and bought it with cash (...) I've seen customers hide stuff from other customers loads of times</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That's interesting what do you do?</b></p> <p>Employee7: I just try and turn a blind eye to it as I don't want the customer to be upset (...) but then I don't want items being in the wrong place and annoying other customers so it is quite irritating I feel like I'm in catch 22</p>	<p>Employee cant do anything other than apologise because they do not know who did it</p> <p>Customer try and hide product and purchase later</p> <p>Turns a blind eye but also feels the need to intervene – hard situation</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you remember the last time you saw customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee8: Well I see customers talking all the time to each other like saying hello and reaching products and stuff just usual pleasantries I think you would call it (...) especially early in the morning when I'm there it is a lot of older people who always say morning to each other when buying the paper or talk about the weather and stuff like that (...) just general old people chit chat haha ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever intervene or get involved?</b></p>	<p>General pleasantries C2C intensifier: Time of trip Age intensifier General conversation</p> <p>Intervene and join in the conversation</p>

<p>Employee8: Oh yes all the time I'm always saying hello to people or one time a man came in and was complaining that it was too cold to another man and the other man said "well yes no wonder it is when you're wearing bloody sandals" ((laughing)) and I said "no wonder you want to get some fluffy socks like mine" and pulled my trouser leg up to show them both ((laughing))</p>	<p>One man complained and the other joined in Having a laugh with the customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's brilliant what did they do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: They both laughed and the one who asked said "I'm going to get my wife to buy me some of those but I don't think they'll work with my sandals" and I said that "they definitely wouldn't"</p>	<p>Enjoyed the interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So that sounds like a positive interaction?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: Yes definitely I always try and have a bit of fun</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel whilst interacting with them?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: Good (...) like I'm enjoying my shift and I'm a morning person anyway and like to try and share my good energy</p>	<p>Enjoys positive interactions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did it seem that they enjoyed you interacting with them?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: Don't want to blow my own trumpet but I heard them talking after and they were smiling and they said it was nice to see a friendly face which is very nice to hear</p>	<p>Customers enjoyed staff intervening</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever witness negative incidents between customers?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: I'm not sure really (...) like this morning there was a man who was looking for something in the chilled department but he left his trolley out and there was a woman who wanted something nearby and she just said "excuse me" but said it in a way where she wasn't smiling (.) he didn't answer and she just put her hand on his shoulder and said "excuse me can you move your trolley" and she had a very angry look on her face (...)</p>	<p>Trolley blocking the aisles Physical contact</p>

**Interviewer: What happened next did you intervene?**

Employee8: Well the reason I remember is because he was blocking me as well but because I worked here I was happy to wait but as she said excuse me I just nipped in and said “can I move this for you Sir (.) are you ok having a nice morning” and I sort of smiled at the other woman as well and she mouthed ‘thank you’ and smiled at me without words actually coming out of her mouth if that makes sense?

**Interviewer: Yes I get you**

Employee8: So we pushed his trolley a little further up and everyone was happy really

**Interviewer: How did you feel whilst managing the situation?**

Employee8: Fine (.) I like people and I'm quite a positive person so I thought I'd jump in before it escalated because the woman sounded rude but when she smiled to me after she was actually really nice and seemed pleasant so I think it worked out best for everyone and the gentlemen didn't really know anything happened or he was blocking anyone (...) that happens quite a lot actually

**Interviewer: What does?**

Employee8: People getting in each others way and being totally oblivious to it like talking and moving too slow (...) I mean it gets in my way when I'm shopping and loading my cart and if they get in my way I've seen them get in other customers way as well but half of the time they don't even know so I do my best to move them along

**Interviewer: What do you do?**

Employee8: I just quite politely ask them to move and make a light-hearted comment about something in their trolley or about something in general that sort of gets their trust and then I

Customer blocking staff could be the reason why they noticed  
Physically moved trolley  
Tried to distract customer with conversation  
Acknowledged to the other customer that they understood

Jumped in before the situation escalated further  
  
Aisles being blocked occurs often

People getting in each other way but being oblivious to it  
  
Try and intervene

<p>say “you don’t mind If we move this trolley or have this conversation at the end of the aisle do you?” and they always don’t mind or apologise it is just a better way of doing it than “can you move”</p>	<p>Politely speak to customers</p> <p>Asks them to move politely and offers suggestions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yes yes that makes perfect sense (.) who told you or taught you about this technique?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: Don’t think anyone told me about it it just makes sense to do that rather than just being rude (.) I picture myself as a customer and think how would I like to be handled?? Then I think about things I’ve said to customers previously that they’ve reacted positively too then just copy what I’ve done before and hope it works ((laughing))</p>	<p>Common sense</p> <p>Technique: Pictures themselves as the customer</p> <p>Positive reaction from customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel dealing with these sorts of interactions?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: I don’t mind really (...) when I think about it some more now actually I do think my training here has been good (.) they teach us to know our worth and I think they give me some freedom to be myself and just chat to customers (...) my manager is always praising me for my talking skills ((laughing))</p>	<p>Does not mind</p> <p>Provide basic tools and platform to perform</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So was it the handbook that helped you or your manager?</b></p>	
<p>Employee8: My manager definitely he’s been here like 10 years he knows always what to say and he always has my back which is a confidence boost (...) I think that allows me to by myself because I know if a customer does complain about something I’ve said (.) which touch wood they haven’t yet I know he wouldn’t believe them or he’d question what they say because he knows I wouldn’t say anything intentionally to offend a customer if you know what I mean</p>	<p>Manager as key training influence</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That’s interesting (.) can you describe a time you’ve seen two customers getting along?</b></p>	
<p>Employee9: Oh yes all the time I see people having general conversation in the queue or asking people what was wrong with the product if they’re waiting to return something (...) it is normally older people who will chat to each other or make comments about things</p>	<p>General conversations in the queue</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Like what sort of things?</b></p> <p>Employee9: Could be anything really (...) a few times I've heard them ask other customers where they got their items from and -</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee9: Well normally the other customer says something like "oh the home wear department" and then ill try and be more specific and jump in and be like "yeah it is on the back wall under the entertainment sign" or something like that so I leave the customer to it and see if they can give the correct information and if I know they can give them more information then I will join the conversation</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What about if the customer tells them everything correctly?</b></p> <p>Employee9: Then I'll either leave them to it and not say anything additional or I'll just confirm what they say (...) you know I think customers will believe me more if I confirm what they say</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think so ? That's interesting as research suggests customers are more likely to believe other customers over staff members as they have no reason to lie or be loyal</b></p> <p>Employee9: Oh I didn't think about it like that (...) I see it as the other way around that customer trust staff members as they should know where products are and have had training in talking to people and that sort of thing</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yeah that's a good point I think this research was more focused on customers who make product recommendations and for price etc. as they're happy to recommend other companies and brands not just ones that the employer works for</b></p>	<p>Asking what is wrong with the product at the customer service desk Age demographic – intensifier</p> <p>Product recommendation/help</p> <p>Try and add to the information Leave the customer if everything is ok</p> <p>Leave customer if they can</p> <p>Customer trust staff members</p>
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Employee9: That does make sense actually I never thought of it like that (...) I also think people might talk to each other as a way of passing time whilst queuing as sometimes when returning something it can be a couple of minutes wait time

**Interviewer: Yeah that's interesting it could be a stimulator of CCI which I haven't thought about before**

Employee9: Yeah it can be anything really the other day I heard someone say "what are you hear to complain about" and the other person said that they were in the queue to complain about no trolleys and the person who originally asked the question was here to complain about a staff member not being very helpful (...) honestly it is so frustrating sometimes they just like to complain about anything really and just take their day out on us sometimes (...) they love to moan in twos rather than on their own they encourage each other

**Interviewer: Did you intervene when you heard them ganging up to complain?**

Employee9: What is the point?? It would just cause an argument and it is more hassle than it is worth when people are like that (...) they just like to moan for the sake of it plus at the end I'm supposed to say can I help you with anything else?? I have to always ask that and it seems pointless and sometimes it winds them up even more if I didn't help them with what they wanted it almost sounds as if I'm being sarcastic

**Interviewer: Do you receive any training like that?**

Employee9: No I think that's a bit specific for [[company name]] ((laughing)) there is no training for dealing with miserable moaning people who have nothing better to do ((laughing)) I didn't see that section in the employee handbook

**Interviewer: ((laughing)) yes but you get my point though?? That perhaps you're not told how to deal with other customers interacting?**

Talking in the queue as a form of passing time

Joint complaining about trolleys and unhelpful staff member – could be viewed as positive (mutual moans)

Staff did not intervene because it would be pointless and could lead to further confrontation

No training for such specific incidents

<p>Employee9: That's probably because the people delivering the training have no clue what actually goes on down here (.) I'm being serious with this honestly there is a definite gap between reality and what we're told to do it doesn't make sense the company has gone downhill so much since I started and it is only been three years some of the girls I work with have been here ten years and they say it is totally different now</p>	<p>Training is poor and not delivered correctly</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Why is that?</b></p>	
<p>Employee9: Like anything really isn't it the economy and the fact that we're trying to save money wherever possible but it is definitely effecting the service there is just less staff members so we take longer (...) <i>that's another one I think people get fed up when the queue is long or someone is going to slowly (...) like I've had people before over exaggerate checking their watches almost tapping on them and sighing as a sign to go faster and it either means I'm going too slow but I think it is that some customers can take too long</i></p>	<p>Customer technique to speed staff and customer up</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee9: <i>I try and smile at the customers and almost acknowledge that there is a problem and I'm trying to go faster and then I just apologise when I do see them</i></p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok couple of points there firstly when you see two people moaning together and sharing the bad incidents together you how do you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Employee9: <i>Not great but I try not let it bother me (.) I just feel awkward really</i></p>	<p>Smile and acknowledge</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Secondly how do you feel when someone is taking too long and it is annoying another customer?</b></p>	
<p>Employee9: <i>That time I don't like it as I can feel the pressure growing (.) that's when I start smiling at them and letting them know I'm acknowledging the problem</i></p>	<p>Awkward feeling</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How does it work?</b></p>	



<p><b>Interviewer: Have you ever received training for customer to customer interactions?</b></p> <p>Employee9: <b>No definitely not</b></p>	<p>Location of CCI has an impact on wellbeing</p> <p>No training for specific incidents</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Anyway I'll start with the basic question can you tell me about a time when you have recently seen customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee10: Hmmm I'm trying to think (...) the last time I remember customers talking to each other is when I gave somebody the trolley keys to unlock a trolley because they forgot a pound coin so I gave them the keys that unlocks them and just before they returned them to me another customers asked us both if they could borrow them so the other customer said yeah I think so and looked at me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee10: <b>I said yes of course you can</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: And then what happened?</b></p> <p>Employee10: The other customer gave them the keys and said thank you it saved me doing it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I was going to ask if you intervened but you had no choice really?</b></p> <p>Employee10: No they simply asked me and I said yes</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel?</b></p>	<p>Passing equipment on – trolley key Saw one customer using something useful and another customer asked after</p> <p>Employee allowed it</p> <p>Passed equipment on</p>

<p>Employee10: Absolutely fine it didn't bother me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you remember other interactions?</b></p> <p>Employee10: Customers talk to each other all the time but I don't think staff realise that on many occasions they don't know each other I think they believe they all came together when in fact strangers often have a chit chat and say hello</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh really do you ever get involved?</b></p> <p>Employee10: Yes sometimes I'll join in if they are near the till or I hear what they're talking about (...) I always pretend I don't know what they are talking about though and smile at them otherwise it looks like I'm just being nosey towards them ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p> <p>Employee10: I listen until I can jump in and ask them if they're ok and just join in the conversation it makes them feel happy I think they always seem to smile and then I make sure I ask them if there is anything else I can help them with</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh that's interesting so you wait until they invite you in rather than just jump in</b></p> <p>Employee10: Yeah otherwise I will probably looks nosey and I don't want them to think I'm interfering because remember the relationship between a staff member and customers is different from one customer talking to another so I always make sure I ease my way in rather than just jump in</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Who taught you that technique?</b></p>	<p>Neutral feeling</p> <p>Customer chatting saying hello to each other</p> <p>Join in conversation if nearby or can hear the topic in discussion Do not let customers see they're listening</p> <p>Plan when to join in the conversation</p> <p>Wait until customer invite the employee into the conversation</p>
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<p>Employee10: I think it was discussed at my training briefing years ago or it might have been another employee</p>	<p>Training was provided</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel whilst intervening?</b></p>	
<p>Employee10: Absolutely fine it makes my day go quicker</p>	<p>Pleasant feeling talking to customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of any other interactions?</b></p>	
<p>Employee10: I don't think so I don't really listen to people talk that often if I'm honest but I know they have general chit chat (.) well I think they do</p>	<p>General conversations</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Remember it doesn't have to be spoken it can just be where a customer effects another customer</b></p>	
<p>Employee10: Ohhh so like smelling badly ((laughing))</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean ((laughing))</b></p>	<p>Demographic/situational/personal</p>
<p>Employee10: Not sure I should be saying this but oh well (.) there is this one customer who always comes in and tries to talk to everyone but I'm sorry they absolutely stink ((laughing)) and I feel sorry for the other customers because when they're waiting behind them in the line or down an aisle it is so obvious and people really can't hide it on their faces ((laughing)) it really is horrible and it has a wide spread you can smell it for ages I don't know why they don't wash</p>	<p>One customer smells poorly and it impacts on the other customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you do about it?</b></p>	<p>Customer pulling faces at the poor hygiene from another customer</p>
<p>Employee10: Nothing! Even my manager does nothing but what are you expected to do?? They are a paying customer like everyone else you can't tell them that they smell and they need a wash</p>	<p>Cannot manage incident Manager does not intervene too</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel?</b></p>	

<p>Employee10: Horrible (.) gross and embarrassed for the other customers and slightly bad for the person who smells I think (...) like all these people know how bad they smell but they are oblivious to it (.) well actually you surely must know because it really is that bad</p>	<p>Negative embarrassed reaction to incident</p>
<p>Employee11: Well people talk to each other when they ask them for the dividers they say thank you very much or they ask customers if they could pass them the dividers if they wouldn't mind</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh the partitions things they put down on the conveyor belt when they're splitting up each other's products</b></p> <p>Employee11: Yeah the dividers that keep customers separate basically (...) and it is when one customer is waiting to put their stuff on they never like to put it on until the other customer has put their stuff down ((laughing)) and then they'll sometimes ask another customer if they can grab them a divider</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever see a customer without one and intervene before they speak to another customer?</b></p> <p>Employee11: I'm always passing the dividers down the line when I can or I'll ask another customer to put it behind them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Are you told to do that?</b></p> <p>Employee11: Yeah you are it is common sense as well some people can get really funny about it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean?</b></p>	<p>Passing of equipment – dividers on the till</p> <p>Patiently waiting for customers to put the divider down allows customers to place items on the checkout</p> <p>Will try and stop this interaction from occurring/or encourage it</p> <p>Common sense</p> <p>Broken unwritten rules it is common sense</p>

<p>Employee11: Well you can just tell from their look that it is the decent thing to do and some people just choose to ignore it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Does that make it awkward?</b></p> <p>Employee11: A little but not too bad (.) but then sometimes people put it down for them before they even realise and they receive a smile and a thank you so it is not all bad (...) they're often the type to also let people through if they don't have many items or seem as if they are in a rush</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean?</b></p> <p>Employee11: Well you know if a lady is doing her full shop for the week and has 50 items and there is a young lad behind then she will ask if that's all he has and then let him go in front because it is much quicker for everyone</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh that's interesting (.) if she didn't have let him through would you say anything?</b></p> <p>Employee11: I would sort of look at him and hope to get the ladies attention to let him through but I wouldn't put him before her that's her choice to make and not everyone does it but the vast majority of people are let through (...) honestly there are so many little rituals I could tell these anecdotal stories to you for hours ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Really?</b></p> <p>Employee11: Oh yeah even that example that I have just given you made me think of another</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What's that?</b></p> <p>Employee11: Well I mentioned about the young lad with flowers and people letting him through?</p>	<p>Can be awkward if one customer does not do it</p> <p>Sometimes customers help other customers</p> <p>Unwritten rule allowing a customer to go in front if they have fewer items</p> <p>Try and persuade but not force</p>
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**Interviewer: Yeah**

Employee11: Well big items like that or fancy items like that people always comment on

**Interviewer: Really?**

Employee11: Oh yeah take for example the flowers yeah?? Well whoever is buying flowers can't queue at the checkouts without someone saying to him "oh they are nice who are they for?" it is just standard and one of those things ((laughing)) it is the same with women and tops and clothing people always comment (...) if they don't comment and somehow made it to the end of the queue without anyone commenting then I'll sure as hell make a comment ((laughing))

**Interviewer: Oh so people interact with each other and ask who the product is for?**

Employee11: Yeah all the time!

**Interviewer: That's interesting (.) what do you do?**

Employee11: I join in ((laughing)) I'm quite nosey I like to be involved especially when they're at MY till ((laughing)) I like to think it makes them feel comfortable and gets everyone chatting at my till I really do like that

**Interviewer: Are you trained to do that?**

Employee11: I don't think you can be (.) they encourage you to chat and make your customers feel welcome but I think it is years of experience in the police that makes me like that I've dealt with much worse situations than flowers and dividers (.) it just makes me laugh that I have to finish each interact with "is there anything else I can help you with" just to score some bonus points with a mystery customer (...) if I've been really helpful to a customer I sometimes say "right go on get out of here I've given you enough information already" and they laugh much

Customer always comment on flowers  
Comment on clothing

Join in the conversations

Encouraged to chat

Use humour with customers

more than “can I help you with anything else” it is less personal and it needs to be personal and fun

**Interviewer: Wow that’s very interesting (.) do you enjoy intervening?**

Employee11: I love it that’s why I’m here working like I said to meet new people and talk to them I don’t really need this job and I think it probably comes across that way sometimes to my manager so he leaves me be ((laughing)) but if I see an interaction occurring then yeah I’ll try get involved and join the fun

**Interviewer: Same question does training play a part?**

Employee11: No we don’t get taught anything like that (...) they probably wouldn’t want us to anyway it takes up too much time they’re more interested in making sure we throw items through the till as fast as possible

**Interviewer: Is that what you’re told?**

Employee11: Not in that form but pretty much we are yeah

**Interviewer: That’s interesting (.) do you ever see any negative incidents?**

Employee11: Ummm I’m trying to think what annoys customers the most (...) a very simple and common one is when people have to wait ages for a product to be fetched by a runner

**Interviewer: What do you mean?**

Employee11: Well take for example normally they’ll bring an item to me and the barcode doesn’t scan or the milk is leaking I then press a button a staff member comes over and has to go and fetch it (.) and it is weird to see because if it is something that’s not the customers fault then the other customers seem to be forgiving so like the milk leaking isn’t there fault but if

Enjoy interacting with customers and managing the situation

Don’t get taught to be personal

Customers get irritated waiting for another customers product

If it can be avoided other customers seem annoyed – body language

they accidentally forgot to buy something that was 2 for 1 and they only picked up one then other customers can become really agitated and I can tell from their body language (...)

**Interviewer: That's interesting do other customers ever fetch the items themselves?**

Employee11: Yes they do and that annoys customers too I've even had customers ask if they can scan their items whilst the other one is 'prattling around' I think the term was used ((laughing)) but I explain than I can't save their transaction halfway through so we just normally have to wait and I can feel the tension building if it is really busy

**Interviewer: How does that make you feel**

Employee11: Very awkward

**Interviewer: Do you do anything?**

Employee11: I just ignore it and pretend to be busy on the till or something I don't know what to do its horrible really (...) I have even pretended before that I haven't heard them

**Interviewer: Anything else?**

Employee11: Yeah another one that I've literally just thought about in relation to other customers is when I'm on the basket till which is supposed to be 10 items or less I can tell other customers get annoyed when other customers break the rules and have more than the required amount of items in their basket because they rule is 10 items but some people have more than that and I've actually had customers say to me "I counted and he had more than 10" almost as if they don't like that the rule is being enforced it really is quite comical

**Interviewer: Wow when you see these people becoming annoyed do you do anything about it?**

Customers having to wait for other customers

Feel the tension building up

Awkward feeling

Ignore it

Not obeying the rules

Had customers comment to the employee that the rule is being ignored

Do not intervene because the employee is worried it will make the situation worse

<p>Employee11: No not at all because I'd make the situation worse I think (.) I have a customer who is perfectly happy putting things through the till and someone behind them who is unhappy with their number of items (.) but if I confronted them both then I will certainly have a customer who is unhappy and I may make the other customer happy and that there is no guarantee (.) plus the customers might turn on each other and that is my worst case scenario that's something I don't want</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel?</b></p> <p>Employee11: Alert actually (.) not mundane and putting items through the till but more that I've got to manage the incident (...) doing nothing is managing an incident you know because I could play by the rules and tell them they're not allowed through here because they have more than the 10 items but that will just cause more harm and could lead to the customers not coming back (...) you've got to see what is going on first (...) you do not just jump in and start managing situations when there is more than one customer (...) you see what's what before being rash and making decision you watch first</p>	<p>Alert and needed</p> <p>Doing nothing is a technique</p>
<p>Customers talk to each other all the time I don't think people actually realise how much they do even if it is just saying hello to each other and things like that</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So just general chit chat? Any specifics?</b></p> <p>Employee12: Not really just being polite quite a lot of the time or when people join the queue at the same time sometimes they'll let people go in front of them just being polite or if they bump into each other</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you do anything?</b></p> <p>Employee12: No nothing just watch them (.) not just that they'll also talk about products or make comments on each others shopping or recommend products that sort of thing</p>	<p>Conversations such as saying hello</p> <p>Being polite letting customers going in front of each other</p> <p>Do not intervene Talking about products or making recommendations</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: They seem quite positive interactions that doesn't really need much managing? Because remember I'm very interested in how you plan on managing the interactions and your feeling during the interactions maybe something that's slightly more negative that really sticks out in your mind?</b></p>	
<p>Employee12: Oh ok well I had one (...) yesterday I think and it was a woman who ran over a mans toe with her wheelchair at the paying point of the checkouts I found it funny because he really over exaggerated it to prove a point and almost fell over like he had been shot and a man afterwards said "ooo wheres the sniper" ((laughing)) it really made me laugh</p>	<p>Physical contact Ran over a persons toe with wheelchair</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok there is a lot of stuff going on there can you break it down for me?</b></p>	
<p>Employee12: Ok well there was a man at the checkouts with a lady behind him and she was in a wheelchair and I will admit he was taking ages and I think the woman behind was getting fed up</p>	<p>Moved too close to the customer in front</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Why was he taking a long time?</b></p>	
<p>Employee12: Because he packed his stuff really slowly and was trying to redeem loads of vouchers and pay on card and stuff and the woman behind almost sighed and tutted (.) she basically kept getting closer and closer and he then went to almost go back up the queue to get a magazine and she moved forward and caught his toe under her wheel and he then basically bent over and almost fell to exaggerate it and then another man behind the lady said "where is the sniper??"</p>	<p>Woman sighed and tutted because the customer was going too slow with vouchers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh wow what did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee12: I asked him if he was ok</p>	<p>Physical contact due to impatience Third person interacted and joked</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did the other lady do?</b></p>	<p>Checked up on the customer</p>

<p>Employee12: She sort of apologised but did not really do to much it was so weird hard to explain</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did the guy do?</b></p> <p>Employee12: The one at the back or the one with the bad toe ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: One with the toe</b></p> <p>Employee12: He turned to me and said “did you see that?”</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee12:I just said it looked an accident and that I hope you were ok (.) if I'm honest the other woman didn't look too bothered</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel ?</b></p> <p>Employee12: Awkward but trying not to laugh (...) you know when you're at school and something is not that funny but because you can't laugh it becomes funnier well it sort of was like this because this guy was a big guy he was well over 6ft and fairly well built and there he was going down like he had been shot from a small lady in a wheelchair (...) it was quite pathetic really</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you often have stuff like this happen? Can you think of any others?</b></p> <p>Employee12: Ummm customers not being happy with each does mainly happen when customers take too long to pay or they're being really slow that's the most common you can just tell from other customers faces that they don't like waiting</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever intervene?</b></p>	<p>Barely apologised</p> <p>Wanted recognition that the customer was wrong</p> <p>Remained neutral</p> <p>Awkward situation from the original incident and the secondary reaction</p> <p>Customers being too slow</p>
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Employee12: Nah not at all it is pointless really I don't think it would solve anything and just make it worse because the person being slow is normally quite polite and talkative hence why they're slow but more importantly they're normally oblivious ((laughing)) so it would just be silly to say anything I just try and help and pack their bags quicker

**Interviewer: Does It help**

Employee12: Yeah it speeds them up a little bit but not too much so If it works it works then if it doesn't then I haven't lost anything and then I just always apologise to the next customer and they seem to calm down

**Interviewer: Did you get training to deal with that?**

Employee12: No not at all the situations given in training are quite standard and nothing like this (.) plus they give some advice like asking the customers "if there is anything else I can help them with" and sometimes it just seems totally pointless

**Interviewer: Why is that?**

Employee12: Because sometimes there are situations that I can't solve and that piece of training advice is pointless (.) it almost aggravates them like another one that happens a lot is people get annoyed when the person in front doesn't put the partition down in between there items and I once had a woman literally lean across a man and push passed him to grab the divider just to prove a point and he was obviously looking at me like she was rude

**Interviewer: What do you do?**

Employee12: I try and push the dividers as far down as possible and ask customers to put them in between shopping if they haven't already (.) I also ask customers to put the 'this till is closing sign' down for me as well actually

Does not intervene because it doesn't solve anything and could make it worse

Bag items quickly

No training – quite standard  
Do not like the scripting

Training is not always applicable

Physical contact pushing passed to grab a divider

Push the dividers down to avoid the scenarios

**Interviewer: Does it normally work?**

Employee12: I'm not sure really

**Interviewer: Are you told to do that?**

Employee12: By who?

**Interviewer: The company in the training you receive?**

Employee12: Oh no not really

**Interviewer: If you can tell the customer is unhappy with the other customer do you get involved?**

Employee12: No not really I just ask them to put the divider in (.) so yeah I suppose you could say I do get involved ((laughing))

**Interviewer: How do you feel while doing it?**

Employee12: Not the best I don't think I just slide it up and ask them and then not make eye contact because they then can't kick off (.) I normally speak to the one who is unhappy once they are at my till and the other person has gone and that seems to make them a little happier

**Interviewer: Ahh that's interesting that you adopt that technique a few others have said the same thing**

Employee12: I think it is just common sense really to make sure they're ok and then it can't really anger the situation

Does not enjoy negative scenarios

Common sense

<p>Employee13: Ok yeah I think I can do that (.) like I said I quite often have to let people in and out of the changing rooms (...) I will get in trouble for calling them changing rooms they prefer to be called dressing rooms ((laughing)) anyway yes someone could be sat outside waiting for someone and then someone else comes out of the changing room and they can pay them a compliment like that looks nice and they'll have never met before (...) I wont lie it is always women and normally older women who pay the compliments</p>	<p>Compliment on the item of clothing being word by another customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So presumably positive experiences?</b></p>	
<p>Employee13: On this occasion yes</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you do? Do you get involved or anything?</b></p>	
<p>Employee13: <i>No not about that I don't think they want my input ((laughing))</i></p>	<p>Does not get involved</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Are you told to or trained to?</b></p>	
<p>Employee13: No not to get involved in something like that I don't think</p>	<p>Training</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Any other incidents you can think of between two customers?</b></p>	
<p>Employee13: I'm not too sure (...) I'm trying to think about the majority of complaints I deal with I think one is when <i>customers say to me that they can't find an item because people move the items or even hide them sometimes if they're coming back to grab it (.) like a customer finds something they like but they're not picking it up from the original place they've found it where someone else has left it and it doesn't come in multiple sizes so they ask me where the original items are and if they have other sizes because that's a comment I hear all the time that we only have "fat people sizes left" or "stick thin people sizes" left in stock</i></p>	<p>People move the items</p> <p>Leaving fat people sizes as a dig to the store</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So what do you normally do about it?</b></p>	

<p>Employee13: I try and take them to the correct place and find the products for them or if we don't have the sizes I just apologise to them and ask them if they want us to order the new sizes to their home or let them know when it comes into store</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Is that what you're told to do?</b></p> <p>Employee13: Yeah we always offer the customer a chance to order it in and I will always help them fill in the details and basically build up the relationship with them when I order stuff for them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: When customers moan about other customers to you how do you feel?</b></p> <p>Employee13: Don't really mind to be honest because I feel their pain sometimes because it annoys me when I'm in another shop so I always sympathise with them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you say?</b></p> <p>Employee13: I say "oh I'm sorry it is annoying isn't it it happens to me all the time in other stores I wish people would put it back where they found it (.) but sometimes you're just in a rush aren't you and put it back wherever is easiest" or something along those lines</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Why do you use that technique?</b></p> <p>Employee13: Well there is a couple of points in there that I think is important firstly I sympathise with them and agree that it is wrong and not right which I think is good because it feels like I'm on their side then especially if I say it is happened to me then they seem to trust me more (.) but then I also give a reason why the other customer may have left the stuff where it is and that we can all be in a rush sometimes even themselves which helps them to forgive the other customer a little easier</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That's a very good technique did you get trained for these sort of specific incidents and told how to manage them?</b></p>	<p>Return products to eliminate the issue Offer solutions to the issue</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Doesn't mind the interactions</p> <p>How the employee dealt with the issue – agreeing with the customer</p> <p>Sympathise with the customer Agree with the customer Say they have experience the same Reason why the customer may have done that</p>
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<p>Employee13: No nothing like that I think it is just experience and using common sense which often gets forgotten about (.) I think it is important to put yourself in the shoes of the customer and how they feel and also trying to get customers to imagine they were the other customer which is good to help them empathise</p>	<p>Experience</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh that's interesting (...) right my first question is quite standard can you please explain to me a time where you have seen customers interacting with each other? Remember it does not have to be spoken</b></p> <p>Employee14: Yeah sure let me have a think (...) the first one that comes to mind is earlier on this morning there was a lady who was returning an item of clothing that she had bought for her over the weekend as it was her birthday she told me this at the till because I said the top looked nice and there was a lady who was stood next to us also being served and she said she liked that top and wanted it (.) so she bought it straight back from the desk without trying it on we're supposed to put the item back out but it was easier for us all if the lady bought the top right here</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh wow does that happen often?</b></p> <p>Employee14: No not at all people are normally returning things for a reason but this lady just did not like it and the lady next to her did</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Was it a positive interaction between them both?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Yes definitely</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do to manage the incident?</b></p> <p>Employee14: I just did as they requested really and kept things moving quickly and talking to them both about the product</p>	<p>Product touching/switching Purchasing from another customer/both like a product</p> <p>Did as the customer wanted</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel while this was occurring?</b></p>	
<p>Employee14: No feelings really just part of the job isn't it</p>	<p>No feeling</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's true do you get told how to manage other customers interacting?</b></p>	
<p>Employee14: By who?</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Managers other colleagues maybe training programmes that sort of thing?</b></p>	
<p>Employee14: We get told how to manage customers yes about the step by step process we go through</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What about managing customers who interact with other customers does that ever get covered?</b></p>	<p>Training provided</p>
<p>Employee14: I think so it all sort of gets covered in the same thing and a lot of the principles can be applied to other situations it is just about making sure the customer leaves happy</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of any other incidents that occur between two customers? Perhaps a particularly vivid negative incident you remember?</b></p>	<p>Part of training</p>
<p>Employee14: Well I don't know if this is one but if I'm thinking about when people are returning items they can often complain loudly and sometimes shout if they're unhappy about something and I think that has an effect on other customers like this one lady claimed she bought some cigarettes from us that had "two f*****g cigs missing" which obviously we don't sell them if they're not sealed so it was not even a good argument I had another customer just make some wide eyes at me like the lady talking to me was nuts</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you think they feel?</b></p>	<p>Shouting customers effecting other customers</p>

Employee14: I'm not sure there is a bit of me that thinks they look uncomfortable and that they don't think they should be speaking to staff like that but then I think if one customer shouts at me then another is more likely to shout as well because it is almost like oh well if they speak to them like that then it must be ok and copy them

**Interviewer: What do you do to manage the situation?**

Employee14: I think I either just stand in silence and let them get it out of their system because they can't argue with someone who isn't shouting back and it makes them look silly or I just simply call for a manager I don't get paid enough to be spoken to like that I don't think so with the cigarettes I called the manager

**Interviewer: Do those methods work?**

Employee14: I think both do firstly because like I said they calm down a little when they see they're not getting an argument in return and the second one because I think they think they're being treated seriously and a manager has the authority to sort their issue out

**Interviewer: Did you receive training that helped with that do you think? Or is it experience?**

Employee14: Well one of the first things we're told about is getting supervisors or managers involved if you feel intimidated or are being abused because they have the authority to refuse service and ask them to leave with security

**Interviewer: Do you think this method works?**

Employee14: Asking them to leave?

**Interviewer: No getting managers involved**

Employee14: Yeah I think it does not all the time but most of the time

Made other customers feel uncomfortable

Stand in silence to let them shout at nothing  
Makes them look silly

Trained to get supervisors

<p><b>Interviewer: When does it not work?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Well sometimes I've had people say "no I don't want to talk to a manager I'm dealing with you you sort the problem out" and it can perhaps feel like I'm palming the problem off</p> <p><b>Interviewer: If you think that will sometimes worsen the problem do you try avoid it?</b></p> <p>Employee14: No that's what we're told to do it is easier for me if we do that</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel whilst doing that?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Not nice it is not great having someone shout at you but I just try and stay calm and keep my voice down</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Does the other technique help when you just don't say anything and wait for them to calm down?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Yes definitely it is my biggest trick and clearly works I've even had customer apologise to me for shouting because I'm so quiet it just magnifies how rude they are being</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahhh that's interesting where did you learn that?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Just past experience I think it seems common sense to me to let them shout and we remain calm it is just so easy and natural to defend yourself if customers are shouting (...) plus the customers watching respect me more because I've had them say afterwards I don't know how you "deal with them shouting at you like that I'd have to say something"</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel while that's happening?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Empowered actually in a weird way like I'm in control</p>	<p>Sometimes training technique is not useful</p> <p>Not enjoyable managing negative C2C</p> <p>Strategy employed works</p> <p>Past experience/common sense</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: Even more so than when you refer them to a manager?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Yes definitely I don't know why actually that's a good point</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you have any more incidents you can think of because these are really good</b></p> <p>Employee14: <b>Not really to that extreme just the cigarette one will always stay in my mind I think because I even remember her face I suppose the other complaint we get from customers about customers if people who take too long to pay at the checkouts like there was a lady who was returning about 10 tops the other day and she took so long and was so slow and had like 3 different cards she paid on and after I said goodbye the lady after her said "I thought she had bought half the shop"</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee14: <b>I just laughed with her and said "I know" sort of again agreeing with her and getting her on side</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think the experience was positive or negative?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Positive with me but definitely negative between her and the other customer I could sense the tension rising</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you do anything?</b></p> <p>Employee14: Nothing I could do really</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel during the incident?</b></p> <p>Employee14: <b>Nothing really there wasn't much I could do in situations like that if I'm honest</b></p>	<p>Empowered dealing with the incidents</p> <p>Product related – speed Returning a lot of products</p> <p>Customer commented on how many products the other customer bought</p> <p>Laughed at the situation and agreed</p>
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	<p>No feeling towards the incident as there was little the employee could do</p>
<p><b>Brilliant (.) can you tell me a time when you see customers interacting? Both positive and negative?</b></p> <p>Employee15: I'm not sure I think the vast majority want to keep themselves to themselves if they can</p> <p><b>Interviewer: It can be spoken, blocking spaces, queuing products anything you can remember</b></p> <p>Employee15: Well there was a lady blocking the till area earlier with a pushchair if that counts and somebody asked her to move?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes that's perfect what happened?</b></p> <p>Employee15: Well there was a mother who had a pushchair and she was paying for her stuff but left her pushchair stuck out at like a 90 degree angle and was blocking an older man from getting passed to sit on the chairs at the end of the till</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee15: I moved the pushchair for her whilst she continued to put the items onto the belt as she moved the pushchair near the till so it was right by me so it was easier if I intervened and</p>	<p>Customers don't seek interaction</p> <p>Lady blocking the till with the pushchair</p> <p>Left the pushchair blocking other customers Age</p> <p>Physical assistance and moved the pushchair Helped the customer</p>

<p>felt as if there was less attention on her then as well and she could load quickly because there was a bit of a queue forming</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel intervening?</b></p>	
<p>Employee15: Felt good because I like to help people like that</p>	<p>Enjoyed intervening</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you think the customers felt?</b></p>	
<p>Employee15: I felt sorry for the mother because she looked a bit flustered and like she did not have enough hands and the other man was irritated and looked a little grumpy ((laughing)) so I just helped ease the situation</p>	<p>Felt sorry for the customer Man looked irritated</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's a good one are there any times you don't intervene</b></p>	
<p>Employee15: Yes if I think it is going to make it worse or if I obviously don't see them</p>	<p>Don't intervene if scared of making things worse</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of the most extreme examples that you've encountered where you don't want to get involved?</b></p>	
<p>Employee15: I don't think too many extreme things happen between customers at the checkouts ((laughing)) ummm the thing that always gets the most attention is on a Wednesday evening a girl comes in with her mom and she puts her in the baby seat at the front of the trolley and the girl must be 12 stone and weigh about 12 stone It really causes people to look and it does look silly I must admit I'm not sure if there is something wrong with her</p>	<p>Demographic: Age – appearance  Customer displaying strange behaviour</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: This effects other customers?</b></p>	
<p>Employee15: Yes definitely it has a massive effect on them I think they all stare and I've seen them pull a few faces and laugh</p>	<p>Customers stare and pull faces</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you do anything?</b></p>	

<p>Employee15: Nothing I can do there it can't be controlled can it? I just let them get on with it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel?</b></p> <p>Employee15: Sorry for the other customer in a way but then again I don't think they help the situation the person is far too big for it and shouldn't be in there</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I was going to ask if you receive training for that sort of thing but I highly doubt there is anything in the training programme for that? ((laughing))</b></p> <p>Employee15: Certainly not ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok maybe let me rephrase the next question any forms of interactions between customers at your till that you witness that are maybe not that extreme?</b></p> <p>Employee15: The most common thing that people complain to me about is how busy the store is and how slow some people are either at the till paying or just in the queue but they always complain after they've gone</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p> <p>Employee15: Don't know really I just smile and say "yeah I know some people go at their own pace" and then make a comment saying "it would be boring if everyone was the same" or something like that ((laughing)) just to keep it light and make it look like I'm not slagging off the other customer in case they know them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Who taught you that technique?</b></p> <p>Employee15: Nobody I don't think just seems to work and keep the conversation light hearted</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel while this interaction is occurring?</b></p>	<p>Employee does not intervene as nothing can be done</p> <p>Sorry for the customer – but own fault</p> <p>No training</p> <p>General busyness Slow customers</p> <p>Agree with customers – remain neutral Make a light hearted comment Defending the other customer whilst agreeing with them</p> <p>Technique based on experience</p>
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<p>Employee15: Fine I've done it for so long nothing phases me now</p>	<p>No problem with intervening</p>
<p><b>Right my first question is quite a simple one, can you remember the last time you saw two customers interact?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Ummmm (...) I haven't been on shop floor today (...) I don't know! (laughing) Umm at the front of the store by the desk we've got all the merchandise about the Royal Wedding (...) and there was a top something about kissing a frog or something to do with the Wedding and she was talking to a lady about it (.) "they don't have my size here" and the other lady had a look and said "oh your size is here on the manikin" and they then both called me over and asked if they could take it. But they were like interacting talking to each other.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So two customers talking about a product (.) it occurred at the front of the store.</b></p> <p>Employee16: Yep</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you say the overall interaction looked positive?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Positive</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you become involved? What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Well she came up to me and said "Oh can I have this one off a manikin" and I said "yeah sure"</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So the outcome was that you gave them the top and they were happy?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Yep</p>	<p>Discussing something topical – humour</p> <p>Product related – size of clothing</p> <p>Incident location</p> <p>Intervened because customers asked them to</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Most of the time people give extreme examples of CCI.</b></p> <p>Employee16: Oh I do have one (.) oh I did have a customer stick up for me the other day(...) I had my headset on and this man came out of nowhere right at me with his mushrooms. I was talking to a colleague about another query at the desk (...) and I moved my headset just to make a point that I was talking because it really annoys me when they put a product right in your face. He literally went like this ((Puts hands in interviewers face)) and I went “oh sorry can I help?” and he just said “sunshine, I need the price” and I went “ok” he said “oh sorry were you talking” and he knew that I was talking! (.) and I said “no don’t worry I can check for you” and he then came up to my ear without the headset on and shouted “CAN YOU CHECK THE PRICE” and I just looked at him and said “yes”(bluntly). I walked up to the till and he followed me over (.) and there was a lady who was stood by me at the time and after the incident she said “HOW RUDE WAS HE” but she said it loud enough for him to hear! They then started to bicker because he heard her. I just tried to laugh it off and said that everyone is different and its my job to help.</p>	<p>Customer stuck up for employee</p> <p>Customer kept interrupting and was rude</p> <p>Another customer acknowledged the rude customer</p> <p>Tried to laugh off the incident</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did this incident make you feel?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Not too bad I don’t really mind – it was nice though that they other customer saw that he was being rude I just didn’t want to make the situation worse. She almost said what im not allowed to say if that makes sense? After she said to me quietly “im sorry but he was so rude” I said “he was wasn’t he” ((laughing))</p>	<p>Liked that the other customer stuck up for them</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you often see customer arguing?</b></p>	<p>Dirty looks from other customers</p>
<p>Employee16: Ummmm the most common is dirty looks from till savers</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Whats that?</b></p> <p>Employee16: So we often open up new tills and choose a customer who is at the back of the line and move them to a new one (.) but often people try and go straight to the new one who</p>	<p>Employee could be viewed as the instigator</p> <p>Trying to push in</p>

haven't been waiting. And we just have to say to them "sorry this is being held for somebody else" and they always give the customer I'm holding the till for a dirty look as if its their fault. I feel like the customer I'm holding it for sometimes no longer wants it and feels guilty as if they're getting special treatment.

**Interviewer: How does that make you feel?**

Employee16: Uncomfortable sometimes as I'm only doing what I've been told

**Interviewer: So you have seen interactions between customers and even been involved in between customers do you think you have received adequate training for those incidents?**

Employee16: Not to do with managing queues and customer like that no.

**Interviewer: Do you think you should receive training like that?**

Employee16: I could receive training on customers interacting most definitely (.) it also depends on the person (...) not many things phase me in that way but some people can really stressed and can be a bit flappy I guess

**Interviewer: Have you ever had customers gang up on you?**

Employee16: I probably have ((laughing)) I probably have really good examples I just cant think! (...) ummm I don't know have i? (.) customer service desk I've had loads (.) just rude people to me and then they all gang up on you.

**Interviewer: Could you perhaps explain one of these scenarios in more detail?**

Employee16: Its normally just when I'm explaining a policy other people will agree with a point that another customer has made and jump into the conversation and back up the customer and almost gang up on the business and it's employees

Makes the employee feel uncomfortable

No training received

Training wanted  
C2C can stress employees out

Location of incidents: customer service desk

Customers agreeing and ganging up on an employee

<p><b>Interviewer: Do you receive training for incidents like that? Or is It more experience?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Experience definitely not training</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think training for these specific interactions would be helpful?</b></p> <p>Employee16: Yes most definitely (...) it just depends if we have time at the moment because its just so busy and understaffed</p>	<p>Experience no training</p> <p>Training would be useful</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever see customers interacting and if so can you describe as much detail as possible the scenario?</b></p> <p>Employee17: I suppose I see customers talking quite a bit apologising for being in the way and that sort of general chit chat but nothing major just the usual</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Anything in particular you hear them discussing?</b></p> <p>Employee17: No not really just maybe passing someone a product from under the racking if they're already lifting it up or perhaps reaching a product that's on the back shelf if someone can't reach it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee17: I'll happily reach a product if I can but the customers normally sort themselves out then main thing I get asked is if there is anymore in stock or where a product is if they can't find it or blame us for moving it ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do any of those things effect another customer?</b></p> <p>Employee17: What do you mean?</p>	<p>Apologising for being in the way – general pleasantries</p> <p>Physical assistance – passing of products</p> <p>Will intervene if possible Customers sort themselves out</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Like at the moment you've given customer to employee but what about customer to customer?</b></p> <p>Employee17: See I suppose I overhear customers moaning about the quality of products sometimes in the fresh grocery department they'll be saying that there used to be more quality with the products in [[company name]] and that some of the fruit sizes are much smaller than they should be and often they'll agree with each other</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee17: No not normally because I agree with them ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel whilst you can hear this interaction occurring?</b></p> <p>Employee17: I just try and play a deaf ear and act like I can't hear them sometimes I will admit I hope you're not going to tell my manager this ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: No of course not would they be upset if they knew you ignored them?</b></p> <p>Employee17: I'm not ignoring them if they speak to me I always respond but when I hear two customers with a problem talking I don't always intervene because that's a solution I don't have how am I meant to make the fruit better quality?? Or make them order larger quantities?? It is not my job to do that</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yeah I understand are there any times you do intervene and join in if you see two customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee17: I'll talk to them if they are discussing a product and I can help then I suppose I will</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Is that because you can solve the problem whereas before you can't?</b></p>	<p>Hear customers moaning about quality of products Product related</p> <p>Does not intervene because they agree with the customers</p> <p>Play a deaf ear</p> <p>Speak if spoken to but ignore if possible Does not intervene because they cant do anything</p> <p>Talk if they can add value</p>
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<p>Employee17: Yeah I suppose when they're complaining about something I can't help I don't see the point in me responding I just ignore it or walk away or something you know? But if I hear them talking and asking questions and I can intervene then I will yes definitely I suppose I've never thought about it before</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok that's quite interesting do you think you have any more examples?</b></p> <p>Employee17: I'm not sure really people just general seem to exchange hello and goodbye and thank you and sorry for getting in your way but nothing I would say it particularly memorable I'm afraid</p>	<p>Talk if they can solve the problem ignore if they cant</p> <p>General pleasantries</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time when you have witnessed two customers interacting with each other?</b></p> <p>Employee18: I think our customers talk to each other all the time (.) well I think they do I'm always speaking to customers about their experience and I'd say the vast majority of compliments we receive are from customers who say the staff are friendly but then they also say that other customers are nicer than competitors</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That's interesting do they say why?</b></p> <p>Employee18: They say that they don't mind paying a little extra even though with [[company promotion]] we aren't any more expensive and even cheaper than the other but they say they like the atmosphere here which I suppose feeds in to what you were saying earlier about the different factors that influence customers experience</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes yes so music atmosphere and other customers can all influence customers experience</b></p> <p>Employee18: So let me give you a more specific example there is a man who comes in every week and says to me that he comes in specifically to see other people and meet and just chat to</p>	<p>Staff are friendly as well as customers</p> <p>Positive atmosphere in store due to other customers being pleasant</p> <p>Comes in specifically to see other customers – friendship group</p>

them he explained that he lives on his own and it is the only form of social interaction he has since his wife died which I think is very sweet

**Interviewer: Do you know what he talks about?**

Employee18: I know he has a pet budgie that he always talks about to both me and the other customers but I've had other customers say to me "isn't he sweet" almost like our own celeb but mostly he just talks about general things and says hello to people

**Interviewer: So a positive interaction then by the sounds of it?**

Employee18: Yes definitely

**Interviewer: When you see customers talking and it seems positive do you ever interact with them as well**

Employee18: Oh I say hello to everyone and smile and make sure everything is going ok with them

**Interviewer: What about negative interactions between customers do you ever see them?**

Employee18: Not very often I don't think but I suppose it does happen sometimes the one that mainly stands out is when we discount items and put them at the end of the fresh aisle sometimes I have to tell customers to wait patiently and not push

**Interviewer: Customers push each other?**

Employee18: I wouldn't say physically push each other but they certainly try and barge past each other with shoulders at busy times trying to see the deals like the colleague putting the deals out is surrounded it is like bees around honey so I tell them to just wait patiently

**Interviewer: How do you manage the situation do you think?**

Talks about personal life – friendship

Engage in positive interactions

Discount item section – location  
Physical contact pushing passed

Barge passed each other

Employee tells them to wait patiently

<p>Employee18: I don't know really I just try and watch the situation and assess everything I try not to say anything until I know what is going on and who the culprit is because we have quite a few older customers and they should not lose out because people are hogging the discount goods and they're too polite to ask</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p> <p>Employee18: I stand back and asses it all to make sure everything is ok and if I can help at all (...) you know like don't jump in just watch until they need help (...) sometimes I just leave it if it sorts itself out really I'm not too sure I just watch for a while (...) you know like don't jump in just watch until they need help</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What happens?</b></p> <p>Employee18: People just stand in front of the discount section checking everything usually after pushing their way to the front and maybe the colleague marking the items gets pushed to the side and doesn't say anything so I just come and make sure everything is ok and ask if they need help either me or the fresh manager [[colleague name]] comes and watches sometimes not all the time but that's the time where I feel tension is highest and that customers influence each others experience as you put it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you say that's one of your biggest challenges then managing those customers?</b></p> <p>Employee18: I'd say my biggest challenge and complaint from customers is about the queue time and length during busy periods when our staff limits are stretched because of cuts to hours</p> <p><b>Interviewer: People moan about queues?</b></p> <p>Employee18: Yes definitely I think they moan that we don't have enough checkouts open and that they're moving too slow the one that annoys customers the most I think is when a product</p>	<p>Watch and assess everything</p> <p>Age intensifier</p> <p>People standing in the way</p> <p>Colleague gets pushed Make sure everything is ok and ask if they can be of any help</p> <p>Queue time</p>
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<p>doesn't scan or cashiers are waiting for a team leader for assistance and the line isn't moving then that's when people get annoyed and I've even asked if I can help another customer get an item and I've had someone else say "you want to help get behind a till"</p>	<p>Tell customers they're doing their best</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee18: I just said we're going as fast as we can</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: That's an interesting one actually that has come up before is there anything you can do about people getting annoyed by people who are slow if it is not their fault?</b></p>	
<p>Employee18: Things like a faulty product there is nothing we can do about it really but if people are at the till and it is a busy period we tell them to try and not interact as much and stop for a chat but to just scan exchange pleasantries and move onto the next customer apologising about the wait</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: I forgot to ask how did you feel interacting with the customer during the discounted section?</b></p>	<p>Don't mind dealing with them</p>
<p>Employee18: I don't mind I know my role and have been dealing with customers for years</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Did you get training for that or something you've just picked up on the way?</b></p>	<p>Experience</p>
<p>Employee18: Something I've picked up on the way I think I'm quite authoritarian and you need to be confident and firm with some customers because they will run riot if not</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Really?</b></p>	
<p>Employee18: Yeah I really do mean that</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: In what way?</b></p>	<p>Technique utilised</p>

<p>Employee18: Well dealing with customer complaints and I suppose your form of interest to customers with each other you have to be <b>firm but fair</b> because otherwise they take advantage</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Could you give me an example</b></p> <p>Employee18: I don't have any for your customer to customer but I would take the same approach <b>I would listen to what they say then make a fair unbiased decision as best I can but I wouldn't be persuaded otherwise if they started shouting or becoming rude if anything it would make me dig my heels in more because they're not being rude to my staff or causing a scene</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Does it work? If so what example?</b></p> <p>Employee18: Well a customer wanted to return a top that had marks on that looked like make up and the labels cut out and we simply don't accept those returns it was obvious that she had worn the item and wanted her money back but that wasn't something we could do and she started getting high rate and aggressive and <b>started to shout so I calmly said to her that we could not return it and she started getting louder and louder so I guess other customers would hear which is what she wanted but I did not back down and I think she thought because she got louder and more aggressive I would but in fact it was the total opposite the louder she got the calmer I remained and I think it made her look even more stupid</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you think other customers felt?</b></p> <p>Employee18: <b>Uncomfortable because the woman was clearly in the wrong and was a bit rough and very rude</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel dealing with the situation?</b></p> <p>Employee18: <b>Great I loved it ((laughing)) I see it as a challenge not to meet them head on but to communicate my message in a clearer way then them if they get high rate (...)</b> I'm more likely to give a refund to someone nice and calm opposed to someone who shouts it is just being kind and treating someone with respect really</p>	<p>Technique utilised</p> <p>Loud customers</p> <p>Shouting made other customers uncomfortable</p> <p>Enjoyed the negative interaction</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: Is that something you try and communicate to staff?</b></p> <p>Employee18: I tell them to always remain calm and never take being spoken to like that I tell them to always call me (.) it is not the girls on the tills that get it but the girls on the customer service desk really who suffer the most</p> <p><b>Interviewer: When managing the situations like remaining calm and not being spoken to in a disrespectful way do you get trained to manage it like that or is it something you've picked up after being at the company and dealing with customers for so many years?</b></p> <p>Employee18: The company do provide good training and I think the training I receive as a manager is a much better standard than the generic training but I see it as my job to tell my team how to deal with customers and I think that no employee deserves to be spoken to like that so whenever something is going on that could be uncomfortable for the employee I tell them to call me straight away and they do most of the time I think</p>	<p>Good training provided is good – but better at management level</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant so you understand the importance of customers interacting with each other so my first question is can you tell me about a time you last witnessed customers interacting?</b></p> <p>Employee19: Yes sure literally mo of work yesterday as I was about to leave the door I heard one customer giving another customer directions to the toilet</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What exactly did you hear?</b></p> <p>Employee19: Just him saying “it is by the café I’ll show you if you’d like”</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	<p>Customer assistance – giving directions</p>

<p>Employee19: I asked what was going on and if I could help</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What happened?</b></p> <p>Employee19: I just said “hi gents anything I can help with” and he replied saying “no thank you just wanted to know where the toilets were” I then confirmed that the information he was told was the correct info and left him to it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel during the interaction?</b></p> <p>Employee19: Fine (.) was nice to see other customers interacting and getting correct information from each other</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Is that something that happens often do you think?</b></p> <p>Employee19: I think so I think we have quite a friendly atmosphere where people can talk to each other especially on the benches at the end of the till you often see husbands normally chatting to each other whilst the wives finish off the shopping (...) until it is time to pay ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: They sit and chat?</b></p> <p>Employee19: Oh yeah all the time they share the same thing in common that they dislike shopping ((laughing)) so it is a good way for them to interact with each other and have a rest</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you do anything?</b></p> <p>Employee19: What do you mean?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Speak?? Say hello?? That sort of thing?</b></p>	<p>Intervened and offered help</p> <p>Confirmed what the customer was stating was true</p> <p>Fine dealing with the incident</p> <p>Friendly atmosphere Same demographic/situation the reason for interaction General chatting</p> <p>Same interests</p>
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<p>Employee19: If I'm passing I'll just say "afternoon or morning gents" and smile at them and they always reply but I don't get into full conversation with them</p>	<p>Pleasantries</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel saying hello?</b></p>	
<p>Employee19: Feels pleasant</p>	<p>Positive</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Are there any interactions between customers where you have to get involved when it is not a pleasant experience or something negative is occurring?</b></p>	
<p>Employee19: I'm not sure (.) well a couple of years ago there was a massive feud between two families I think and they hated each other and they would always get into arguments and one time it was almost a full on fight (.) they probably argued about 3 times over a 6 month period before in the end we had to tell them to not come into the store anymore because they were so loud everyone would be watching</p>	<p>Arguments Reoccurrence</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee19: Well the customer service team would normally be notified about the problem if it is in the aisles and then they'd call me or [[store managers name]] to come and resolve the issues</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee19: I got them to calm down and explain what was going on the first time as I had no clue what had happened in the store that made them so angry but then I soon realised it was not anything to do with us it was a family feud they are a traveller family and it had been running for years so first time I got them to calm down second time I was a bit firmer and then third time I kicked them out and told them not to come back and thankfully that was a few years ago and we have never seen them since</p>	<p>Calm down Removed the customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What were they arguing over?</b></p>	

<p>Employee19: I can't even remember nothing to do with us it was personal</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think they would have had an effect on the other customers in the store?</b></p> <p>Employee19: They definitely made people stop and stare and wonder what was going on it is not the sort of atmosphere that we are trying to create</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did your method work trying to get them to calm down what did you do exactly?</b></p> <p>Employee19: I firstly tried to listen to exactly what they were trying to say and was doing my best to listen to the issue but then I quickly realised it was nothing to do with us I took a firmer stance and I didn't want them airing their dirty laundry in our store so I asked them to lower their voices and said the only way I would speak to them is quieter otherwise they would have to leave</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel dealing with the situation?</b></p> <p>Employee19: Fine the first time well almost intrigued as to what could have possibly gone on then second time around slightly annoyed that it was happening again and then third time I had lost my patience altogether</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What effect did you think it would have on your staff if they had to deal with it rather than yourself?</b></p> <p>Employee19: I would not expect them to deal with situations like that on their own</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you get trained to deal with those sort of situations or is it more your own personal experience that helps?</b></p>	<p>Made people stop and stare Unpleasant atmosphere</p> <p>Tried to listen</p> <p>Firm stance Ask them to lower their voices</p> <p>Lost patience</p> <p>Do not expect staff to deal with situations like this</p>
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Employee19: A bit of both I think like I've obviously completed my management training and store management training that deals a lot with customer management and dealing with awkward situations but this is something I have experienced many times in 15 years of retail so pick up little tips here and there that I use such as not speaking for the first 60 seconds of interacting with customers to make sure I hear their side and almost let them run out of steam that's a good one

**Interviewer: Can you give me an example?**

Employee19: Yeah sure so for example when dealing with a customer complaint or something similar or the example I gave you about a feud between two parties I ask what the issue is and let them speak for as long as they need and then I give about a 10 second silence to gather my thoughts and let them calm down because they're only agitated if they have someone to argue with but I always speak in a calming manner and let them get the ranting out of their system

**Interviewer: And this seems to work?**

Employee19: Not applicable to all situations but anyone who is agitated and getting loud it certainly works

**Interviewer: Is that part of training?**

Employee19: My very first manager told me that trick and he used to be a police officer and I think he got it from there he used to have some real nasty stories but he always maintained we had to stay calm

**Interviewer: Do you pass this technique on to your staff?**

Employee19: Yes when I can I do it all the time like I'm a mentor to new managers and staff who are trying for deputy or store manager and I try and pass these sort of things on to people when I can

Training and experience

Not speaking for the first 60 seconds – hear both sides

How to deal with customers correctly – management technique

Passed experience/training – information passed on from one colleague to another

<p><b>Interviewer: And they say it works well?</b></p> <p>Employee19: Yes seems to work well or that's what they tell me at least</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Right so can you first tell me about a time you remember two customers interacting with each other?</b></p> <p>Employee20: Yeah no problem as you will guess the one I see most often surrounds trolleys ((laughing)) I often see people giving each other pounds rather than putting the trolley back</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean? Can you give me a specific example?</b></p> <p>Employee20: I can't remember what they were wearing or anything like that but if someone is returning a trolley and someone is about to get one rather than put their trolley back and insert the link to get their pound back they give it to someone else and they give them the pound I don't know why people do it it literally saves them like 5 seconds</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee20: No what do you want me to do?? ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: No I mean do you allow it to happen or are you supposed to not?</b></p> <p>Employee20: Don't know I don't think they're doing anything wrong</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Are you told to intervene?</b></p> <p>Employee20: I suppose we're not supposed to really in case people swap tokens for pound coins not many people actually put much money in anymore because of when the new pound coin came in people worried they wouldn't be able to use the new coin in the trolleys but they all work the same people just over react</p>	<p>Physical assistance – helping each other</p> <p>Product/equipment assistance</p> <p>Do not intervene</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: So you ignore the training?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: No no I wouldn't say that I just use common sense I'm too busy to be dealing with silly things like that</p>	<p>Use common sense</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What about any other types of interactions? Can you remember times you've seen customers interacting?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: Umm I've seen a couple of crashes if that counts?</p>	<p>Car crashes</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yes definitely what happened?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: Normally well most definitely the most common is people reversing into posts or other cars and most of the time people witness it and once I had a woman go over to a man and say "you know you've just hit that car right" and he said he hadn't ((laughing)) when he clearly had and she pointed to the other persons car and he was still just being ignorant and was like "no that mark was already there" and it clearly wasn't</p>	<p>People reversing into equipment and other cars Other customers defending other customers property and letting the customers know what they've done wrong</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: I went over and said "it was clearly an accident sir but you did hit it and it is a criminal offense to damage a car and drive off" so he said "ok shall I leave a note" I said leave a note on the car and then we'll go in and tannoy over the system to get the owner to come and see it and you can sort it out with them</p>	<p>Went and confirmed the other customers statement</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did the lady do who witnessed it?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: She said thank you for sticking up for her and she couldn't believe that this guy was still denying it after she saw it and heard it she said it was unbelievable but he said it with so much confidence she said she almost started to doubt herself ((laughing))</p>	<p>Pleased a customer with the correct response</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel dealing with the situation?</b></p>	

<p>Employee20: Fine I think because I've seen so many cars bumped in my time so I was used to seeing it but I wasn't used to having someone deny it and two people talking about it so I suppose a little nervous it was going to escalate</p>	<p>Fine dealing with the negative incidents</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Who told you how to deal with the situation?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: Nobody I googled it about hitting parked cars because I did it a few years ago and wanted to know the law</p>	<p>Personal experience/knowledge</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What does your training suggest?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: You don't get proper training here ((laughing)) I started around Christmas time and they were so busy I was just told to shadow someone else and see what he does which I wouldn't call official training and I think he shadowed somebody else before that so I think I shadowed someone who did not receive proper training either ((laughing))</p>	<p>Lack of training Shadowed someone who did not receive proper training either</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: That's interesting would you like proper training?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: Well we have guidelines and that sort of thing it is a handbook that tells us how many trolleys we're legally allowed to push and gather and not to exceed that amount but we do anyway</p>	<p>Standard guidelines</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Are there any other types of arguments or anything you've seen?</b></p> <p>Employee20: Not really I don't think</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Nothing else where you see people talk?</b></p>	
<p>Employee20: Well sometimes after people finish unloading their items into the car I've seen them leaving their shopping trolleys in the middle of the road or bay and I've seen a customer asking them to return them back to the front of the store or trolley park which is nice to see</p>	<p>Leaving equipment in incorrect places</p>



<p>Employee21: Sure well did you see that had the [[brand name]] tasting stall at the front earlier?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: By the doors?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Yeah well as I was cleaning up something I saw one customer looking for a bin and another customer take the rubbish from them and start walking towards the café where there is a bin and I went over and grabbed both of the rubbish from the man</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh so what another customer took the rubbish for them?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Yeah this man had the same problem that the lady did that they finished their samples and needed a bin and he was walking towards the café when he saw the woman just finishing her sample and he took the rubbish off of her and said he was going to the bin anyway so took hers with him too</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Employee21: I saw it and went over and said “I’ll take that for you love” and put it in my bin</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Was he happy?</b></p> <p>Employee21: He thanked me and carried on</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think the interaction between the two customers was positive?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Most definitely yes she seemed very surprised but happy that he took rubbish from him and then he seemed happy that I took the rubbish from him (.) nobody takes the rubbish from me though ((laughing)) but I don’t mind</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel taking the rubbish from him?</b></p>	<p>Customer helping another customer</p> <p>Customer saw one customer struggling and took over the interaction</p> <p>Employee finished the original action</p>
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<p>Employee21: Fine it is part of my job it is only like someone on checkouts scanning an item isn't it that's what we get paid for plus I always like to see someone trying to do the right thing rather than just leave rubbish</p>	<p>Neutral feeling towards the interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Does that happen?</b></p>	
<p>Employee21: Yeah all the time (.) actually I think that effects others customers too because before I've picked up like empty bottles from the side and chocolate bar wrappers and people say to me "some people have no respect" and one said "total animals some people are they probably leave rubbish around their house too it is probably a s**thole" ((laughing))</p>	<p>Annoyed that customers leave rubbish Think their action is a result of home life/standard of living</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so other people leaving rubbish really annoys customers?</b></p>	
<p>Employee21: The half decent ones yes that's why I have to be quick and alert sometimes they hide it behind items or on the top shelf and I can't reach that ((laughing))</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: It is interesting that it annoys other customers</b></p>	<p>People leaving rubbish Hiding rubbish</p>
<p>Employee21: Yeah but I can't do anything that makes them happy because it is hard to catch people littering</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you say to the people who moan about other customers?</b></p>	<p>Do not intervene because it is hard to catch people</p>
<p>Employee21: I normally just agree with what they say and just comment "it keeps me in a job though if everyone cleaned the store I wouldn't be needed" and they just smile and agree</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever catch customers littering?</b></p>	<p>Agree with customers</p>
<p>Employee21: Oh yeah definitely but I just offer to take it off them before they drop it or just pick it up from them (.) I've seen a customer tell another customer to pick it up before and that was funny ((laughing)) they said "What are you doing pick it up" and the other customer said</p>	

<p>“are you the rubbish police?? Do you work here??” in a really sarcastic way and before it got out of hand I jumped in and said “I do though”” ((laughing)) and took the rubbish from them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel whilst doing that?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Awkward but happy I got there just in time because they were a little bit rough shall we say ((laughing)) and don’t think they would have shook hands and walked away ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So what did happen?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Well I just picked up the rubbish and smiled and the man walked off and the other person said to me that “you shouldn’t have to do that” and some people are “so lazy”</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you reply</b></p> <p>Employee21: I said that I didn’t mind and he just smiled at me and left it really wasn’t a big deal</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think that you’re trained on how to deal with customer to customer interactions like that?</b></p> <p>Employee21: We receive good training here and how to manage customers and they make us feel part of the staff</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Even customer to customer interactions?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Probably not customer to customer like that but it is very specific so I’m not sure</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you mind dealing with customer to customer interactions like that?</b></p>	<p>Seen one customer try and stop another customer doing something wrong</p> <p>Other customer offended by one customer trying to educate another</p> <p>Customer demographic</p> <p>Took over the interaction</p> <p>Remaining neutral</p> <p>Good training</p>
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<p>Employee21: No not really I quite enjoy it as I don't really speak to many people in my role here I get told off if I talk to the staff too often ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So even negative incidents between customers such as them arguing over the rubbish or that sort of thing you don't mind?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Nope not really I'd rather be speaking to somebody than all by myself all day which is very dull</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh that's so interesting but you don't think you've received the training for that necessarily?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Well I'm employed by [[company name]] not directly by [[company name]] so it is a little different</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh they sub contract out?</b></p> <p>Employee21: Yes yes that's why I have this uniform on</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you like [[company name]] to train you in managing the incidents between other customers better? Even though it sounds like you do a good job anyway</b></p> <p>Employee21: I suppose more training would not hurt but I doubt that will happen</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Where do most of your incidents normally happen?</b></p> <p>Employee21: I get called to the milk isle the most or alcohol it is normally leaks or people dropping bottles and sometimes at the checkouts as people notice stuff leaking on the belt or near the tills quite often</p>	<p>Not specifically C2C training</p> <p>Enjoy talking to people</p>
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**Interviewer: In that time can you remember any times you've seen customers interacting with each other?**

Employee22: We have people talking to each other all the time if that counts?

**Interviewer: Yes definitely what happens? Can you describe a specific example?**

Employee22: I see customers talking to each other all the time about general things and I'm sure they don't know each other because you said if they come to the store together that doesn't count right?? Yeah I see them recommending drinks to try and just being friendly in general

**Interviewer: Do you intervene?**

Employee22: No not if it looks like it is going ok I leave them to it to talk to each other I think it is nice because you also see so many negative incidents it is nice to see people getting on I think

**Interviewer: How do you notice that the incident is negative or positive? Do you receive training for that?**

Employee22: No I don't think so I just use my judgement I think it is quite common sense what looks like a positive interaction vs a negative one don't you think so??

**Interviewer: To some people like you but I know others who struggle (...) any other examples of positive interactions?**

Employee22: Sometimes I see people lift heavy items into the trolley for people especially if they're not getting the stuff for themselves (...) well I think not themselves ((laughing)) like I've had little old dears who could pick a crate of beer up and has asked somebody near to come and help it into their trolley for them which I think is nice but obviously they're buying the beer for somebody else unless 80 year olds like pints of beer these days but I doubt they do ((laughing))

Basic conversation and pleasantries  
Product recommendation

Do not intervene because the customer is doing nothing wrong

Common sense not training

Physical assistance listing heavy goods

Demographic: Age

**Interviewer: Do you intervene?**

Employee22: I do actually I told her that I'll make sure somebody helps her put it on the checkout belt and someone who will help her put it from the trolley into her car

**Interviewer: So what do you do?**

Employee22: I ended up watching out for her and when she went to the checkouts I went and put the crate on for her and got someone from the car park to help her put it into the car as I'm not supposed to leave the store really

**Interviewer: How did the customers feel about you getting involved?**

Employee22: The man who originally got the crate off the shelf for her came and said thank you to me for sorting it out and that she looked a very sweet woman ((laughing)) not that a woman can't do it she was just old it would have been same for a man doing it at that age

**Interviewer: How did you feel doing that?**

Employee22: It is just my job but I felt good doing that knowing that I helped them when the man said thank you to me and the little old dear said thank you to me too which is nice to be recognised

**Interviewer: Did you think your training helped you to manage that situation and know not to leave her?**

Employee22: Tricky question because I'd say that we receive good training but not sure it is quite specific to something like this they just tell us to go the extra mile with customers and make sure they're ok so I think they give us a broad framework and then let us use our own discretion to make sure they're ok so I'd say kind of but not entirely but it is still good

Intervening and offering to help further

Offered help took over from the customer

Customer was grateful that the staff member got involved

Enjoyable helping another customer

Good training but not as specific going above and beyond

<p><b>Interviewer: What about negative incidents between customers?</b></p>	<p>Broad framework – freedom for discretion on some incidents</p>
<p>Employee22: Hmmm that is a trickier one (...) I've had a customer come up to me before by the discount section and say that a customer has taken "all of the best stuff they were there waiting do you have anymore you can't let them take all of the stock" and I just had to reply that they were perfectly allowed to do that and we did not have anymore discounted stuff today</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel?</b></p>	<p>Customer hording the products Waiting for the reduced times</p>
<p>Employee22: Felt sorry for him but nothing I could do</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Did you do anything else?</b></p>	
<p>Employee22: Yeah I did actually I offered him an alternative and was quite positive I might have even said "that stuff is reduced for a reason lets get you a better one" and then showed him a few options</p>	<p>Empathised with the customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did that go down?</b></p>	
<p>Employee22: Very well he laughed and said I was helpful which was good</p>	<p>Offered alternatives</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Is that your normal technique to offer the customers new products?</b></p>	
<p>Employee22: Well I don't say that the product they wanted was no good normally ((laughing)) but that does help it makes them trust you if you are negative about a product it shows that you're willing to tell the truth and have their best interests at heart they always seem to listen to me more</p>	<p>Successful strategy</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Are you trained anything like this or something you have just picked up?</b></p>	
<p>Employee22: We're certainly not trained to be negative towards some of the products ((laughing)) but we are always told to offer alternatives to customers sometimes it goes down</p>	<p>Build trust – offer alternatives</p>

well sometimes it seems silly to offer them something or order it in like if we run out of lemonade or something the customer is not going to want it ordered in they'll just buy it elsewhere so I don't even bother asking if they want an alternative like orange juice or if they want it ordered in because it sounds patronising I think it is more for people working on general merchandise but that training should not be told to me

**Interviewer: So it is one sort of generic training?**

Employee22: Checkout training and produce training is different and so is bakery and café and everything but shop floor training is quite generic whereas the job roles differ greatly

**Interviewer: That's interesting so do you think your technique of being honest about the products is something you've adopted yourself and a method you use from your experience?**

Employee22: Definitely yes something that I've found work and that customers like and keeps them calm and makes them smile if we don't have something and I know it personally and I think it I'll say "oh you don't want that rubbish" and people laugh

**Interviewer: Ahhh that's so useful do you have anymore?**

Employee22: Don't think so

**Interviewer: Brilliant thank you so much for your help**

Told to offer alternatives

Adapted the training to make it humorous and more personal

Appendix 6.2: Open Coding Customers'

Key Positive interaction Negative interaction Employee response How the customer felt Location	
<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Initial coding</b>
<p><b>Interviewer: This study is all about recollection of incidents so not necessarily occurring in store today (...) so my first question is can you remember a recent time where you interacted with another customer?</b></p> <p>Customer1: Yes I can(.) erm 30 minutes ago</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you please describe the incident in as much detail as possible?</b></p> <p>Customer1: Yes there were many free parking spaces(.) erm available and erm a big car(.) a 4x4 wanted to park right next to me despite having plenty of other spaces. The 4x4 has wide opening doors and parked too closely to me(...) I looked up and the woman parked next to me made eye contact with me (.) so we interacted ((laughing)) and then she tried to open her door and I think she realised that without hitting the car she wasn't able to so she then go her husband or other person to move the car which they then went and parked next to a DIFFERENT CAR ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel during the interaction?</b></p> <p>Customer1: BAFFLED ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Baffled(.) why baffled? ((laughing))</b></p> <p>Customer1: Because when there is so many free spaces they could easily park in a space unoccupied both sides they could easily get out the car without causing (.) any damage to other cars or a struggle to themselves getting in and out their own car</p>	<p>Invading space Breaking the rule</p> <p>Negative feeling</p> <p>Reason being there was no need to interact</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Baffled or really irritated?</b></p> <p>Customer1: Ermmm (...) definitely both (.) I was definitely irritated because its irritating people risk the damage of other peoples vehicles but then also baffled as to why you would not naturally go into a free space</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you reckon she would have parked there if you were not in the car? (meaning not move it to a new space)</b></p> <p>Customer1: Definitely I think so yeah (.) I think she would have just opened the door on my car and lent the door against the car to get out</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ermm did an employee do anything?</b></p> <p>Customer1: (...) No there was no one around</p> <p><b>Interviewer: If there was (.) would you have wanted them to have done something?</b></p> <p>Customer1: Ermmm (.) probably not as I don't think there is anything they can do about someone occupying a parking space no</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Silly question but where did the incident take place? I presume the car park ((laughing))</b></p> <p>Customer1: [[Store 1]] store car park yes ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me about any other forms of interactions that have ever occurred to you in store? You can take a minute to think about it</b></p> <p>Customer1: (...) Ermmm yes actually whilst we're talking of car parks! ((laughing)) I have one incident that I always tell my friends about and its regarding trolleys</p>	<p>Irritated</p> <p>Could get away with it if not present</p> <p>Lack of employee</p> <p>Lack of employee power</p> <p>Car park location</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: As in the store trolleys to put shopping in?</b></p> <p>Customer1: YES ((laughing)) it happened a few years ago but as I was walking over I to put a pound in a trolley to release it, a gentlemen stopped me and said here have mine (.) he had finished his shop and was returning his trolley (...) to save time I gave him the pound and he gave me his trolley</p> <p><b>Interviewer: (...) ok</b></p> <p>Customer1: After I finished my shop I took my trolley back and there wasn't a pound in there but a crappy TOKEN!</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did that make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer1: VERY IRRITATED (.) like I had been cheated out of money and the person knew exactly what they were doing</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did you report the incident to a member of staff</b></p> <p>Customer1: I went in and told somebody what had happened and they offered to give me a key to unlock a trolley (...) that was not the issue. The issue was being coned out of money but they could not give me a pound as they needed proof(.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did that make you feel? Were you happy with the response?</b></p> <p>Customer1: I didn't necessarily want the money back (...) It was more the fact that I felt cheated and if somebody had tricked me (...) an acknowledgment or some empathy from the service desk might have been nice ((laughing)) I think because it was outside of their control I don't expect them to do much (...) when I think about it (.) it would be nice of them to have done SOMETHING</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes I know exactly what you mean (...) are there any other incidents you can remember?</b></p>	<p>Broken rule Customer tricked</p> <p>Strong customer emotion from negative interaction</p> <p>Wrong employee decision</p> <p>Employee dealt with the incident poorly</p>
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Customer1: I'm trying to think of an interesting one (...)

**Interviewer: It does not have to be interesting! It can be mundane like queuing**

Customer1: Ok I used the currency department and the man was really nice and asking me where I went on holiday and if I had been there before and he has influence me that if I was coming in to exchange money id want it to be him again

**Interviewer: Ok so are you interacting with a customer or an employee?**

Customer1: ermmm an employee

**Interviewer: Oh ok**

Customer1: Do you need it to be a customer?

**Interviewer: Yes I do (...) one of my questions is if you have interacted with a customer has an employee ever stepped in?**

Customer1: Umm (...) (...) probably not (...) ummm its just that the store did not have much stock in the **grocery department** and there was another customer that said "oh there is not much of this is there" and just as in a passing comment (.) not like a conversation to anyone specific.

**Interviewer: Did you reply or leave it?**

Customer1: I just laughed and said "no there isn't" (...) as I was just eye shopping than actually shopping

**Interviewer: Did an employee intervene?**

Customer1: [No no one around](#)

Location: Grocery department

Form of interaction about products



Customer2: Well trained, comfortable in their jobs, enjoy their jobs – you got to the Co-Op their no brained, they don't give a tits whollop ((laughing))

**Interviewer: I haven't heard that one before ((laughing))**

Customer2: Co-op have gone all up market all countrified, local stuff, the demographic of customers have changed in the Co-Op its really the (...) cauliflower heads I'm a badger I'm not a cauliflower head. But its them

**Interviewer: Cauliflower heads ((laughing))**

Customer2: Cauliflower heads ((laughing)) if you think about it it looks like a cauliflower (...) and they're always out on Mondays Thursday and Fridays

**Interviewer: I have a rule that if they're retired they shouldn't be allowed out on weekends that's the days for people who work! ((laughing)) (...) So far you've described two incidents to me where you've interacted with another customer – the one would be you approaching another customer reaching products for them-**

Customer2: Helping them because you see people there

**Interviewer: The second would be if you're buying the same product as someone else you'd do what?**

Customer2: I'd say "good choice" or "how would you use that" or I'd make a comment (.) they're standing there maybe not for commodities but something different that not everybody would buy – you'd have a bonding which is crazy when you think about it

**Interviewer: Would you rather talk to another customer about a product or a staff member?**

Customer2: (...) I would normally talk to a customer because you have an empathy of choice so there is

C2C intensifier: demographic

C2C intensifier: demographic

C2C helping others

C2C product recommendation

actually a psychological link between us. The staff (...) I wouldn't at the time but [[brand name]] agree with your purchase or comment because they're not no brains like Co-op they ask a question. You know what the question is at the end?? "Have you found everything you came in for"

**Interviewer: You trust the customer more than the employee?**

Customer2: Yes definitely, they could have tested and tried it first (...) how many people have actually picked it up and "said have you had it?" "Yeah love it I'd have it again" "Thank you I'll have that" on the bases that somebody else has already had it and tried it

**Interviewer: So we've spoken about the bog standard middle of the road interactions – but can you remember a clear stand out interaction between you and another customer?**

Customer2: Yes I had one last week and I was the cause of it ((laughing))

**Interviewer: You were the cause?? ((laughing))**

Customer2: And the reason is, there was a child walking round with its Grandparents in an isle-

**Interviewer: Whereabouts? As in within the store.**

Customer2: Down the toothpaste or home isle

**Interviewer: Yep**

Customer2: It was quite busy and there was Grandad with the trolley, Grandma with the child looking around and I was going somewhere and I waited, not very long because I didn't know what was happening. So I waited a bit and then I went in one direction and just ignored. (Customer's wife) said "bloody hell did you see the look she just gave you and said 'look at him'". Then Margaret said "I'm not going down that isle again in case we meet them" and I said "give me the trolley and I'll go and meet them and I'll tell her" ((laughing))

Prefer customer interaction over employee

Trust C2C more than C2E

C2C intensifier: Children

Location

C2C intensifier Trolley and demographic

Gave customer dirty look

<p><b>Interviewer: So that's one incident then – next question has a member of staff intervened at all and would you have liked a member of staff to have intervened at all?</b></p>	<p>Blocking aisle</p>
<p>Customer2: Never had a member of staff intervened on any altercation or pleasant interaction. (.)</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Never?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: Never. And that's quite something. Baring in mind I'm quite vocal</p>	<p>Never had a member of staff intervene</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So every time you've had an incident with another customer, whether it be positive or negative you've never had a staff member intervene?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: Absolutely</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Why do you think that is?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: One, a lot of the supermarkets don't have enough staff around so they don't see it, two they ignore it so they don't see it as their job or responsibility such as why should I have to do it</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: That's cool and the other incident you were about to describe</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: Yep which is seriously ongoing and it happens in nearly every supermarket where cauliflower heads are around (...) cauliflower heads meaning late sixties (...) couples going out with trolleys and they stand and meet each other and talk. They talk at the entrance of the supermarket, they talk at the entrance of isles and nobody moves them on. And I have stood there and waited and waited (...) and then I go "excuse me" and then I say "EXCUSE ME" and then I hit them with my trolley. ((laughing)) I just gently nudge. I will ask and if they can see and they can see I'm there I'll hit the trolleys. In the main I'm polite</p>	<p>Reason for no staff intervention: Lack of caring and hard to spot</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: You'd like a member of staff to intervene?</b></p>	<p>C2C intensifier: Demographic</p> <p>C2C: Aisle being blocked Customer interaction asking them to move</p>

<p>Customer2: Yeah absolutely I think people in a key area should be moved on. I've seen it in Westfields and big centres and it's a security thing. If they see groups of people in a key area they just say "lovely could I ask you to move across please".</p>	<p>C2C customer taking charge of the situation</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Where can you see this in supermarkets?</b></p>	<p>Employee should intervene and manage the situation</p>
<p>Customer2: [Entrances] and [end of isles]</p>	<p>Location</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok thank you very much – you were about to tell me another incident</b></p>	<p>C2C intensifier: Discount C2C group of customer C2C personal space – blocking the view and pushing (physical contact)</p>
<p>Customer2: Yeah what was it (...) oooh got it! It's a store thing when they have the small reduced section and you get people stood there for ages and they wont let you see what is on offer! They act like its there own personal section and they take ages sometimes blocking the view for other customers. I just barge past them in the end and shove my way in. They always look at me funny but I don't care.</p>	<p>Staff do not intervene</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do staff ever intervene?</b></p>	<p>C2C slow customers C2C customers need to be well prepared</p>
<p>Customer2: NEVER. They look scared of the customers guarding the reduced section. Another pet peve I have is in the queue. Got a trolley, put it all out, im a bit OCD but all my shopping is in a reason so when I unpack it and get home its all ready and in the correct place. That's the way I am. So I'm third in the queue the conveyor belt is full so, I'm putting my stuff on, I'm finished. What do I do? I get my credit cards out, my bags are flapped open and I'm there ready. But what do I have to wait for? Women in front. So they go through their shopping. They get their handbag, open their handbag, search for their purse, then get their credit cards, pay, ah right, thank you, got it, take the receipt, take the credit cards, back in the purse, put the purse back in the bottom of the bag, say goodbye and move off. I therefore stand tapping my credit cards, on the handle of the trolley, as a gesture, just to show them that someone without being aggressive, is to show them a quicker way, and people in front will always look and see and get their credit cards out ready. And I've had a lady say to me before "oh im not that organised" well I suggest you get that organised ((laughing)) but 90% of that is definitely women</p>	<p>C2C putting pressure on other customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So there is a woman at the front taking too long, you start tapping your card and</b></p>	

<p><b>someone between you both notices this and gets their card out as well so they're not going to annoy you and take too long?</b></p>	<p>C2C educating other customers</p>
<p>Customer2: Yep it always changes their manner. And rather than people taking too long and taking their time, because im changing my manner, they might change their manner.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you think though that's not your job to ensure the queue moves quickly?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: No it isn't. Because you can add a section in there, that the people on the till often older people on the till will have a conversation with those people and at busy time (...) I understand about customer care and not moving them in and out but there is a way in which you can do it. And I think when they're very busy it cant be done. When its quiet and there is no one around not a problem building relationships with a customer. But it's the flexibility to feel what is happening. I feel they should be empowered to be in charge of their queue and make decisions based on how busy it is or a customers personality – not one training fits all. They should have a responsibility – whilst they are scanning they can see and judge the situation. I've had a cashier in [[brand name]] growl at me</p>	<p>C2C educating other customers</p> <p>C2C intensifier/cause employees talking and being too slow</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Growl at you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: She said “is there any need for that??” (in relation to the tapping the cards) and you can guess what I said?? “YOU BET” ((laughing)) and I said “and ill do it again” and she shrugged her shoulders (...) and then she said “need any help packing” and I said “no im organised” and again that made other shoppers aware of how important I find a fast checkout and that should also be organise (.) but she almost played games (...) she then starts to scan stuff fast</p>	<p>Employee interacted</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you think other customers would have heard you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: Yes ABSOLUTELY (...) I mean im not quiet</p>	<p>C2C action to educate others and purposely loud</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you think they'd have been like?</b></p>	
<p>Customer2: They'd have though “miserable bastard” (...) they'd think its my fault. Im impatient, I'm</p>	<p>C2C spoken observation to educate</p>

<p>intolerant. And they'd stick up for the employee. Well (...) I think blokes wouldn't but women would. It's the same with older people I'm definitely less tolerant of them (...) im much more likely to engage with someone my age and gender actually when I think about it (...) unless they needed help and are open. Because again you can get people in their sixties and seventies who communicate very well and if you said to them "im thinking of buying that" and they will turn around and go "oh yes" where you can get some older people who will ignore that you're talking to them. It isn't clear-cut but I usually interact with people around the same age and look as me.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you say you do your shopping going in looking to talk to someone or-</b></p> <p>Customer2: No I don't go in looking to talk to someone</p> <p><b>Interviewer: No??</b></p> <p>Customer2: I don't on holiday let alone in the supermarket, I don't today. Although I'm in a communicating type job I don't generally talk to people. So its only when I feel relaxed or I see people struggling or they have something I can comment on. Its about the environment they create as well. Like I wont if im waiting in a long queue and the cashier is rubbish.</p>	<p>C2C intensifier age</p> <p>Only interact with same age</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you give me an example of a time where you interacted with another customer ?</b></p> <p>Customer3: Yes (.) now-</p> <p><b>Interviewer: And can you describe that incident in as much detail as possible please?</b></p> <p>Customer3: It was when It was bad weather and (.) the lady was struggling with her shopping and I helped her get some stuff from the shelves and she said "oh thank you" and I said no I cant help it I'm like that. Like the other week there was a women on the floor [[store location]] [Near the front doors] and I had to make sure she was ok and somebody was helping her. I said to my partner "oh its ok now we can leave because the [[brand name]] staff are here" (...) I think she'd fallen over but she was</p>	<p>C2C reaching a product</p> <p>Location front of store</p>

alright apparently. But umm yeah (.) I know I said to [[husbands name]] “I cant stand here I’ve got to go and help”

**Interviewer: So there was a woman and you went over and helped with getting products?**

Customer3: Yeah it was an elderly lady (...) in fact I nearly helped one today when the snow was on the ground she was tryin- ((laughing)) it was funny but I shouldn’t laugh (...) she was trying to get into the front of the store and you could just see her feet slipping every step ((laughing)) and I said to [[husbands name]] “I’ve got to help her” and he said “you’ll fall over yourself” and I said “I don’t care- I cant see that poor woman struggle” (...) but her husband came up and between them they did manage to get to the door

**Interviewer: So if we take it back to the first one where you helped, were you the only one helping or did an employee come and help at all?**

Customer3: (...) No I don’t think an employee did

**Interviewer: Should they have?**

Customer3: Well I don’t know whether they noticed to be fair. You’re there you see it and other than the girl behind the till (.) who I assume just cannot get up from behind her till and go anyway. Because we tend to go to [[colleague name]] because she has been there years and we go to her. (...) sometimes others will come up and say “do you want to come to us here” and we say “no thanks we’ll wait for [[colleague name]]” we’d rather go to [[colleague name]] (...) we used to go to another lady but she retired

**Interviewer: Its funny how you choose which cashier to go to isn’t it ((laughing))**

Customer3: Yeah it is ((laughing)) but to be fair [[brand name]] to get very good quality cashiers (...) a lot of them tend to be older

C2C helping another customer

No employee interaction

Employee could not see interaction

<p><b>Interviewer: They take their time and they chat and get to know people. (...) Ummm so far an incident where you helped another customer. The other one was when a customer had fallen over</b></p>	<p>Employee intervened because they noticed the incident</p>
<p>Customer3: That's right yeah I don't know what happened but she had plenty of people around her eventually so I left her</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Did an employee come and help? If so how did that make you feel?</b></p>	<p>Happy that an employee intervened</p>
<p>Customer3: Well good, it was good, they were there quite quickly (...) I hadn't even noticed her to start with it was Colin who spotted her!</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell be exactly where in store it was?</b></p>	<p>Location in store: chilled aisle</p>
<p>Customer3: Yeah it was in the aisle that's got [cheese and fresh Milk – chilled aisle]</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you remember the last time you spoke to another customer?</b></p>	
<p>Customer3: Yes last Friday (...) we were having a laugh with a couple</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: You were having a laugh?</b></p>	<p>C2C 3 people: laughing with a customer at the expense of a third person</p>
<p>Customer3: Yeah it was very rude really ((laughing)) but a lady in front of me at the till was on her own and she was so dopey (...) but I work quite quick, but this lady was so slow. Even the cashier looked at me as if to note how slow and dopey she was. There was another couple behind me and we both looked at each other and we looked at the woman and started to laugh because the woman was just to slow and so dopey ((laughing)) I know you shouldn't really but we couldn't help it! She said to me "what is she doing" (pointing towards the woman at the front of the queue) and I said "I don't know but I'm ready to strangle her" ((laughing)) and I said "look at the woman on the till as well, she really looks fed up" the cashier knew exactly what we meant too so it was quite funny. The couple I said that to we've come to know them quite well actually (.) you know the staff in [[brand name]] who hand out the freebies and the leaflets well we talk to her (.) and this other couple always stop and talk to her as well.</p>	<p>C2C slow customer generates positive C2C with others</p> <p>C2C bad interaction turns positive</p> <p>C2C joking between customers</p> <p>C2C relationship builders</p>

<p>And the lady always says to me “what you done with him? Have you lost him” (In reference to Customer3’s Husband) and she says the same to the other couple. Whilst we were stood there “I said has he escaped again?” ((Laughing)) and then I said to him “you haven’t got very far” and he said “nahhh nobody else would have me” and she says “whats she doing” (nodding to the dopey woman infront of them both) and I said “I don’t know but I’ve been here ages and ive been ready to strangle her (.) and look at the woman on the till she really looks fed up”</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: So from that then, two incidents, first one you’re friendly with another couple?</b></p>	<p>C2C relationship builder</p>
<p>Customer3: Yeah</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: And they’re the same couple you interacted with to take the micky out of the dopey lady who was slow?</b></p>	
<p>Customer3: Yeah ((Laughing))</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: My question would be would you have liked the employee to have intervened and sped the woman up?</b></p>	<p>No employee intervention as it is not in their job role</p>
<p>Customer3: If im honest I did like having a laugh with the other couple (...)but the employee definitely should do something and speed them up I was like come on do your job hurry them up (.) but if you’re made that way then you cant help it. Colin will tell you I was up for strangling her but you’ve got to give other people the benefit of the doubt. She had loads of [[brand name]] bags and she was putting two things in a bag and then starting another bag and then she was coming back and putting a bit more in and I was thinking just shove it in the bag and take it HOME. The employee definitely should do something and speed them up I was like come on do your job hurry them up. But that’s me, im very impatient with things like that. But I could see, that it was not right</p>	<p>C2C Slow at checkouts too many bags</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Although you said you didn’t think an employee should intervene, what would your reaction have been if they did?</b></p>	<p>Would have liked an employee to have intervened</p>
<p>Customer3: Thank goodness ((laughing)) it was painful to watch. But It really would have been wrong</p>	<p>C2C laugh at someones expense</p>

<p>for an employee to say something. You work for the company (...) and to be fair she didn't- she was very polite to her. Just afterwards we had a laugh together when she had gone. But im an impatient person but no I don't think she should have gotten involved. I don't think any of the [[brand name]] staff would have said anything</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I presume this happened at [the tills]?</b></p> <p><b>Customer3: Yes</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Everything you have given me so far has been positive, can you tell me any negative examples when you interacted with another customer?</b></p> <p>Customer3: Not that I can really remember (...) <b>sometimes I get annoyed when people push in front. More the half soaked people annoy me when people go slow.</b> But to be fair, there's not many bad experiences in [[brand name]]</p>	<p>Location: Till</p> <p>C2C queue pushing</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: I'll just ask a broad question, can you remember the last time you interacted with another customer? And it doesn't have to just be verbal. Can be absolutely anything</b></p> <p>Customer4: (...) couple of times quite recently with various people. I've seen both a lady and a man in the past week that are struggling to reach a product on the top shelf and I just simply go over and help them. If I can reach it I'll simply grab it for them. Ive done that a couple of times</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked an employee to have stepped in and done it?</b></p> <p>Customer4: <b>Well there was not an employee about was there?</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Simple</b></p> <p>Customer4: As the case of [[brand name]] now, the number of staff walking around the shop is diminished to what it used to be. No I wouldn't have liked it, it was something simple</p>	<p>C2C physical assistance</p> <p>No intervention: Employee not present</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Nice any other examples?</b></p> <p>Customer4: Talk</p> <p><b>Interviewer: There you go-</b></p> <p>Customer4: I mean I meet several ex colleagues from work and football is always a talking point</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Could you just explain in a little more detail about that interaction?</b></p> <p>Customer4: Yeah there was a chap I used to work with, funny enough asked if I support Charlton still (.) and he is a West Bromwich Albion (WBA) supporter so we had a long discussion about the demise of WBA. Ummm and things like that. I don't go out to interact but if it happens it happens, if it don't, it don't</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So the people you've spoken to before have been ex colleagues. Do you ever interact with strangers?</b></p> <p>Customer4: Im not the most sociable of people for start (...) no not particularly</p> <p><b>Interview: Has a customer ever done anything to you that has really irritated you?</b></p> <p>Customer4: Not a stand out incident but it does annoy me when people are so bloody slow it annoys me. The people who have two trolleys when you can't get past them chatting</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Customer have more than one trolley?</b></p> <p>Customer4: No more than one customer. We do it, we natter. But that does irritate me, when you cant get past. But not particularly no most of the people in [[brand name]] are alright (...) theres no cause for agro. But I don't find there's cause for agro anyway. (Customer4's partner) get exasperated when she gets to the till</p>	<p>C2C talking about none shopping topic: football</p> <p>C2C intensifier personality</p> <p>C2C intensifier/incident slow customers C2C trolley blocking aisle</p> <p>C2C customers blocking aisle</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: Why</b></p> <p>Customer4: <i>When people have got their vouchers out (...) see that doesn't bother me. I've got nothing else to do. Im very laid back though</i></p> <p><b>Interviewer: See that's an interaction that has occurred between you and another customer, the question I always ask is, would you want an employee to step in and deal with the situation that annoys her so much?</b></p> <p>Customer4: <i>No no, ((company name)) aren't going to step in and say get your ass in gear are they! ((laughing))</i></p> <p><b>Interviewer: The other one you mentioned is when people are blocking the isle, would you want an employee to step in then and manage the situation?</b></p> <p>Customer4: <i>(...) No not particularly (.) I don't think so. If it becomes a real problem I'd ask them to move myself</i></p> <p><b>Interviewer: If I was to ask you yourself how you felt during the incident – how do you think that would be?</b></p> <p>Customer4: <i>Frustrated (.) come on shift yourself. I have been known, if I'm on my own just to turn around and go up the other isle rather than to argue. Yeah I don't bother. Im very laid back</i></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would it have made a difference if an employee stepped in?</b></p> <p>Customer4: <i>I don't expect pro-active employees</i></p> <p><b>Interviewer: You don't?</b></p> <p>Customer4: <i>Nope</i></p>	<p>C2C slow customers because of vouchers</p> <p>No intervention because it would not be appropriate</p> <p>No need for employee</p> <p>Customer felt irritated</p> <p>No need for employees to intervene</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: As in you don't want them or don't expect them?</b></p> <p>Customer4: As in you're not going to get them (.) you're not going to get them. I think, and it doesn't matter if its [[brand name]] or <i>anywhere it is vary rare and employee will step in, during an agro situation</i>. Very very rare. Because they get no support from the management in my point of view.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That's very interesting. The question is, do employees intervene if it gets bad.</b></p> <p>Customer4: I suppose if it got very bad and loud they'd have to. <i>I've seen a few drunks and loud people but I just keep my head down and try and ignore them.</i> (...) But the time we go you're going to get more old people than anything. Not many drunks or fights at 11am on a Friday morning ((laughing)). <i>But they are slow and I've just got to accept that. You also find that there are more and more people with wheelchairs, walking frames, walking sticks. You've got to accept that. Im just fortunate I haven't got one!</i> The maximum I would say we spend a week in ((company name)) is 2 hours, that's a very small percentage of our time. During this time we'd have seen friends and it's a social occasion. (...) I don't mind shopping. I really don't, I drift around and put things in the basket.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Thank you that's all!</b></p>	<p>No employee intervention as the customer feels there is a lack of support</p> <p>C2C interaction disorderly behaviour C2C intensifier demographic</p> <p>C2C slow customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: I don't don't worry ((laughing)) well my first question is quite simple can you tell me the last time you have interacted with another customer of they have had an influence on you? Whether it be spoken or none spoken (...) it can literally be anything</b></p> <p>Customer5: Ummm (...) <i>you see I come into the store on my lunch hour and the thing that irritates me most is when people are slow at the lottery desk when I try buy cigarettes</i> (...) probably a good enough reason to try and quit ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you specifically explain what happens in a little more detail?</b></p> <p>Customer5: <i>Well when I'm queuing there always seems to be a conversation going on between the customer and the member of staff and it winds me up because It literally take me two seconds to pay</i></p>	<p>C2C interaction slow customers</p>

<p>for mine (...) no cash just quick contactless I hardly say a word to the cashier and he leaves me alone (.) I only have 20 minute break in the morning from [[names company he works for]] so I don't like to be in the store long and I always feel that others are watching and waiting so I'm quick</p>	<p>C2C cause of negative interaction is the employee and customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: But it is slow for others?</b></p>	<p>C2C intensifier: Outside pressure of work</p>
<p>Customer5: Customers are so slow and they like to stand and have a chat and ask silly questions to the cashier and I can literally feel myself get more and more irritated I just want to scream hurry up ((laughing)) just because you don't have work doesn't mean I don't either</p>	<p>C2C slow cashier and customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you like a member of staff to intervene and speed up the process?</b></p>	<p>Employee the issue</p>
<p>Customer5: They're normally the bloody problem (...) like the other day I was waiting to pay and the customer and cashier knew each other and they were talking about their children and having a natter it is so unprofessional</p>	<p>Annoyed customer because of employee intervention C2C intensifier: time of shopping trip and customer demographic</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How does that make you feel?</b></p>	<p>C2C demographic intensifier</p>
<p>Customer5: Pissed off (...) like hurry up (.) I think actually there is something else that irritates me about other customers and my wife says I need to chill out it is about customers who are shopping in the middle of the daytime like they have all the time in the world and they're so slow I'm up early at work working hard and they're doing nothing other than collect benefits (...) im paying for these people I think why aren't you at work? I really don't understand it</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so customers who look unemployed annoy you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer5: Sounds petty I know but I think it is because they're so slow because they're unemployed I think that's what gets me (...) and the fact they could be taking taxpayers money ((laughing)) I hope my wife wont find this out she'll call me a miserable git</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: I'm supposed to ask if the members of staff should intervene but I don't think they can help with this ((laughing)) unless they have an employed and unemployed only section</b></p>	

Customer5: That would solve it ((laughing)) see I notice stuff like that all the time but I thought I was the only one but im not like there was a man in front of me at the checkout the basket aisle the other day and he was so scruffy and smelly and was just a bit weird and I wasn't the only one who noticed because I stepped back and the man behind me said "don't blame you keep your distance" and we laughed I said "he stinks" and the man said " I see him in here quite often" so he is well known

**Interviewer: That is an interesting one so you actually managed to have a bit of a laugh with someone else even though normally that one person would annoy you?**

Customer5: I suppose so (...) I would rather that he wasn't there and I didn't have to rely on someone for a laugh to get through it but it wasn't too bad I suppose

**Interviewer: Would you have liked an employee to have stepped in and maybe moved the man on?**

Customer5: The employee could have sprayed him with deodorant ((laughing)) but actually the employee was pretty damn good he didn't chit chat and spend ages he hardly spoke and smiled at us if to say I understand gents don't you worry and he almost hurried him through with no fuss which was good

**Interviewer: How did it make you feel?**

Customer5: What the employee and how he managed it? Or both?

**Interviewer: Both**

Customer5: I suppose if im not being grumpy it was funny with the other man although it does sound bad that we're taking the micky I suppose children would call it bullying but it wasn't like that it was good to have a customer who understands my pain and he was dressed smart in work stuff like myself so he would have similar values and principles too I think (...) and it was good to see a cashier who doesn't chit chat and faff around

C2C cause: demographic

C2C third party interaction.  
Laughing at the expense of someone else

Employee provided positive experience by moving the mad C2C incident on quickly

Employee response had positive impact by being quick

<p><b>Ok brilliant so you understand the overall concept (...) can you remember a recent time where you interacted with another customer?</b></p> <p>Customer6: Ummm in this store [[store location]]</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes please preferably</b></p> <p>Customer6: Well I think I do it here but I'm quite a talkative happy chap as my mom describes me so I'll always look to smile at people and say hello to them I think it is good to socialise and say hello to some people as I think people can be lonely and one friendly interaction may be enough to cheer somebodies day up</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you talk or smile or what?</b></p> <p>Customer6: Depends really I will normally always smile at someone if they make eye contact with me but most of the stuff I talk about happens naturally I don't purposely go looking for conversation (...) like the other day I went to pick up a basket as an old boy did and I said "sorry go ahead" and he said something like "thank you young man" but then I bumped into him again in the aisle and then he was stood behind me at the till and he said "I promise I am not following you" and we laughed and I said "I hope you're not one of those stalkers you read about in the news" ((laughing)) and he had a chuckle and said "my wife would certainly disagree with you there I avoid her at all costs" ((laughing)) which I thought was bloody funny he was a nice chap</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh that's a good one how did you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer6: Good man he was a funny guy if I ended up like that at his age I would be very content the last thing I ever want to lose is my marbles or sense of humour (.) I suppose you normally don't get a choice if you lose either of those it is down to nature</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Very true (.) did a member of staff intervene or anything?</b></p>	<p>C2C likes to social and general pleasantries Aims to please others</p> <p>C2C reactive interactions</p> <p>C2C humour</p> <p>C2C positive interaction demographic factor</p>
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<p>Customer6: I don't think a member of staff heard but I think the staff member on the till smiled at me when it was my turn but I'm not sure if that was because we were laughing or if it was just their job to smile and they're programmed to do that</p>	<p>C2C unsure on employee involvement</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked them to?</b></p>	<p>C2C no need for employee – they don't care</p>
<p>Customer6: Not really I don't think they care what happens between customers really why would they</p>	<p>C2C general pleasantries</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok interesting do you have any others?</b></p>	
<p>Customer6: Not really nothing stands out that I can think of that is particularly interesting I mean I smile at people and they smile back at me I think that is it really</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok what irritates you most about other customers?</b></p>	
<p>Customer6: I'm not really too sure if there is anything that irritates me too much that springs to mind</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Nothing at all?</b></p>	
<p>Customer6: Well (...)</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: It can be anything they do that irritates you</b></p>	
<p>Customer6: I suppose I said I like smiling towards people and saying hello but then again if they don't smile back or speak to me I find that annoying and rude is that sort of thing ok?</p>	<p>C2C lack of general pleasantries or being ignored</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yes that's exactly the sort of thing can you give me a specific example or a little more detail perhaps?</b></p>	
<p>Customer6: Well I cant think of anything as in a specific incident but sometimes I will smile at people and then they don't smile back or I say hello and that irritates me if they ignore me especially if it is obvious that I'm speaking to them I just wow you're rude there is literally no need to be like that</p>	<p>C2C reaction not what expected C2C being ignored</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel</b></p> <p>Customer6: Not surprised there is always rude people around</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you think of anything else that might annoy you or have experienced interactions with other customers?</b></p> <p>Customer6: Not that springs to mind if I'm honest</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That's no problem thank you!</b></p>	<p>C2C don't expect positive reaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time you last interacted with a customer?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Well (...) hmm (.) there was an incident about (.) well just before Christmas maybe start of December (...) no end of November I think</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes what happened</b></p> <p>Customer7: It was between myself and another two people who were a couple</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you explain in as much detail as possible what happened please?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Well there was an offer for Baileys that was on tele so they should have been better supplied but as I went to the section that had Baileys there was a couple that had <b>two</b> trolleys and they took every bottle off of them self</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh what did you say?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Well when I got there they were blocking the section and I saw they had loads in the trolley and I jokingly said "leave some for me please" ((laughing)) not actually thinking they'd take all of them but they actually did (.) they actually made me wait behind them whilst they literally grabbed</p>	<p>C2C interaction taken too many produce</p> <p>C2C selfish behaviour</p> <p>C2C hording products</p>

everything they could get their hands on and I must have waited a good 30 seconds and they just turned around and walked off they didn't even say sorry to me

**Interviewer: What did you do?**

Customer7: I stood there and tried to check the other shelves in case there was one spare or left over or something but they had taken them all

**Interviewer: How did you feel?**

Customer7: I didn't feel too bad because I thought that there must be more outside so I found a staff member who had a big trolley and asked him if he had any out of the back (.) he actually said to me "oh have they stolen them all I saw they had a lot" so he knew what was going on and I said "I just need one (.) one small tiny bottle please" ((laughing))

**Interviewer: Did he find one?**

Customer7: No he didn't which I couldn't believe he said that they were having a delivery the next day (.) but the story carries on because that was the last thing I had to buy and I actually queued with the two people at the checkout and said to them "that I didn't manage to get my hands on one" and they didn't offer me one I thought they would but it turns out they own a business and they're doing Christmas hampers and decided to put Baileys in the hamper so they must be doing well and have a lot of money or something like that

**Interviewer: How did you know that info?**

Customer7: Well apparently there is some rule that says you can not buy so many bottles of something and that it needs managers approval so the cashier called for the manager and the two people explained to him the situation and scenario but the manager didn't do anything he just ok'd it and that was it everyone carried on so he didn't in force the rule even if there was such a rule he just carried on and let them have them I was so tempted to say something but I didn't

C2C did feel to bad because though the situation could be resolved  
Employee offered poor solution

Employees action was not successful

Poor response from employee  
heightened negative emotion

Employee did not enforce rules

<p><b>Interviewer: How did the whole scenario make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer7: It certainly didn't make me feel valued as a customer if that is what you're referring to (.)</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I normally ask if you would want an employee to step in and intervene to solve the issue but it sounds like an employee did intervene?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Well in the aisle I literally explained what happened to him and he didn't seem that bothered it was like he didn't want to upset the others which is fair enough I suppose they are customers too but I just wanted one bottle ((laughing)) I don't think I am asking for too much</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What about at the till would you have liked someone to have stepped in and maybe hurried them up?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Oh certainly not no that is one of my biggest pet peves it drives me insane when people are hurrying me packing away</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Staff members?</b></p> <p>Customer7: No other customers</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oooo ok ok this sounds like another interaction so just bare with me two seconds (.) so the manager got involved but it wasn't for you and the customer just to scan the drink through?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Yeah (.) I wouldn't have wanted him to say anything though it was not that big of a deal they have every right to buy it like I do they just got there first which is fair enough</p> <p><b>Interviewer: ok so you were about to explain about other customers hurrying you?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Yes well when I'm in the queue I sometimes get made to feel guilty about the amount of food I have and I feel like I have to rush and I suppose they make me do that in a number of ways (...)</p>	<p>Irritated customer because the employee chose one customers needs over their own</p> <p>Location of incident Employee did not respond</p> <p>C2C interaction customers putting pressure</p>
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they ask for the divider to be put on the belt even when I haven't finished putting my own shopping on **yet** I actually think they do it is as a form of tactic to make me hurry its quite clever ((laughing)) then they stand really closely and then they have their bags all ready laid out in the trolley as if to say "look im ready why aren't you" but I cant do that because just as im finished unloading it is already stocking up at the end of the checkout so it is a mad rush and they move their trolley down and just watch me struggle

**Interviewer: How does it make you feel**

Customer7: **Very stressed**

**Interviewer: Would you like a staff member to intervene?**

Customer7: To be fair the staff are great they can see that I'm getting flustered and they talk to me and tell me it is alright and they go nice and slow and sometimes even pack for me whilst I try too and they sometimes smile at the other customer which makes them back off a little bit

**Interviewer: That really is an interesting one how does it make you feel when they intervene?**

Customer7: **Much better and calmer actually I really do appreciate it I think they must get trained or something** (...) or similarly if they do the shopping they must feel the same I'm sure everyone does at some point

**Interviewer: Yeah I know exactly what you mean ((laughing)) so those are two negative situations do you have any examples of you interacting positively? Or speaking to other customers?**

Customer7: Well I suppose it should come as no surprise to you that I love seeing mothers and babies I really do love babies I will always talk to them and pull funny faces (.) that then leads me on to talking to the mothers and I explain I had a nursery I'm not some random weirdo ((laughing)) I always tell them how lovely their babies are and ask them some questions

**Interviewer: That's good**

Tactics used by other customers such as putting dividers down, having bags out already, standing very close

Other customer makes them feel stressed

Employee notices interaction and calms the customer

Effect of employee intervention positive – puts it down to training

C2C demographic influences behaviour  
C2C positive interaction about a baby

<p>Customer7: That is half the reason I come in the daytime my husband says to chat to babies ((laughing)) it isn't but it is certainly a nice little added bonus</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel interacting with the customer and their babies?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Oh just lovely all warm and fuzzy and it takes me back to when I used to work and have all the children I really do miss it they're so sweet and innocent and our future lies with them I think they're just lovely I could play with them for hours I really do miss it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you like staff to intervene?</b></p> <p>Customer7: Only if they're going to join in ((laughing))</p>	<p>C2C intensifier time of trip</p> <p>Effect of positive interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok fantastic can you tell me about a time you last interacted with another customer please?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Hmm well I guess it would be today with an elderly lady</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What happened?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Well it would be a verbal interaction as you put it there was a lady who looked elderly she was walking with a walking frame type thing (...) a walker with her basket on and I saw her looking very closely at the tin and I could just sense she was struggling so I just casually asked her "are you ok my lovely"</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ah ok that is nice of you what happened?</b></p> <p>Customer8: She kind of looked up at me and before evening seeing what I look liked she was smiling which shows the kind of person she was I think she was ever so nice I would say in her 80's and she just said something about not being able to read what the tin said and that "they all look the same" or something like that ((laughing)) and then we just had a chat for a minute or two</p>	<p>C2C intensifier demographic C2C physical assistance</p> <p>C2C humour assistance reading the product</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: What was said?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Nothing in particular I just asked if she was ok and she said she was but then just said I was kind for stopping and asking how she was (...) unfortunately my own Nan died recently</p>	<p>C2C intensifier personal situation</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh I'm terribly sorry</b></p> <p>Customer8: That's ok (.) it was hard but I am getting there</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you think that is why you stopped?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Yes most probably actually when I think about it (...) I have much more tolerance for older people than I do for younger people</p>	<p>C2C cause of interaction is demographic type: age is an influencer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ahh really? Have you interacted with anyone younger?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Not them actually but they annoy me (.) like the other day there was a child running around screaming and in the end he was literally sat on the shelving (.) then he was like grabbing the end of my trolley and his silly mother was just in her own world on her phone and reading her list (...) so first time when the child was on his own in my way sat on the self I just said "excuse me" and he moved out the way (...) I looked at the mom and she didn't even know the child was in the way then about 2 minutes later up another aisle the child was hanging off my trolley and I just said "watch it you will hurt yourself" and I said it loud enough for the mother to hear so she would actually take notice this time (.) she just looked up at me and kind of went "come here" and pointed to her side as if the child was a dog</p>	<p>C2C intensifier demographic type: age is an influencer</p> <p>C2C child causing an annoyance</p> <p>Letting the other customer know they were in the wrong</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How do you think she should have reacted?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Well a sorry to me would have been a start (.) and then she could have actually explained to her child what the problem was he didn't have a clue bless him (...) I wont lie I found him irritating but I know it is the mothers fault not necessarily his own (...) so yeah that one</p>	<p>Irritation occurred from other customers</p>

**Interviewer: Would you have liked a staff member to have intervened?**

Customer8: Ummm im not sure what they could do I would like it so It wouldn't have happened in the first place or at least just apologise I see so many children now just running around because parents don't seem to care (.) my boyfriend says it is because I don't have children that is why I don't understand but even if I did I wouldn't let them bother anyone else

No staff intervention because of unsure outcome

**Interviewer: How did they interaction make you feel?**

Customer8: **Disgusted at the mother that she pays so little attention** (.) but it doesn't surprise me really I see it all the time (...) **I have children running loose when I come that is the downside to coming in the middle of the day when it is quiet I think why aren't you in school ((laughing))**

Feeling that other customer had a responsibility  
C2C intensifier children in school

**Interviewer: So you wouldn't actively seek interaction out with other people or children but you don't mind talking to elderly people?**

Customer8: Only if they look friendly ((laughing)) but I try and keep myself to myself just sometimes you have to speak to people or interact even if it is a couple of words

**Interviewer: Such as what?**

Customer8: **Well even if you continue on with the mothers you'll get some of them who like to stand and chat to other mothers (...) like it is some community I don't know but surely they cant all stay together but there are like little bottlenecks**

Blocking the aisles chatting  
Location causing bottlenecks

**Interviewer: Oh im sorry I just remember something (.) where did the incidents take place before? Start with the old lady and the chatting about a product or something**

Customer8: **oh um I think I said it was tinned food? So potentially down the cat food aisle** actually because I think that is what we spoke about it was cats because I had one and she had cat food (...) well I'm hoping the cat food was for her and not her husband or something ((laughing))



<p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Same as the children</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did it make you feel talking to the older lady?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Amazing (.) she was a pure soul and they're rare these days</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you like the member of staff to have intervened when you were talking to her and helped?</b></p> <p>Customer8: No not at all I enjoyed it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What about with the aisles being blocked by the women? I presume mainly women?</b></p> <p>Customer8: Sometimes men as well (.) yeah get them on the old tannoy and embarrass them say something like "all of you people having a natter will you please be considerate for other people and move to a coffee shop or something" ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ill take that as a yes then ((laughing))</b></p> <p>Customer8: They would only do it once</p>	<p>C2C have to move around other customers</p> <p>C2C negative incident feeling</p> <p>C2C positive feeling after C2C</p> <p>Do not intervene after positive C2C</p> <p>Intervene after C2C has occurred suggested tactic</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ahh that's good do you interact with anyone whilst you are here?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Oh yes all the time ask ((colleague name)) we always have a chat and they all know me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What about with any other Customer9s?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Yes of course I have ((name)) who I say hello to now and quite often I will see people I know and we'll sit and have a coffee or something</p>	<p>C2C based on previous relationship and friendship forming</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so you've had coffee with people and stuff?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Yes definitely (.) so before I've seen someone who has been having coffee and they had a newspaper I wanted because they leave free papers out here that I love to read and the person looked as if they had finished with it so I just went over and asked if they had finished with it and they said they had and it was during the world cup I think and I made a comment about the football and we ended up chatting and I sat down with the person we actually went to the same school which was strange I was a few years below them it is a small world isn't it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ah yes that is very weird but you didn't know the person before you went over to them?</b></p> <p>Customer9: No not a clue it was ((inaudible)) school so from around here I was born and raised</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel having this conversation with the person?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Ah wasn't too bad I quite enjoyed it I like having some reading time and time on my own but was nice to chat to somebody for a change rather than sitting on my own all week (.) gave me something to tell the Wife about she said that I need more friends ((laughing)) I think she is trying to get rid of me (.) it helps me plan my day though and gives me a purpose sometimes when I don't have anything else on</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Well one question I always ask is when an interaction has occurred would you have liked a staff member to have intervened and perhaps returned the papers to the holder for you to grab so you wouldn't have had to ask for the paper?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Oh no they're rushed off their feet they don't need small problems like that I don't mind asking for stuff myself like that (.) my mom used to say you don't ask you don't get (...) no harm in asking</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you actively seek customers out to interact with or keep yourself to yourself?</b></p>	<p>C2C friendship formed off of products</p> <p>C2C general chat</p> <p>Enjoyable to socialise with others</p> <p>No need to intervene as the staff are too busy</p>
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<p>Customer9: I like to chat I'm always saying hello to people</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So you have interacted with others quite a lot?</b></p> <p>Customer9: I'm always saying hello to people I see in here I know quite a few now as I'm here quite often it is just down the road from me so yeah I speak to people and say hello ask them who they are or make comments about their shopping</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you give more detail?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Well If I know you can get it cheaper elsewhere ((products)) I'll tell them or if I've seen them the week before and they haven't been well I'll ask them if they're any better (.) now I'm older a lot of my conversations revolve around doctors appointments or something like that ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh excellent I know you wouldn't want people interfering there (.) do you enjoy these interactions?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Yes yes I like speaking to people if they're friendly (.) and it is quite nice to be able to help some people like my son works in ((company competitor name)) so he tells me about deals and then I can pass it on to people so it is nice to feel helpful and like I am saving people money</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you think ((company name)) would mind you doing that?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Not really</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What about the other side (...) do Customers do anything that annoy you?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Ummm well actually I promise I'm not making this up but earlier today something happened that I thought was rude (.) as you know I come with my wife and it is busy there wasn't many trolleys left there was only one small one left and that is all we need (.) as she went to go and get it this man probably in his 20's just shot in and grabbed it and almost like moved in in front of her so she had</p>	<p>General pleasantries Product recommendation</p> <p>Product advice based on price</p> <p>Enjoy helping people giving advice</p> <p>Negative C2C customer breaking rules and being rude</p>
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<p>to almost step back and she just looked at me as if that was rude (...) but also looked at me as if to say “don’t say anything” he went and she just goes “well he was just lovely” ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Anything happen after that?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Well we spoke about it and entered the store we grabbed a big trolley</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked a staff member to have stepped in and intervened at that point?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Ummm well I feel like my wife should have gotten the trolley or at least an apology or at least the option to have the trolley! She would have let him have it she is very kind whereas I would have stole it ((laughing)) but yeah I would have liked an employee to have said “did your mother not teach you any manners” ((laughing)) so yeah employees need to monitor rude customers it is just hard to do so I don’t expect too much from them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahhh ok ok how did you feel at the time of this interaction when you saw him cut up your wife?</b></p> <p>Customer9: Well probably like you should treat my wife with a bit more respect but just a little but annoyed because he seemed very rude and not a pleasant person</p>	<p>Employee should have intervened and dealt with the situation</p> <p>Lack of respect from customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Haven’t interacted with anyone today or spoken to them? Doesn’t actually have to be spoken can be anything just a look or body language?</b></p> <p>Customer10: Well actually I’ve told a lie I spoke to someone today actually who looked in a similar state as me ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you explain in as much detail what happened please?</b></p>	<p>C2C looked similar in terms of appearance and demographic</p>

<p>Customer10: Yes sure (.) well I was in the queue about to get a full English from the cafe here (...) that's why I was here trying to get a hangover cure and the lady behind the till I don't know her name asked me if "I had a rough night" and started laughing I guess you could tell that I'm not looking my freshest ((laughing)) and I sort of nodded and said "not my best decision" and the young lad behind me said "I feel your pain my friend" or something like that indicating that he also was feeling a little rough and that he was out as well just like me the night before which was kind of strange but funny ((laughing)) I think it was because I asked for the "biggest greasiest breakfast" the colleague didn't just look at me and think I oh you look rough I'll slag a customer off like that (.) don't want her getting in trouble</p>	<p>Overheard conversation</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So how did that make you feel? That is a strange coincidence isn't it I presume it doesn't happen often?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: No certainly doesn't happen often that is for sure (.) to start with I was a little bit like what are you doing why are you butting in and trying to make conversation I'm tired and hanging</p>	<p>Irritated to start</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: But? I feel like there is a but ((laughing))</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: But because he was sort of a bit like me I didn't mind as much (.) I think that's what it was I didn't really care</p>	<p>Similar demographic so more tolerant to interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean a bit like you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Well he was about my age I think and looked kind of similar he almost looked like one of my mates I thought he knew me</p>	<p>Same age</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so like you in demographics rather that situational? Like because he was drunk too</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: I mean like me too because he was also in pain and it was self inflicted he would know how fragile I felt (.) well still feel that breakfast didn't do much</p>	

<p><b>Interviewer: So technically the employee was part of the interaction too?</b></p>	<p>Enjoyed the employee joining in</p>
<p>Customer10: Yeah she was speaking and joining in was funny</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: So you liked that she did?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Well it was nice to see she wasn't a robot and she had a sense of humour which is quite rare I also work in retailing and I try and smile and laugh with my customers I think it makes a real difference</p>	<p>Nice to see employees empowered and free to join in</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Has an employee ever stepped in when a negative interaction has occurred between you and another customer?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: I don't think so (.) I can deal with it myself usually I think there is no need for an employee to help someone young like myself (.) might be slightly different if there is someone older or something and they feel intimidated or threatened or something like that but not with me</p>	<p>Employee should help older people not youngsters</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Have you had any negative interactions with someone in the store?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: (...) I don't think so no</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok well if there isn't anything else don-</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Actually I suppose one is that my mom always does but I don't think anyone does it to me (.) I'm only young so I don't have many items and if the basket till is shut I don't like self checkout I'll have to go to a normal till and it annoys me when I only have one item and someone is doing a massive shop and they don't let me through that drives me mad its so selfish</p>	<p>Breaking the rules in the queue should let the customer through</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So explain in a little more detail for me please</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Well say for example I'll have just a carton of milk and I'll stand behind a lady who has a massive shopping trolley full and I'll try make eye contact and normally if they see I have one item</p>	<p>Time consuming and customers being selfish</p>

<p>they'll let me through and I'll be gone whilst they're still loading their stuff onto the conveyor thing (...) but it annoys me when they don't let me through and they just make me watch them load their stuff (.) this is a good one actually it is like when you're trying to pull out of a junction and there is traffic and a car just blocks you in it is just pointless let me go out you cant go anywhere and it is the exact same when someone doesn't let you through I'm like it doesn't effect you at all you wont even know I'm there</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you do?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Stand really close to them look pissed off and try let them know they're rude and wrong</p>	<p>Trying to pressure the other customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked a staff member to have intervened then?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: I said no earlier so don't want to contradict myself ((laughing)) but this time yeah would have been good if they just said "do you want to come on through you only have a couple" or something like that it would let the other customer know they're in the wrong then</p>	<p>Employee should step in and let the customer through</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel when customers do that?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Just annoying isn't it (.) it happens all the time that's why mom does the shopping not me ((laughing))</p>	<p>Irritated enough to stop the customer from shopping</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yeah I bet it annoys others I know how you feel about this one definitely</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Well if im honest I hate people that are self centred for no reason and selfish like that (.) even walking around sometimes you see some people who are just interested in themselves and don't care about anyone else that annoys me</p>	<p>Selfish customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Such as what? Do you have an example?</b></p>	
<p>Customer10: Oh there is loads like people just leave trolleys everywhere (.) had people literally lean over me when trying to get a product when im just stood there looking at something rather than saying</p>	<p>Selfish customer leaving trolley</p>

<p>excuse me or anything (...) or when there is only enough room for two people and you let someone squeeze past and they don't say anything no thank you</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Theres a lot there actually thank you (.) do these happen often? Also where do they happen?</b></p> <p>Customer10: Yeah every visit normally (.) <b>it is in the fridge bit</b> usually as that is busier than the normal aisles</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok there are quite a few examples there any you could expand on?</b></p> <p>Customer10: I think they're quite basic but just anything that effects other people or just a lack of patience like touching me to move past me when I'm standing still or not thanking me if I let you through I think it is just common decency really I just think right are my actions going to impact anyone (.) not just shopping but in life in general I even think like that on nights out (...) if they are I think would I be happy if it happened to me and then just work from there</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Anything staff can do?</b></p> <p>Customer10: No I wouldn't expect them too either it is hard to see it happening</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Thank you</b></p>	<p>Physical contact between customers reaching for a product No manners</p> <p>Location: chilled</p> <p>Physical contact Lack of manners Selfish</p>
<p><b>My first question is quite an easy one can you tell me about a time you last interacted with another customer please?</b></p> <p>Customer11: Ok yes quite simple I think it was today actually I helped somebody reach a product from a top shelf actually it may have been last week but quite straightforward I saw somebody who was smaller trying to reach for a product and it looked like they were looking around for a staff member to help them but they couldn't see one so I just reached up and grabbed it (.) no actually I asked them first if they wanted me to get it and they said if I wouldn't mind and I certainly didn't so I just reached up and grabbed it</p>	<p>Physical assistance reaching a product</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Where did this happen?</b></p> <p>Customer11: <b>It was actually in clothing</b> I think because I thought after god knows how a staff member would have reached that if they were small but then I think there is a hook on like a big metal stick they can use to reach clothing at the top (.) they don't have enough storage room so they have to start putting things up high so because I'm tall I can sometimes reach if I stand on tip toes ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh do you think a staff member should intervene?</b></p> <p>Customer11: If a customer is struggling of course I will try and help them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: I mean instead of you? Should a staff member step in then and stop you</b></p> <p>Customer11: For something that was quick and easy it wasn't a problem plus some of the people who work on clothing are small ladies anyway so I'm not sure they would be able to I don't really mind helping out it doesn't bother me really</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Clothing section was this?</b></p> <p>Customer11: Yeah if I remember correctly</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant (.) do you like to help?</b></p> <p>Customer11: <b>I do actually if I feel useful</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Any other interactions?</b></p> <p>Customer11: Hmm not sure (...) possibly a lady having a <b>laugh with my about a list that my wife gave me</b></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes brilliant explain</b></p>	<p>Location: Clothing department</p> <p>No need for employee as customer could fulfil the role without them</p> <p>Enjoyed helping out</p> <p>Laughing with other customers over own incompetence</p>
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Customer11: Well my wife writes out a list and I can hardly read her writing for one (.) but even when I can sometimes I don't know some of the products and I must have looked like I was struggling because I had a lady come up to me and laugh and say something like "I'm sure my husband looks as confused as you do when he is reading my list" and I think I just replied back with "I'm not allowed to return home unless I get everything correct"" ((laughing))

**Interviewer: That is nice how did you feel?**

Customer11: Yeah it was funny to be fair it made me laugh and I probably was pulling a face at the list all confused but didn't realise

**Interviewer: What happened then?**

Customer11: I think I might have said I'm looking for a certain product or something and that was it really nothing more but was funny because I didn't realise what I looked like ((laughing))

**Interviewer: Ok are there any negative incidents that have occurred between you and another customer?**

Customer11: Um not like arguments or anything like that I don't think so no

**Interviewer: Anything in general that irritates you? Oh also did you want a member of staff to step in on the last incident?**

Customer11: Oh no of course not

**Interviewer: Also where did it occur?**

Customer11: In this store

**Interviewer: I mean like specifically in this store where did it happen?**

Humour important

Humour after interaction

<p>Customer11: Oh I think down the chilled section (...) I think I was pulling a funny face at the specific name of a cheese I had to buy and the lady saw that (...) like I just know cheese as cheese ((laughing)) nothing more nothing less</p>	<p>Incompetence lack of understanding</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok so the negative incident?</b></p>	
<p>Customer11: Well occasionally I'll have people barge past me without saying excuse me or apologising which is rude</p>	<p>Physical contact People taking up too much room blocking the aisle</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yeah that is perfect what happens? Can you give more detail about a specific incident</b></p>	
<p>Customer11: None springs to mind but like I'll be looking at products or trying something on in the clothing and someone will reach for something near me and almost bump in to me (...) no <b>actually</b> I had one bloke hit right into the backs of my legs with a trolley when he was on the bloody phone and just look up at me! Did not even apologise or acknowledge I was there I just glared at him in a pissed off manner</p>	<p>Physical contact lack of patience Physical contact</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did you do anything else?</b></p>	
<p>Customer11: Yeah I purposely did not move but he looked at me as if I'd damaged his basket the cheeky git I almost said sorry for existing here mate did you not see me I'm only 6'4</p>	<p>Stood ground and refused to move</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh wow</b></p>	
<p>Customer11: Yeah it was like he had little man syndrome or something he just was so rude</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Should an employee step in?</b></p>	
<p>Customer11: Nah I can handle that myself plus they'd have to be polite to him whereas I could have said something to him much more (...) succinctly shall we put it</p>	<p>Did not want an employee to step in because of lack of power</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: What happened?</b></p> <p>Customer11: I just stared at him as almost as if to say “go on say something I dare you” rude little man</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So you almost looked hoping he would say something</b></p> <p>Customer11: I looked and almost gave him a reason to start something or say something but he didn't (.) but I told myself if he does say something I'll definitely say something back to him to let him know how rude and annoying he is (.) I don't understand he definitely knew what he did he just hit into me and didn't say anything like come on you know when you knock into someone its ridiculous</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel when he did it?</b></p> <p>Customer11: Delighted (...) how you think just shock that people are that rude well actually it doesn't surprise me (.) just put down unhappy ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: A member of staff did not intervene did they?</b></p> <p>Customer11: No they did not</p> <p><b>Interviewer: If they did, what could they have done do you think?</b></p> <p>Customer11: not a lot (.) maybe kick them out the store for being so annoying</p> <p><b>Interviewer: ((laughing)) anything else you can think of?</b></p> <p>Customer11: Don't think so</p>	<p>Setting boundaries for reaction: Indicated an internal threshold of when they will react</p> <p>Let the other customer know they were wrong</p> <p>Sarcastic response – unhappy and surprised at how rude</p> <p>No staff intervention</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant so I'll start off with the question then (.) can you tell me the last time you interacted with a customer?</b></p>	

<p>Customer12: Yes I interacted with one recently when myself and another customer purnot using the utensils provided look at it really closely and then put it back it was disgusting because they looked dirty too</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh ok can you give me some details maybe describe it fully? Actually can I ask do you usually shop at the same time and day each week? Are the trips planned or spontaneous?</b></p> <p>Customer12: Every Saturday yeah same day but the times vary massively just on how busy I am (.) I work until 6 every day in the week and don't have time so it has to be a Saturday</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant so yes describe the first incident in as much detail as possible please</b></p> <p>Customer12: Ok well I'm probably three quarters of the way through my shop and I leave my bread until near the end because well firstly it is at the end of the store and secondly because I don't want it getting squashed I normally buy pre packaged normal bread for sandwiches through the week but on a Saturday I buy a some rolls for us to have for lunch</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yep</b></p> <p>Customer12: Well I was waiting behind a lady and there was a gentlemen next to me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How old would you say they were?</b></p>	<p>Touching product C2C intensifier: Demographic appearance</p>
<p>Customer12: Umm cant remember exactly woman maybe 40's man 60's but he was dressed and presented in a much nicer way than she was and we were both waiting for the woman and she kept picking up the bread rolls and was literally smelling them and putting them back it was disgusting she didn't looked like she had clean hands either if you get what I mean (...) I looked at the bloke and he looked at me just as shocked and he said to her "are you going to buy any of those or sniff them all day" which was kind of rude but also necessary and she just told him to "mind his own business" and he just laughed (.) she sniffed another one and then just put it down and walked off (...) we just stood there and he said "certainly don't fancy that anymore think I'll get the Wharbuttonns instead" ((laughing))</p>	<p>Touching products and not purchasing Demographic intensifier: appearance</p> <p>Third party humour: Laughing at the expense of someone else Different product after C2C</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Customer12: I certainly didn't pick them up up I left it (.) what is scary though is that if I hadn't have been there and came like 2 minutes after I wouldn't have known and just picked it up none the wiser which I probably have done so I certainly don't buy products that aren't wrapped up now that cant be tampered with</p>	<p>Pleased they have witnessed negative C2C</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So this one experience has changed the products you buy?</b></p> <p>Customer12: Absolutely 100%</p>	<p>C2C changed purchase behaviour</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should a staff member have intervened?</b></p> <p>Customer12: Absolutely 100% (...) no half decent customer would want their products touched by someone who has potentially not washed their hands (.) I know the staff members will have had to have touched them putting them out but you know there are rules and health and safety and that they are probably going to be clean hands touching them</p>	<p>Staff should intervene to stop it from happening</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did a member of staff intervene or step in at any point?</b></p> <p>Customer12: No they didn't they weren't around</p>	<p>Did not intervene due to lack of staff</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked them to have?</b></p> <p>Customer12: Oh yes absolutely on both occasions actually</p>	<p>Staff should have intervened</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean?</b></p> <p>Customer12: Well firstly someone should have stopped the woman from picking up the items and putting all of the other customer off and then secondly someone should have stopped the man and the woman from arguing because when she basically told him to sod off it could have quite easily got nasty</p>	<p>Two roles in the intervention: the initial C2C interaction and then the follow up interaction</p>

<p>or into an argument and she looked rough (.) she looked like she could handle herself I wasn't going to say anything to her</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What would you have liked them to have done?</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: Told the woman off</p>	<p>Suggested action of staff</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel when it was going on?</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: So awkward it was not pleasant</p>	<p>Feeling after negative C2C</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Any other times you speak to Customers?</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: Feel like I've got to say something nice and happy now to make up for that ((laughing))</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: No certainly not just say whatever you can think of</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: I say excuse me and stuff if people are in the way</p>	<p>General pleasantries to move passed customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Any other details? Could you expand?</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: Not really if someone is in the way I ask if they could move and they always do</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok anything else?</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: Well I had a lady say my hair was nice ((laughing))</p>	<p>Comment on demographic appearance</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Really? Not saying it isn't ((laughing))</b></p>	
<p>Customer12: Yeah it does not happen often but i cant remember exactly but say for example I went to walk past her and I said excuse me she apologised and then she just randomly said she liked my hair ((laughing)) it made me embarrassed but it was very sweet of her to say so (.) she was older so I feel</p>	<p>Strong demographic appearance customer received compliment</p>

like she could get away with saying something very random (...) I also think it is important to note that my hair was like bright blue I used to get it all the time (.) or stared at if people didn't like it

**Interviewer: Obviously an employee didn't get involved**

Customer12: No not at all (.) this is a pet peeve of mine people who leave the trolley in the middle of the aisle and then walk to the shelves and leave the trolley abandoned and take up the entire aisle and you have to ask people to move them out the way it makes me feel irritated but sometimes I genuinely just cant get past them (.) even if I can get past them I still say excuse me and make a point that they're leaving them there

**Interviewer: Ahh does an employee ever step in?**

Customer12: Not in my case (.) plus I quite enjoy telling some of these irritating people to move ((laughing)) and sometimes you can clearly tell they hate listening to me but they know they're in the wrong just walk with your trolley or leave it at the end of the aisle I never have anyone ask me to move so I cant be that irritating can I

**Interviewer: Where do these incidents usually occur?**

Customer12: All over the store normally like on one occasion a lady didn't move when I asked her so I pushed hers out the way and she grabbed it as if it was her possession and I just politely said "sorry you're blocking the aisle" and she was talking to somebody she knew like I politely asked her to move first time and she was in a world of her own so after you don't respond when I politely ask I just move your trolley that seems fair to me

**Interviewer: Where did this happen?**

Customer12: Just down the dry goods bit I think those aisles are smaller and it wouldn't be chilled people don't seem to chat there as much because it is cold I reckon

**Interviewer: How does it make you feel?**

C2C trolley blocking aisles  
Inconsiderate for other customers  
Try and educate another customer  
so they know they're wrong

Enjoy the negative C2C telling  
them they're wrong

Threshold of when to intervene  
Asked customer to move  
Physical contact pushed trolley

Location

<p>Customer12: Oh I enjoy it it allows me to tell people to move I get a little kick</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you like an employee to have intervened?</b></p> <p>Customer12: I would like employees to step in and tell them they have to think about other people so when they get moved they can't shout at an employee or give them a bad look</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That's interesting do you have any others?</b></p> <p>Customer12: I don't think so I've got to shoot now!</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Thank you</b></p>	<p>Enjoy managing customers</p> <p>Employee should step in</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant so my first question is can you tell me a time when you interacted with a customer?</b></p> <p>Customer13: Well probably one of my most memorable is when I nearly came to 'fisty cuffs' with another customer ((laughing)) that was a memorable day</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you explain what happened in as much detail please?</b></p> <p>Customer13: Well my daughter was running around just being what a normal small child does she wasn't misbehaving or anything bad but she just turned the corner too quickly and sort of tripped and fell over at this women's feet and started to cry because I think the fall hurt and she was embarrassed but rather than ask if she was ok and help her up like a normal caring person was this lady stood there looked down her nose at her and almost tutted and as ran and picked my daughter up and said its ok no need to get upset and I just glared at this spiteful old woman</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did she do?</b></p>	<p>Physical contact with another customer nearly a fight</p> <p>Protecting child Customer judging another customer Customer speaking loud enough so other customer could hear</p> <p>Customer reacted to loud comment</p>

<p>Customer13: She just glared back at me I was so close to saying something (.) like if she would have said anything to me I swear I would have ripped her head off she looked like Cruella Deville</p>	<p>Setting boundaries for reaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel?</b></p>	<p>Unpleasant C2C reaction</p>
<p>Customer13: Just concerned for my daughter and very protective of her</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Where a bouts did this happen within the store did this incident happen?</b></p>	<p>Location of incident</p>
<p>Customer13: I think it was by the cd's and dvd's sort of near the children's</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ahh so the entertainment section was a member of staff around?</b></p>	
<p>Customer13: No don't think so I didn't really check</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked them to have stepped in?</b></p>	<p>No need for employee nothing could be done</p>
<p>Customer13: Not really not much could be done</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant do you have any other examples?</b></p>	
<p>Customer13: I'm not too sure</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Doesn't have to be spoken can be mere presence ((laughing))</b></p>	<p>Reaching for products invading their space</p>
<p>Customer13: Well for example today im not sure if this is one but when I'm putting my shopping on the checkout till (...) whilst loading up as fast as I can I literally had some one lean over my shopping and grab the chewing gum that is above my shopping so I had to move out the way (.) like just wait your turn and then they picked up the checkout divider and held it whilst I was putting my shopping away as if they were trying to make me go quicker (...) if anything it made me go much slower and just wound me up</p>	<p>Trying to hurry up and put pressure</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: So whilst you were packing they reached over your stuff to grab chewing gum and the divider?</b></p>	<p>Negative do not like physical contact</p>
<p>Customer13: Yeah like touching my arm whilst they were doing it I just glared at them and they smiled as if nothing was wrong as if it was normal</p>	<p>Employee does intervene but should</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should a colleague do something?</b></p>	<p>Customer interaction based on demographic: Ethnicity</p>
<p>Customer13: They should tell them to be patient and wait their turn (.) this doesn't happen often but on a weekend when it is busy everyone seems to be in more of a rush and people tend to be in larger groups than in the week and that seems to make a difference</p>	<p>Product location help</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Think there is anything staff members can do?</b></p>	<p>C2C does not know where products are</p>
<p>Customer13: I think it would be a good idea to have staff members around like they do in shops just there to help customers and ask them if they're ok not just there stacking shelves but just as general helpers (...) like I've had a customer before ask me where an item was in the trolley (.) like my dad was born in Malaysia and I do a lot of Asian cooking and I have probably had this three or four times people have seen oyster sauce and dry noodles in my shopping trolley and had people ask me where I found it (.) I presume they've seen that rather than asking the Asian man where the Asian cooking stuff is ((laughing))</p>	<p>C2C does not know where products are</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so you have actually had people ask you to help find items?</b></p>	<p>C2C does not know where products are</p>
<p>Customer13: Oh yeah I have people ask me where I find stuff all the time that's why I mean there should be general staff walking around the store looking to help people rather than having to rely on me</p>	<p>C2C does not know where products are</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you describe a usual scenario when you have to help people?</b></p>	<p>C2C does not know where products are</p>
<p>Customer13: Yeah sure (.) so I don't know I'll just be minding my own business and someone will stop and ask where I get certain things from in my trolley (.) so then obviously I cant say like aisle 5 or something so I just have to physically walk and take them (.) sometimes I cant even remember so I just</p>	<p>C2C does not know where products are</p>

<p>have to do my best and it can take a couple of minutes to find something but when you have someone following you I cant just stop and go “nope sorry cant find it” and leave them ((laughing)) sometimes I cant even find an employee to palm them off</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So on the occasions where you interact and try find something for someone you would like an employee to step in?</b></p> <p>Customer13: Oh yes most definitely I feel like I am doing their job slightly</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How do you feel showing customers to items?</b></p> <p>Customer13: Alright I suppose I don't really mind</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What about when you cant find stuff?</b></p> <p>Customer13: Yeah I would like help then I suppose if I'm struggling because I don't know what to do and sometimes I feel like I'm taking people further away from the product and can get easily confused ((laughing))</p>	<p>Employee should step in as customer feels like they're doing the employees job</p> <p>Needs the employee to take over the situation No employees around</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant so my first question is can you tell me the last time you interacted with a customer?</b></p> <p>Customer14: I'm not sure I really speak to customers if I'm honest I normally have enough going on looking after this little one whilst shopping</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can be anything doesn't have to be spoken</b></p> <p>Customer14: Well I suppose one thing that does happen a lot since I've had her is that people stop and make comments and speak to her she seems to bring a lot of attention to us</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you give me a specific time or more detail at all?</b></p>	<p>C2C interaction because of small child</p> <p>C2C chatting because of child</p>

<p>Customer14: Yeah sure so like the other week she has an outfit where we put a little bow in her hair and there was an older lady who I think might have been with her daughter stopped and just said how pretty she was and turned to my daughter who was walking by me and told her how pretty she was and that she loved her little bow she then turned to me and said she looked lovely and that I bet I get this all the time</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ah that's lovely how did that make you feel?</b></p>	<p>Good feeling after C2C</p>
<p>Customer14: Proud as always it happens often she just loves the attention too</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Did an employee intervene or anything?</b></p>	
<p>Customer14: It has happened before and an employee has stopped what they are doing and joins the conversation</p>	<p>Employee intervened and joined the chat</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ahh how did that make you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Customer14: Handy actually because I normally need to ask them where something is so makes it easier when they're already interacting with us ((laughing))</p>	<p>Pleased an employee intervened</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Are there things that some people do that irritate you at all?</b></p>	
<p>Customer14: Well some customers use terrible language and I saw one incident where a couple were actually have an argument with another couple in the car park and they started swearing and shouting it was vile really and vulgar</p>	<p>C2C use of poor language C2C third party interaction watching an argument Impact on her daughter</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you explain what happened exactly?</b></p>	<p>Location: Outside</p>
<p>Customer14: Well yeah there was a car park space that someone was coming out of (.) I should note that it was a real busy day and I actually wasn't coming in to the supermarket but the general retail park walking past and there was a car pulled forward with its indicator on going to reverse into the space like it was so clear what it was going to do and as the other car pulled out and that car went to reverse</p>	<p>Physical car crash Bad language</p>

<p>into it another car came down and went to pull in before they could (...) then the other car reversed back and there was nearly a crash (.) I just stood in amazement the car that just went to nip in then had the cheek to just sit there with the horn on and the first car retaliated and sat with the horn on too they both couldn't get into one space and they both had their horn on like full grown adults then the second car had his window down and started f'ing and blinding and the first car the first car started f'ing and blinding in return it was ridiculous</p>	<p>Argument between two customers over a car park space</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did it make you feel?</b></p>	<p>Negative feeling after the interaction</p>
<p>Customer14: <b>Oh terrible</b> I just started talking to my daughter and moving quickly I wanted to distract her and get away because I feel like the situation could have easily escalated quickly and I didn't want her to ask any question what some of the naughty adult words meant ((laughing))</p>	<p>Employee did not intervene despite knowing it was going on</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did a staff member intervene or get involved or should they have?</b></p>	<p>C2C intensifier: Appearance – tattoos</p>
<p>Customer14: <b>Well there was actually the car cleaners and trolleys boys outside and they could see what was going on but</b> (.) well actually they could hear what was going on but they didn't seem bothered and in a way I don't blame them they don't get paid enough and the one person in the car that came late and was at fault looked very rough and scary they had all sorts of tattoos that I don't like at all</p>	<p>Wanted a more authoritative figure to step in not just an average employee</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh so you wouldn't have wanted a staff member to have intervened?</b></p>	<p>C2C doesn't like customer appearance</p>
<p>Customer14: Not a regular one maybe a manager or someone with more authority</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok and what do you mean that the others looked rough?</b></p>	
<p>Customer: I probably shouldn't say it but I'm really not a fan of some of the people wearing tattoos I don't like it at all and I don't want my daughter to have any when she grows up that's for sure</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Does it bother you when some people have tattoos then?</b></p>	

<p>Customer14: Yeah definitely some of the people who have them around here scares me like there is one man in here who has some on his face and that honestly scares me a little I know I shouldn't judge but I cant help it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That is very interesting so you would say how other people look influences your shopping experience</b></p> <p>Customer14: Not loads but extreme stuff like that I guess</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ahh interesting anything else?</b></p> <p>Customer14: No hope that has been helpful</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant thank you</b></p>	<p>C2C intensifier: Appearance – tattoos</p> <p>Only in extreme cases does appearance matter</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you please tell me a time you interacted with another customer in as much detail as possible please?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Yes of course it was yesterday I think when I was in here</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant explain away</b></p> <p>Customer15: Well it is my granddaughters birthday and I needed to get her something smaller as well as her main present so I thought I would get her some make up she is 16 so I went to the <b>make up stand</b> and as you can imagine it all looked too much for me and there was a young girl looking as well and she was probably mid 20's so I asked her for some help</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you say?</b></p> <p>Customer15: I said to her “could you help me please it is my granddaughters birthday and all this looks like the same to me can you help” and she was so lovely she asked me a couple of questions about her age skin colour etc and picked out a few bits that someone her age would like so I presumed if it was</p>	<p>Location of incident</p> <p>Demographic influence on C2C chose someone age appropriate</p> <p>Verbal interaction around products Product recommendation</p>

<p>good enough for this very pretty 20 year old my little one would love it especially if I told her that I got help picking it out she'll like it even more she probably would not wear it if granny chose it ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ah that is a brilliant one so you enjoyed that interaction?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Yes she was a lovely girl and very sweet and helpful</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So no staff member helped you?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Oh no certainly not</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked them to have helped?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Oh no not at all half of them look about my age (...) maybe a little younger so they would be none the wiser my granddaughter wouldn't want someone over 30 helping them she thinks anyone over that age is "oh so old" trust me she has said it to me enough times ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So actually speaking to a member of the public was actually more useful than a member of staff for you then?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Not always but yes I suppose so in this case</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Can you remember when a member of staff intervened when something happened between you and a customer?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Not particularly last time I spoke to a staff member was today about how slow the food was that is why I didn't want to go back up to the café but the meeting room instead</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Was another customer involved?</b></p>	<p>Young girl to choose product for young girl (not present)</p> <p>Enjoyed the interaction because it was helpful</p> <p>Did not want a staff member to intervene as the customer was more helpful</p> <p>Spoke to staff member because the customer saw another customer complaining</p>
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Customer15: Actually (...) possibly yes other customers were just as irritated as me and I saw that they were if that counts?

**Interviewer: Yes of course**

Customer15: Well basically the food was taking ages to come out much longer than normal and it wasn't overly busy so that is why I complained (.) well and because a lady got her food before me and she ordered after me but I saw her go up to the staff member and complain about how long her food was taking even though I still had not had mine and she was after me (...) when it did come out it was fish and chips as well and I only ordered toast so she ordered after me had a bigger meal than me and got it before me

**Interviewer: So what happened?**

Customer15: So after the waitress dropped her meal off I stopped her and asked where mine was and I said exactly what I told you and that it was because she complained she got it first

**Interviewer: Then what happened?**

Customer15: Well she went to the back and brought it out straight away I don't know if It had just been sat there or it only takes that long to do it it is only out of a packet and toasted

**Interviewer: So because of the other customer you had to complain?**

Customer15: Not complain but ask where mine was and because I witnessed the other customer they couldn't give me an excuse they just apologised to me and said it wouldn't happen again

**Interviewer: How did it make you feel?**

Customer15: I don't expect too much from them if I'm honest I don't normally complain but otherwise you worry yours has been forgotten or lost if you know what I mean? That has happened to me before

Service took too long  
Complained because it was quiet

Complained because another customer received their food first

Annoyed another customer complained and received her food first

Used another customer to gain leverage

Employee blamed the customer – this has a negative experience for the customer

<p>I've been sat there half an hour waiting and then when I finally ask they've had the cheek to say that I should have said something earlier I'm like you cheeky sods don't blame me ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That is interesting thank you (.) I know you said you were pushed for time is there any others than spring to mind?</b></p> <p>Customer15: Not that I can think of if I'm honest is that enough?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes that is brilliant thank you very much</b></p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Very true (.) right can I ask you about a time you interacted with another customer and give me as much detail as possible?</b></p> <p>Customer16: Yes sure thing I have almost made what I would call a friend here I normally come in on a Monday after dropping the grandkids at school and treat myself to a breakfast and a coffee whilst ((partners name)) is at Italian classes so I come in here and kill some time (.) and I now sit with ((customer name)) and we have a chat and he is a friend that I have made through ((company name)) so I would say that is probably the best example that I can think of</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok so could you give me a little more information around this and could you explain how it all started?</b></p> <p>Customer16: I think we just used to have a general chit chat in the queue whilst we were waiting and realised we had some stuff in common and then just carried on talking and sat down together (.) and then next time the following week we just saw each other and I think he asked If he could sit with me and I said of course take a seat and it just went from there really (...) nice to have someone to sit down with and have a chat together (.) it could have even started that after we went to queue we both went to get a paper and we said we need to be quick before someone comes and takes them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Someone hogs all the papers?</b></p>	<p>Interaction based on relationship built over time</p> <p>Sits and chats with another customer</p> <p>Chatting whilst queuing became friends</p> <p>Sitting and chatting after meeting in the store</p>

<p>Customer16: Not one particular person but sometimes it is hard to get them off of people I have to go and ask</p>	<p>Ask another customer to return the papers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should an employee step in and get them</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: No don't be silly</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: So how does it make you feel interacting with another customer such as the guy you sit with?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: Yeah it is good someone to talk to kills some time and we discuss all sorts of things</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Have you spoken to someone else or interacted with anyone else?</b></p>	<p>Enjoys talking to other customers</p>
<p>Customer16: Just trying to think (.) well I actually normally have a late but decided to have an americano this one day and I couldn't get the milk jugs to work they're awkward you have to press a button stand on one leg sing to it just to get the damn milk out ((laughing)) and a youngish chap came and showed me how to do it and I just said "thank you very much they look confusing" he laughed and then the cheeky git asked me if I wanted help carrying my tray over (.) I said "I may be going senile but I ain't that bloody old" ((laughing)) he looked a little shocked but I smiled so don't think I upset him too much</p>	<p>Product help – turned negative because a customer overstepped the line and wanted to help too much</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked a staff member to have joined in?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: I've had staff members offer it to me before I said no thank you the day you lose your independence is the day I don't want to be around no more (.) I know that sounds morbid but it is true I saw it with my dad</p>	<p>Staff members have tried to intervene but same issue – crossing the line</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did the interaction make you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: Cheeky git (.) a little worried I may look older and more fragile than I thought I do</p>	<p>Worried the experience may make him look weak</p>



<p>Customer16: A bit angry that people can get away with talking to people like that I mean it was not her fault they're just the rules you know what I mean?</p>	<p>Setting boundaries for reaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yeah I do (.) did you say anything?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: No I didn't but I was close to telling him to calm down and leave her alone if I'm honest (.) I think if he would have gotten any louder or kept going for any longer I would have but he stopped just in time</p>	<p>Impressed the staff member stood firm</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What happened in the end?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: Well in the end he stormed off but fair play to the girl she didn't give it no matter how loud and rude he was and then I asked her if she was ok and she just said she's used to it and that it was the second one of the day ((laughing))</p>	<p>Another staff member backed up the colleague</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should another employee have intervened?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: Another employee did intervene the other lady who works on the desk next to her told him to calm down and that there is nothing that can be done and a manager can be called if he wants it but he cant keep shouting (.) that was the point he decided to walk away so they did well but I couldn't have seen the issue being resolved if she was on her own I think he thought he could bully her so fair play to them both</p>	<p>Location of the incident</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Where did this happen?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: Customer service desk near the front</p>	<p>Enjoyed watching the staff deal with the incident so well</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok so the employee stepping in was a good thing?</b></p>	
<p>Customer16: Yeah I'd say I enjoyed watching them team up with each other to calm this idiot down</p>	

**Interviewer: Brilliant the first question can you tell me about a time when you interacted with another customer? In as much detail as possible**

Customer17: I'm not too sure but I normally speak to people if they speak to me or smile and say hello something like that (.) I normally have people speak to me and comment on something I'm picking up like today I had strawberries and someone next me commented that there wasn't many good ones as in fresh strawberries and I think they said that they were small which I totally agreed with they were rather naff

**Interviewer: Did you enjoy the conversation?**

Customer17: Didn't last long but I suppose it was nice to have someone say something you're thinking so you know you're not being fussy or something like that if you know what I mean? But I wouldn't want them talking to me for too long like I'm not being silly I've had guys try talk to me about something relevant before and then all of a sudden ask for my phone number

**Interviewer: Really?**

Customer17: Yeah like they've asked me where I got something from in my trolley or something normal and then asked where I am from and stuff and then asked for my number

**Interviewer: How do you feel? How many times has this happened?**

Customer17: Awkward and embarrassed (.) a few times maybe 3 or 4 something like that I reckon

**Interviewer: Do you give it them ((laughing))**

Customer17: No not at all I have a boyfriend

**Interviewer: I normally ask the question would you like a staff member to intervene so can you tell me for both scenarios would you like a staff member to intervene?**

Speak when spoken to

Product discussion: Positive recommendation

Enjoyable when confirming your thoughts

Negative interaction when customers crosses the boundaries

Too personal

Awkward experience

<p>Customer17: No for the first one there is no need the strawberry person is doing no harm ((laughing)) that is what I'm calling her the strawberry person (.) and the other times not usually the lads just go but before I had a lad not take no for an answer I would have liked a staff member to have intervened and tell the guy to leave me alone but I suppose that would be security more than a normal member of staff (...)</p>	<p>No need for general pleasantries Needed for the second interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Where did these incidents occur?</b></p>	
<p>Customer17: Strawberry lady occurred in the shoe section (...) ((laughing)) obviously by the strawberries whatever you call that and the other normally happen throughout the store the stalker guy followed by by the fresh stuff for another couple of aisles I would say</p>	<p>Store location</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: I bet that was scary</b></p>	
<p>Customer17: Yeah I actually think it was when I look back but I would rather it happened in a busy well-lit store than in a club or outside or something</p>	<p>Scared after interaction with another customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Anything else other customers do that irritate you or make your experience more pleasant?</b></p>	
<p>Customer17: I cant stand people who go too slow</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What with trolleys or-</b></p>	
<p>Customer17: Anywhere (.) walking with trolleys or paying I'm like damn man hurry up why you going so slowly? I don't get why anyone would want to spend a minute longer in the supermarket than you need too am I missing something?</p>	<p>People moving too slowly</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: ((laughing))</b></p>	
<p>Customer17: Like I just don't get it I'm not sure if I walk extra fast or something but whenever I seem to be in a rush I always get slow people and they're not all old before you say that ((laughing))</p>	<p>People moving too slowly can be very irritating – wants the customer to hurry up</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Where does it normally happen?</b></p> <p>Customer17: Anywhere (.) mainly down aisles that are tight so I cant overtake them but people just stand and chat at the entrance to the aisles so I have to ask to move or when they are putting there stuff on the checkout belt they go so slowly and then to make it worse they'll pack really slowly and have a little chat to the staff member as if they're best mates I'm just like hurry up please</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel</b></p> <p>Customer17: Like I'm being miserable but they just annoy me</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you like to see a staff member do something?</b></p> <p>Customer17: Yes get a big stick and poke them to hurry up ((laughing)) no in all seriousness I think they should not allow people to stand and chat and block the aisle I think everyone has the right to walk up and down without having to ask people to move it is inconsiderate I feel that at a till people should go at their own speed but I purposely try use self checkout when I can because people go too slowly (.) maybe they should just try and move their trolleys when they talk so perhaps they're still allowed to talk but not allowed to block the aisles I think that is a thing but I don't think they're going to be able to make people walk quicker or pay quicker</p>	<p>Location – occurs in aisles Standing and chatting Slow through checkouts Chatting to staff members</p> <p>Very irritating that customers go slow</p> <p>Staff should intervene</p> <p>Suggested tactic for employee</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant so first question can you tell me about a time you last interacted with another customer please?</b></p> <p>Customer18: Ok so I am a little confused about the whole critical incident I'm not sure if it is major or anything but like this morning I had someone before I entered the store ask me if knew where ((company name)) was</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Customer18: I gave them directions It was literally just around the corner I visit there quite often</p>	

<p><b>Interviewer: Ah ok brilliant can you give me a little more detail</b></p> <p>Customer18: Ok well as I was walking in I went to the cash point this morning and I saw somebody kind of looking down on his phone (.) hanging around behind me whilst I got cash out so I was kind of aware of him although I didn't think I was going to be robbed in broad daylight plus he looked nice enough (.) then he said to me "excuse me mate you don't know where ((company name)) is do you" I sort of gathered my thoughts for two seconds and got my bearings and just pointed him in the right direction he thanked me and walked off</p>	<p>Gave directions to a fellow customer</p> <p>Location: outside the store</p> <p>Demographic factor: Physical appearance</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Did you enjoy the interaction</b></p> <p>Customer18: Was not too bad I don't mind helping people when I can but depends what they're asking and what mood I am</p>	<p>Doesn't mind helping other customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Would you have rather he asked a member of staff instead of you? Or do you expect a member of staff to be free to ask?</b></p> <p>Customer18: I think in store they should ask a staff member but I really don't mind (.) outside of the store like that there isn't likely to be a member of staff maybe just even the trolley boys but they're not always around I don't mind</p>	<p>Staff was not present</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant do you get asked in store for some stuff?</b></p> <p>Customer18: Occasionally I suppose (.) I get asked what the time is and tell people basic stuff and information like that it doesn't really bother me too much you see helping when it isn't out of my way</p>	<p>Asked general questions frequently</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What would you class as out of your way?</b></p> <p>Customer18: When people start to ask about products or do I know where something is in the store (.) that mainly happens when I buy CD's people ask where that section is because it has been moved around all over the place recently and then I just sort of generally point I can't be bothered to leave my</p>	

<p>shopping and physically show them I know that sounds lazy but I don't think that is my job that is where an employee is paid</p>	<p>Simple questions don't mind but too complex or consuming should be an employee</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So an employee should step in when another customers asks you where a product is?</b></p>	
<p>Customer18: Yeah sometimes I even just say "I cant remember mate" and point them to an employee and say "ask him he works here" just to move them on their way and allow me to continue with my day</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: What should an employee do?</b></p>	<p>Often is the link from customer to employee</p>
<p>Customer18: I think there should be more of them on the shop floor willing to help people like I've tried showing someone to an employee before and you can just tell some employees aren't interested they're just stacking shelves and probably have a strict time schedule that they need to reach and this is almost like an inconvenience (.) I worked in supermarkets for 10 years so I know it can be stressful sometimes for the employee when they have managers breathing down their neck</p>	<p>Employee should be readily available</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh ok so you think management should employ more staff on the shop floors to help? So you didn't enjoy helping</b></p>	
<p>Customer18: Sometimes I don't mind when it is quick but it isn't my job to physically take another customer round ((laughing)) it is like the blind leading the blind I don't work there have had training or most importantly that gets overlooked quite a lot (...) I don't get paid</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: That is very true do you have anything else?</b></p>	
<p>Customer18: I have another one that annoys me when people are paying for their items but take so long like it has come to a shock to them when they're at the till then all of a sudden they're like ooo I've actually heard someone say "ooo I've got to pay" as if it is a big surprise oh all of this shopping isn't free?? That irritates me a lot I don't like people who are slow at the till and holding people up with all their vouchers and receipts and loyalty cards and rubbish that same women was like "oh try this one and this one (...) and this one" trying to get rid of all her rubbish vouchers (.) I have my bags set up in</p>	<p>Sometimes does not know answers to the customer interaction</p> <p>Slow customers negative interaction</p>

<p>my trolley all ready no messing about stuff in the trolley card all ready and bang in and out really quick no messing</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Should a staff member intervene?</b></p> <p>Customer18: When it is really busy they should hurry them along then I think that is fair because they cant afford to be faffing with stuff</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant any others?</b></p> <p>Customer18: No don't think so</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Thank you</b></p>	<p>Taking ages with vouchers</p> <p>Tactic to speed customers up</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant can you tell me about how other customers have an influence on your shopping experience or anyone you have interacted with either positively or negatively anything spring to mind?</b></p> <p>Customer19: Well I must firstly say that the vast majority of people in ((company name)) seem to be lovely customers I am always getting asked if I need help sometimes the staff member will even take the stuff to the taxi and wait with me I've come to know quite a few people here (.) even one of the customers has taken my stuff to the taxi before which is really nice of them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh that is great could you tell me specifically what happened with as much detail as possible?</b></p> <p>Customer19: Yes sure well I was unloading my basket onto the till belt (.) I put my basket on my walker ((shows walker)) and started putting my stuff on and the cashier actually came around and started helping me off with my stuff I always go to ((colleague name)) and she always helps me and then we had a little chat for a minute and she asked if I had rung for my taxi and I told her I booked it when I got dropped off so it will be waiting for me and then ((colleague name)) asked if she wanted her to get someone to help her to the taxi and before I had time to answer this lovely young man behind</p>	<p>Helpful customer for products/service</p> <p>Customer took over from employee interaction C2E -&gt; C2C</p>

offered and said he would be willing to help and bless ((colleague name)) she looked at me to see if I was ok and I thought what a lovely guy I just said “as long as you wouldn’t mind” and he said “of course not” so after I paid I was sorting my stuff out in my walker and he very very quickly paid and asked if he could carry my bag but told him that it was ok I can barely feel it on my walker and I just said to him you don’t have to ((taxi driver)) the taxi man will fold my walker and he helps me get out the other side so he walked to the front of the store with me and waited for a minute at the taxi drop off point until ((taxi driver)) arrived and they both helped put my walker down and put it in the boot I had two strapping young men help me ((laughing)) I must have gotten all sorts of looks from people ((laughing))

**Interviewer: That’s a lovely one and one of the nicest I’ve heard (.) I presume you enjoyed it?**

Customer19: Yes it is lovely to meet friendly people but the vast majority of people here at ((company name)) are very nice and friendly I’ve been coming here the last 20 years I’ve seen it change so much only ((colleague name)) I can remember being here when I first started shopping

**Interviewer: When the young person helped you to the taxi did you prefer him to a member of staff?**

Customer19: Well I know the staff and trust them but I always feel bad taking them away I think I have better things to do than to walk with me but they don’t seem to mind (.) at least with this young gentlemen he won’t get told off for waiting with me I’m scared some of the staff members will

**Interviewer: Ok that is brilliant (.) any other examples?**

Customer19: I am always saying hello to people I have met here or just smiling at them but nothing too serious

**Interviewer: Anything negative that other customers do to put you on edge or make you happy or anything?**

Physical assistance – helped a fellow customer to the taxi

Enjoys interactions with people

Trusts staff members  
Likes customers because they should have more time

General pleasantries

Conscious of being slow

<p>Customer19: Well I am very aware of going slow and the only time other customers make me feel a little nervous and bad is when I am picking up my prescription (.) because I have to get my bag off my walker and put it on the checkout to get my prescription up (...) and then I have quite a lot of medication so it always takes a while and after it has taken a while I have to put it away because it can be delicate so I try and move to the side so I'm not in peoples way but I think people get fed up having to wait so long for me so I do feel a little rushed and under pressure</p>	<p>Slow when purchasing at the medical centre</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What makes you think they are being impatient or getting annoyed with you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer19: I think because I can just feel the pressure if you get me? Do you know what I mean? That people are standing a little closer to you and just kind of hoping you would hurry up (.) when people are in a rush I don't think they care that I might be old and a little slower I just think they want to get their stuff and be on the way</p>	<p>People standing a little too close Age demographic</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh that is interesting (.) would you like a member of staff to intervene?</b></p>	
<p>Customer19: Oh they do they tell me not to rush and that everything is ok and they come and help me pack the stuff in my bag (.) they always ask permission first to touch my stuff which is sweet but I really don't mind and they tell me that nobody minds waiting and that I'm not going too slow or anything like that they really are quite lovely yes they definitely help</p>	<p>Staff intervention is positive and use calming tactics</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ah brilliant how does that make you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Customer19: Slightly calmer (.) well much better actually I feel protected by them which is a good thing as I wouldn't if they weren't there</p>	<p>Effect of the employee intervention</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ah yes that makes sense (.) so both of these incidents you have provided are actually at the tills in both scenarios?</b></p>	<p>Location of the incident</p>
<p>Customer19: Yes they are</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: One at the medical prescription centre and the other at the till?</b></p>	<p>Location of the incident</p>



**Interviewer: Ah you really do look tremendous I must say (.) so when you interact with these people do employees get involved and help or join in or anything like that?**

Customer20: Oh yes if we're having a chat sometimes one of the staff members here who I know will come and chat and join in it is lovely makes everyone feel comfortable and pass the time (.) I live on my own you see so it is nice to get out and have a chat with other people both customers and staff

**Interviewer: Where do these interactions normally happen?**

Customer20: Oh normally around the papers at the front or whenever I bump into them really it depends on the time I am roughly in

**Interviewer: Do you actively seek out other customers or not?**

Customer20: Not I wouldn't say actively seeking people out but I certainly like to talk to people so I'll maybe look to make eye contact or something like that (.) well actually it depends like sometimes I'm clearly struggling if I am and nobody is around like a staff member I will ask a customer to reach something for me like I don't buy Heinz ketchup I always buy ((brand name)) as it is cheaper and I can't taste the difference so if there is a customer who looks like they can reach (.) which is pretty much anyone bigger than me ((laughing)) then I will ask them to reach it down for me

**Interviewer: Do customers normally mind helping out?**

Customer20: Oh no not at all they're all lovely I don't think I've ever had someone say to me no (.) but then I am careful who I ask I think I can tell that they're nice and helpful if they look a little rough I will admit I do not ask them I'm a good judge

**Interviewer: Oh brilliant ok are there any times customers have a negative impact on your experience?**

Employee intervenes and joins in the conversation which makes the customer feel good

Location of the incidents – near front door

Ask customers for help to reach products if no staff member is around

Customers are nice  
Judge customers whether to engage in C2C or not : physical appearance

Customers who moan about other staff members

<p>Customer20: Not really I don't think (.) oh actually yes I cant stand it when I hear other customers moaning about the staff (...) like really everyone here is so damn lovely there is absolutely nothing that anyone could complain about here they're great</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Could you give me a specific example? With as much detail as possible maybe?</b></p> <p>Customer20: Yes well (.) ok I was queuing in ((cashier name)) queue the other day and they are so lovely but anyway as I was waiting (.) probably just 1 minute the lady in front of me starts sighing and tutting very loudly to make the staff member understand she is unhappy at the wait (.) the wait wasn't very long and wasn't her fault the barcode would not scan I mean it happens just be patient and then the lady turned to me and said "it is a joke this is that you have to wait to hand your money over If I went to walk out I bet they would soon stop me" and laughed but I just calmly said "well it isn't ((cashier name)) fault it is just one of those things my dear" I made sure I mentioned the cashiers name to indicate that I knew her well so they might not be too rude and the lady just kind of agreed with me and calmed down</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did it make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer20: Well I don't like to see members of staff shouted at it really is not their fault is it you know?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes I agree (.) anything else?</b></p> <p>Customer20: No I don't think there is if I'm honest</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant thank you</b></p>	<p>Customers making noises to try pressure people to move quicker</p> <p>Tries to get other customers to agree with them</p> <p>Educating another customers</p> <p>Dislikes staff being shouted at</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant could you tell me a time you interacted with another customer?</b></p> <p>Customer21: (.) probably this morning actually and it is a usual occurrence it happened in the changing rooms</p>	<p>Store location: Changing rooms</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Oh brilliant can you explain what happened in as much detail please?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Well it has happened a few times but today I was trying something on in the changing rooms and when I stepped outside of my cubical to look in the full length mirror and show my mom there was a lady who said how lovely I looked and paid me plenty of compliments which was nice (.) she was an older lady probably 10 years older than my mom or something but they had a giggle and a little chat but it always nice to hear something from them like that bless them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ah that's lovely was a member of staff around?</b></p> <p>Customer21: No</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you have liked them to have been?</b></p> <p>Customer21: No not at all no need for it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant anything else?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Talking to customers?</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Talking or anything where customers have an impact on you as a customer both positively and negatively? Do you actively seek out other customers?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Oh no I wont go looking for an type of interaction it usually comes from them instigating it or speaking first I certainly wont I try and avoid it ((lauging))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yes I'm the same ((laughing))</b></p> <p>Customer21: Ok so one thing that really annoys me is when people are blocking the aisle talking or leaving their shopping trolley unattended and I have to turn around and walk back up and around because I don't like speaking to people and asking them to move so have to take the long way (.) silly I know</p>	<p>General pleasantries: Compliment on appearance Ended up a three-way conversation</p> <p>No need for staff intervention</p> <p>Does not seek out interaction</p> <p>Blocking the aisle with trolley Makes the customer go out of their way rather than interact and move it</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer: So what are people doing?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Like they're not doing it purposely but they will be standing and talking to friends or looking at items and leaving their trolley in the way and I cant get through and don't like to ask</p>	<p>Standing and talking to friends or leaving trolley unattended</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should an employee step in?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Oh no I wouldn't dare ask and employee the other customer mind find out it was me and hate me ((laughing))</p>	<p>Wouldn't want the other customer to know they complained</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What about if an employee knew this sort of thing happened though and they wouldn't want it happening so if they saw people blocking the aisle they moved them on?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Well I would like that it would certainly be helpful and cut my shopping time limit down ((laughing))</p>	<p>Wouldn't mind if a customer did it proactively</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Oh that is good (.) how does it make you feel when it happens?</b></p> <p>Customer21: It is frustrating because It adds time to my shop (.)</p>	<p>Frustrating as it increases time of shop</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Where does this happen?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Anywhere across the store really (.) mainly down the smaller aisles like health products and beauty (.) that happens a lot in beauty actually the worse thing is when someone is oblivious that you're waiting to look at the product they're looking at and they take ages it drives me mad that is probably my biggest pet hate actually</p>	<p>Location: all aisles or health poroducts</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What happens can you give me more detail?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Yeah so I'll want to look at an item or something but I won't be able to because someone else is taking too long looking at the item I want</p>	<p>Customers blocking products and unaware they are doing it</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: So what do you do?</b></p> <p>Customer21: I just sort of loiter around a product next to them pretend to read the back of something whilst I wait for them to finish doing what they're doing but they always seem to take ages and don't even notice I'm around (.)</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Do you ever speak to them and ask them to move or grab the product?</b></p> <p>Customer21: No never (.) I'll just wait patiently until they have finished and then move to where they were I just make sure when I'm looking at a product I don't take as long as they did</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Would you like an employee to intervene?</b></p> <p>Customer21: I don't think they can really if I am being honest (.) it is not their job to move people like this the customer has right to take their time and look at a product I just think sometime people are unaware what they're doing and take up far too much room and stand in the middle of the display rather than moving to the side so we can both view it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer21: Slightly irritated but I just wait</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant anything else?</b></p> <p>Customer21: I don't think so</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Thank you</b></p>	<p>Customer reaction: increased shopping time</p> <p>Employee would struggle to intervene and manage the situation</p> <p>Customer feelings</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant so you have a rough idea of what the research is about so can you please tell me the last time you have interacted with another customer please?</b></p>	

<p>Customer22: Yes certainly I'll start on a positive note and I had a conversation with someone today about a DVD that I bought and have watched I saw somebody else pick it up and I told them not to waste their time that it was rubbish ((laughing))</p>	<p>General conversation: Product recommendation and feedback to another customer</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did they react?</b></p>	<p>Thought the other customer liked the feedback</p>
<p>Customer22: They sort of smiled at me (.) I wish somebody had told me that before I bought it so I thought I was doing them a favour and saving them about ten pounds and 2 hours of their life they won't get back ((laughing))</p>	<p>Thought the other customer liked the feedback</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you actively seek out other customers to chat to and interact with?</b></p>	<p>Likes to help other customers</p>
<p>Customer22: I'm not sure (.) I don't think so I don't come in thinking right who can I talk to but if I see someone buying something I've bought before or something like that I try and give some advice as I think other people would want to know just like I know I would want others to let me know (.) I'm not sure I would listen but at least they're trying to be helpful</p>	<p>Likes to help other customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok interesting (.) when you stopped and gave advice to the customer about the DVD do you think that should be you giving it or should an employee step in and give it?</b></p>	<p>Think they provide better information than the employees do</p> <p>Poor advice from employees in the past</p>
<p>Customer22: Oh there was not any employees around and plus they wouldn't give out useful info like that they hardly know about products let alone give good feedback about a film (.) I asked an employee once who worked on the entertainment section about a film and he replied saying "I don't know I don't really like films" oh that is just brilliant someone who doesn't like films working on films that makes sense (...) that's like a teacher not liking children ((laughing))</p>	<p>Think they provide better information than the employees do</p> <p>Poor advice from employees in the past</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yeah that is a bad example being set (.) do you think that is why you stepped in and helped because that person was not going to get any advice from the employees?</b></p>	<p>Doesn't mind helping</p>
<p>Customer22: Yes potentially I suppose plus I don't mind helping</p>	<p>Doesn't mind helping</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Do you think the other person wanted the advice?</b></p>	<p></p>

<p>Customer22: Well they didn't tell me to go away or anything they seemed to smile and say thank you (.) they could have ignored me and put it in their basket for all I know but they seemed interested in what I had to say</p>	<p>Thinks employee enjoyed the advice</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant (.) any other interactions?</b></p>	
<p>Customer22: Yes it was outside of the store though if that counts still?</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Tell me the details and I'll let you know</b></p>	<p>Location: Outside of the store</p>
<p>Customer22: Well I went to pull my car into a car parking space and it was quite busy so had to chose this space and there was somebody packing stuff into their car (.) they then got in and left their trolley in the space that I went to park in</p>	<p>Left equipment unattended: broken rules</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p>	
<p>Customer22: I beeped my horn and he stepped out and apologised and moved the trolley (.) basically he was trying to get away with it and would have left it there if it wasn't for him being caught out by me and that I needed the space (...) it is lucky otherwise I would have just drove past if I didn't see him plus it was windy and could have easily blown the trolley into someone else's car</p>	<p>Told the customer to move it and they did</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should an employee have stepped in?</b></p>	<p>Think if they didn't do it the other customer would have left it – needed to tell the other customer</p>
<p>Customer22: Of course (.) it is literally the only job they have isn't it? Yet here I am doing their job for them it is ridiculous I know it is not the most skilled job but even still they should be able to spot that and stop it from happening</p>	<p>Employee should have stepped in</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What should they have done?</b></p>	
<p>Customer22: What I did (.) minus the horn ((laughing)) shout at them and tell them to stop being lazy and put the trolley back</p>	<p>Employee should have intervened</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: How did the interaction make you feel</b></p> <p>Customer22: Angry definitely (.) people are so lazy</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Any other interactions you can think of?</b></p> <p>Customer22: Not particularly I don't think (.) I don't like people swearing too much that annoys me (.) but that is general not just in ((company name))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Does it happen often when you visit here?</b></p> <p>Customer22: Well outside there are always a few youngsters hanging around sometimes smoking but their language is vile and if I'm with family members and friends it is quite unpleasant</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What do they do?</b></p> <p>Customer22: Nothing (.) they have nothing better to do so they play music and sometimes smoke and skateboard just outside the store so they're very loud and annoying</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Are they on ((company property))?</b></p> <p>Customer22: No like on the corner maybe on the road</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant anything else</b></p> <p>Customer22: No I don't think so</p>	<p>Angry at the incident</p> <p>Bad language causes negative incident</p> <p>Location of the incident: outside the store. Demographic identified – young teenagers</p> <p>Loitering around</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant I'll probably start with a question such as (...) do actively seek out interaction with other customers?</b></p>	

<p>Customer23: Um do I actively go out to try and interact with customers? Absolutely not no (.) that is not to say I don't interact with others but they always instigate it I know that (.) If I do it is because people talk to me or irritate me ((laughing)) I like to think I'm an angel a perfect shopper ((laughing))</p>	<p>Does not actively seek interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What irritates you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: (...) Oh one thing me and my family always laugh at is seeing all the people scarp it out and fight for that small discount section in the fresh meat section you know what I mean?</p>	<p>Crowding around discount section</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Think so can you give me more detail?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Yeah sure so they reduce the produce at some point during the day but it is usually rubbish that people don't want and people seem to just heard and crowd around the area and act like animals like I've seen people push by people to try and grab products and like be very impatient and I'm like Christ are you that desperate for a bargain?</p>	<p>People pushing and becoming impatient</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Does a member of staff need to intervene?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Oh certainly but half the time they're being mobbed as well when they're putting labels on the stuff they need to be a bit stronger and make people act much more orderly and wait patiently but they never do they're part of the mess</p>	<p>Staff should intervene but are unable Staff contribute to the issue</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How does it make you feel when you see this going on?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Embarrassed for the human race ((laughing)) I mean is money that tight guys? Half of the time the offer really isn't that great and it is going out of date anyway and it has like 2p off</p>	<p>Embarrassed during the interaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should a member of staff step in?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Maybe a separate one telling people to act orderly because it does irritate me but also provides entertainment for sure</p>	<p>Staff should intervene</p>

<p><b>Interviewer: Anything else other customers do to influence your shopping experience?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Yes I always seem to get people talking to me and commenting on my shopping and almost giving out tips (.) lucky me ((laughing))</p>	<p>Customers commenting on products but customer does not want it</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What do you mean?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Like the other week I was buying avocados and some guy gave me a tip to help get them out of the skin using a spoon and then told me to put lemon on them to stop them from going brown (...) I just sarcastically said “cheers mate (...)” like I didn’t even ask for his advice and I wouldn’t dare do that to other people I just feel like there are more know it all’s now than there ever has been</p>	<p>Unwanted product advice</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should a staff member intervene</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: No I don’t think so but if I needed advice on a product I would ask a staff member they know what they’re on about not a random guy giving out advice when I haven’t even asked for it I think it is rude (.) I haven’t ever done it and don’t think I would ever dream of doing it</p>	<p>Staff find it hard to intervene</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Where did this occur?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: <b>The fresh produce aisle</b> where the avocados are (.) I could have literally been a chef then he wouldn’t have looked so smug would he have (.) I just think there are so many people these days dishing out advice without asking</p>	<p>Location of the incident</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yeah I know exactly what you mean (.) does this sort of thing happen often?</b></p>	
<p>Customer23: Yeah I always see people trying to talk to me just asking for products or giving me unwanted advice but I try and keep my head down and ignore it if I’m honest ((laughing)) no I wouldn’t say ignore them I will normally speak if spoken to but as I said earlier I certainly don’t go out of my way to talk to people if I can help it</p>	<p>Unwanted product advice</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant anything else you can think of?</b></p>	

<p>Customer23: I don't think so if I'm honest like I said I observe a few times people get on my nerves but I certainly don't think they bring anything to me in terms of nice things (.) and to answer your original question I don't expect the employee to do anything either if I'm being honest you cant control people that easily so I just get on with it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok that's good any others</b></p> <p>Customer23: Actually I had one that wasn't a conversation but it really wound me up I think when I went to move past someone or may have just gentle brushed by them because their bum was sticking out so much that I just said excuse me and moved them and they turned around and glared at me so much (.) I felt like saying what are you looking at? Again of course they were old and miserable they say that youth of today are bad it is definitely the old people they're definitely the worst it is so annoying</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did it make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer23: Well to start with you automatically think is it my fault? But then you realise they're just being rude you're like what is wrong with some people makes my blood boil and I could not drop it and it annoyed me for days after it still annoys me now when I think about it</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Should a member of staff have stepped in? Where was this?</b></p> <p>Customer23: I can't remember where it was just one of the aisles it might have been by the beauty products perhaps (.) I would have liked a member of staff to have seen the dirty look but they couldn't have done anything after that (.) but they could have been the ones asking the customer to move in and they probably wouldn't have gotten the horrible look that I had</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant thank you</b></p>	<p>Employees cant do anything - lack of authority and control</p> <p>Asked a customer to move and they glared</p> <p>Customer blocking the aisles</p> <p>Irritated for a long time after the incident occurred</p> <p>Staff should intervene but cant do much</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant can you tell me the last time you interacted with another customer?</b></p> <p>Customer24: Yes probably be this morning I think if you can class it as an interaction</p>	

<p><b>Interviewer: What happened?</b></p> <p>Customer24: Well at the tobacco desk I just bought myself some roll ups and a new lighter and some cheeky man (.) obviously a man telling me I'm wrong told me that it was a horrible habit and that I needed to quit (...) lecturing me like he was my dad I just thought it was rude</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What did you do?</b></p> <p>Customer24: I just laughed it off and said oh I know or something like that</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer24: Embarrassed I know it isn't the best habit but there is no need to humiliate me in front of people the way that he did</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Should a member of staff have stepped in?</b></p> <p>Customer24: They did it was great (.) the man behind had a bottle of wine and they said to him "alcohol kills more people than smoking you should think about quitting" ((laughing)) was great and he didn't argue back with the member of staff (.) I don't even know if what she was true but it was said with so much conviction (.) she then said to me that she was a smoker and hears rubbish like that all the time from people and her family so she is used to defending herself from people like him</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Did he reply or say anything?</b></p> <p>Customer24: Not a word (...) but if I said anything like that I can guarantee he would have said something like that</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That is a great example (.) would you say you actively look out for interaction and try speak to people?</b></p>	<p>Location incident Product recommendation/comment</p> <p>Did not like the comment from the other customer</p> <p>Member of staff intervened and made the customer very happy</p> <p>Defended the customer from the other customer</p> <p>Made the other customer stop the interaction</p>
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<p>Customer24: No you must be mad (.) only maybe other mothers who have little ones running loose like me then I might smile and make a comment but the vast majority of time I keep my head down and not say too much really but certainly don't come in looking for conversation like some do</p>	<p>Avoid confrontation Speak to people with similar scenarios : demographic, children</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What you mean?</b></p>	<p>Demographic factor: age they like to stand and chat more because they have more time</p>
<p>Customer24: Like some people like (.) sorry to sound bad but people who may have more time (.) like the retired generation may have extra time to chat and try make eye contact to talk to you or talk to my child I just don't want to stand and chat to strangers or really have the time</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok that makes sense do you interact with anyone?</b></p>	
<p>Customer24: Not really no</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time that other customers influenced your experience? Either made it better or someone annoyed you?</b></p>	
<p>Customer24: My biggest thing that annoys me is when people are slow if that counts as one?</p>	<p>Negative interaction slow customers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yes definitely where does this normally happen?</b></p>	
<p>Customer24: Oh normally it is like in busy places around the bakery if people are waiting for their bread to be sliced and stuff and I just want normal stuff that is near the bakery I have to move past loads of people just to get to my bread or cake or whatever it is I am trying to buy</p>	<p>Location incident: baker Busy and plenty of people so slow</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Yes can you remember any specific examples?</b></p>	
<p>Customer24: Not really like nothing really bad ever happened it is just more the fact that I have to wait for someone or they get in the way it happens every time I come shopping guaranteed but nothing too bad</p>	<p>Wait for people to move out of the way</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should a staff member intervene?</b></p>	

Customer24: Nah they can't do anything it is just one of life's things really isn't it you have to put up with it I'm sure I actually get in some peoples way I just try not to

**Interviewer: Anything else?**

Customer24: Ummm again I'm not sure if this counts but people who pay for items using cash but like counting out all their pennies and using so much small change it takes ages (.) I had someone do it the other day for a big shop and was counting out about £5 worth in 20p which took ages (...) and then he dropped them on the floor at the end ((laughing)) which was not funny because he then started counting them all out again (.) I turned around trying not to laugh and the person behind me had a face like thunder because he was so slow

**Interviewer: Oh that is an interesting one did the woman say anything?**

Customer24: No she did not need to she just sort of sighed loudly enough the cashier even heard but was very good she "no rush my dear don't worry" to the person at the front because he obviously heard too and was looking panicked so the cashier did well to calm him (.) but kind of made the situation worse for the woman behind me as he slowed down again and started chatting ((laughing)) it was a weird old situation

**Interviewer: Ah that is brilliant how did it make you feel?**

Customer24: Interesting actually I was in the middle it was my entertainment ((laughing)) but no it was annoying waiting for him to pay with all his coins I wish he hurried up I think credit card payments only at tills for big orders (.) I mean like seriously who has that much cash on them anyway?

**Interviewer: That is true (.) for someone who didn't think they had any good examples you've done brilliantly is that all you think?**

Customer24: I think so

Staff should not intervene because they cant

Taking too long to pay for something – too much change

Third party – person behind got irritated with the person in front

Sighed to get the attention to make the customer move quicker

Cashier dealt with the situation very well using verbal control

Annoying that the customer was slow

<p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant thank you oh so much</b></p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant (.) first question is do you actively seek out other customers to interact with or keep yourself to yourself?</b></p> <p>Customer25: Well I certainly don't mind telling people what I think (.) I'm certainly at that age ((laughing)) I'll try and speak to people that's for sure yeah I would say so</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant can you tell me about a time you last spoke to a customer? Or interacted with one</b></p> <p>Customer25: Well I'm not sure if It was the last time but there is one occasion that I always tell people about where I opened a door for a lady and she walked through and said "I don't need a man to open the door for me" and I calmly said "oh sorry I thought I was opening it for a lady my mistake" and there was an older lady who said to me "good on you sir" and smiled as the other lady just ran through all in a huff and a puff ((laughing)) try and do something nice for someone and you get a treatment like that</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How did it make you feel?</b></p> <p>Customer25: Annoyed to brilliant in the space of two minutes</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What you mean?</b></p> <p>Customer25: So annoyed that someone was rude to me after doing something nice for someone and then happy that I thought of something so quickly and that the other lady also found it funny and thought that the other lady was rude (...) there is nothing worse than having someone say something to you and you thinking an hour later ahh I should have said that so I am pleased that I managed to think of it on my feet</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Where did it happen?</b></p>	<p>Happy to share opinion – indicates a vocal customer</p> <p>Rude lady with unpleasant comment after nice incident</p> <p>Traded insults A third party stuck up for the gentlemen</p> <p>Irritated after the interaction</p> <p>Annoyed that when trying to be nice someone was rude</p>

<p>Customer25: At the front of the store I think (.) no the toilets the front of the store doesn't have doors they're automatic it must have been the toilets</p>	<p>Location of the incident</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should an employee have stepped in?</b></p>	
<p>Customer25: Oh nah don't be so silly they couldn't have done anything there were not anywhere near us the staff don't tend to hang out around the toilets</p>	<p>No need for employee to step in as they couldn't do anything</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant anything else?</b></p>	
<p>Customer25: Yes I think literally the other day we were waiting in the queue and something was wrong with the till and a man in front of my wife and I was sort of shouting and moaning to us that things were going slow and I just said "it isn't the cashiers fault mate there is not a thing they can do they've asked for help and we're just waiting for the manager" and he was saying that they should do something about it "I said what? Things break no need to lose your rag" and he just stood there</p>	<p>Occurred at the till – customer being rude towards an employee</p> <p>Customer stuck up for the employee</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: What could the staff have done?</b></p>	
<p>Customer25: Well a better question is what he could have done? He could put his stuff down and walk out that is an option? He is free to choose</p>	<p>Placed the emphasis on the customer not the employee</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Very true (.) would it have helped if a staff member maybe explained to calm him down?</b></p>	
<p>Customer25: No actually I don't I think it was obvious what was happening and that the cashier sort of shouted up the line that the till was playing up (.) if the cashier spoke to the man directly I think it could have caused an argument because it felt like the guy was waiting for someone to say something to pick a fight almost like he was in a mood</p>	<p>Staff could not intervene because it is not obvious what was occurring</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: So the main point there is that the customer irritated you slightly by being aggressive towards the staff member?</b></p>	<p>Customer looked like they wanted to 'pick a fight'</p>

<p>Customer25: Yes (.) The other customer annoyed me because he was blaming an employee for something that was not their fault Christ they just scan the food through they're not some computer specialists leave them alone</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Yeah I understand that (.) any positive incidents you can think of?</b></p> <p>Customer25: Ummm well I speak to most of the other customers when I'm waiting for my prescription that always takes a while so I always say hello to people I recognise this area is not that big so there are always a few people that you'll notice and stuff so I say hello them have a chat about the world and ask each other if we're ok (...) we love a chat about the weather and the usual rubbish small talk</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Enjoy these chats?</b></p> <p>Customer25: Passes the time I would say quite pleasant</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Brilliant anything else you would like to add?</b></p> <p>Customer25: I don't think so no</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Thank you very much</b></p>	<p>Customer annoyed that other customers are aggressive towards staff</p> <p>General pleasantries to people they recognise</p> <p>Result of the C2C being pleasant</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you tell me the last time you interacted with another customer?</b></p> <p>Customer26: I don't think I can like I said I don't talk to anyone</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Has anything happened that irritated you?</b></p> <p>Customer26: I don't think so not much tends to</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What is your biggest annoyance when shopping or do you see anything you think I wish they stopped doing that?</b></p>	

Customer26: Well I suppose when I'm meeting people for coffee and a catch up one of the girls made a good point that I notice now

**Interviewer: What is that then?**

Customer26: I'm not sure if it is the stores fault but one thing that happened the other week is me and my mate ordered tea and coffee and was carrying it on our tray and there was no spaces left (.) like all the tables and stuff had been taken and there were some people sat there without anything (...) what they did is one person went and grabbed the table whilst the other person queued which I think is unfair because we already had our stuff and we had nowhere to go!

**Interviewer: What happened?**

Customer26: We told a member of staff and they asked a customer if they minded if we sat with them until a table became free (.) which is not exactly a nice relaxing catch up is it?

**Interviewer: Oh that is interesting so you think people should only sit when they have their stuff?**

Customer26: When it is busy yeah because it isn't fair that people are sat down with nothing when we have our trays full of coffee and we have to just stand there

**Interviewer: That is a very good example (.) were you happy with the employee response?**

Customer26: I suppose but it wasn't a good thing though like they didn't do much just asked a couple if we could join them and I wasn't impressed because the person they asked was one of those who was just sat there whilst their husband was in the queue and I said to the employee what the problem was that people are sat there with nothing and taking up room (.) and the employee then sat me with one of those people so it was a little awkward

**Interviewer: Do you think the other customer heard?**

Customer26: No thankfully

Selfish customer breaking non-official rules  
Sitting at a table when they didn't have food and 'hording' the equipment/space

Unfair that people get to sit when they cant

<p><b>Interviewer: That is a good one (.) what could they do?</b></p> <p>Customer26: Maybe have a sign up saying during busy times please purchase first and then get a table after or maybe restrict people to half an hour a time at the table so others can use them</p> <p><b>Interviewer: That is good (.) anything else about customers you notice that annoys you or you like?</b></p> <p>Customer26: (...) well on a separate occasion I have been in the café and seen an elderly gentlemen asleep with his head titled back snoring and I loved seeing it I thought I could do with that ((laughing)) nice to see someone taking ten minutes and a relaxing afternoon without a care in the world (.) he was snoring quite loudly but people were smiling at him they noticed him too</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Should an employee have done anything?</b></p> <p>Customer26: Oh no don't wake him!! ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Anything else?</b></p> <p>Customer26: No I really don't think so I told you I was useless</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Not useless it was very good thank you</b></p>	<p>Response should be signage rather than from the employees</p> <p>Saw a gentlemen relaxing</p> <p>No need to intervene</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok so firstly can you tell me about a time you interacted with another customer please?</b></p> <p>Customer27: Well I think I will probably have something that you wont have before (...) but I made friends with a group of people here ((laughing))</p> <p><b>Interviewer: Oh friendships here are actually quite common ((laughing)) what happened? Can you explain in as much detail please?</b></p>	<p>Pleasant conversation (one off interaction)</p>

<p>Customer27: Well me and my friend were in the alcohol aisle a few Saturdays ago and we were deciding what to get and this group of 3 lads were looking too and they just started chatting to us by asking what we were getting to start with (...) then asked where we were going out and stuff and we we're both going out into ((geographical location)) and got talking and then they asked for our Instagram accounts and stuff and we actually saw them again on the night out and had a drink and a laugh with them ((laughing))</p>	<p>Started chatting based on situational analysis (same age, buying same products) product recommendation Arranged a night out</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Wow that is brilliant how did you say you felt when the interaction was occurring?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: Yeah was good to chat to people going on a night out like we were as well I'm always up for making new friends and I was single at the time ((laughing))</p>	<p>Enjoyable to talk to people and become friends</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Should a member of staff have stepped in?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: What for? They didn't do anything wrong and neither did we</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: No fair point (.) where did this interaction occur?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: In the alcohol section (.) we opted for gin I think ((laughing))</p>	<p>No need for staff to intervene when the customer didn't do anything wrong</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Ok brilliant is there anything else you can think of?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: That isn't the first time something like that has happened (.) I've had someone chat to me in here before (...) ((laughing)) makes it sound like it happens all the time but I promise these two are the only two occasions (.) it must be something to do with supermarkets I really don't dress up ((laughing))</p>	<p>Location of incident</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Can you explain what happened?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: I was at the currency bureau and the staff member was nowhere to be seen and the person in front of me apologised (.) even though it was not his fault and said "I've been stood here for ten</p>	<p>Incidents similar have occurred before People talking to the customer</p>
<p>Customer27: I was at the currency bureau and the staff member was nowhere to be seen and the person in front of me apologised (.) even though it was not his fault and said "I've been stood here for ten</p>	
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<p>Customer27: I was at the currency bureau and the staff member was nowhere to be seen and the person in front of me apologised (.) even though it was not his fault and said "I've been stood here for ten</p>	<p>Another customer passing on useful information</p>

<p>minutes they've put a tannoy out over the speaker system and the staff member should be with us by now but they said 5 minutes like 10 minutes ago so I don't know what is going on" and then I said it was not his fault and we got talking and told each other where we were going on holiday and stuff (.) like not in a romantic way he was about 40 but he was nice ((laughing))</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Then what happened?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: The employee came in the end and apologised and said she was on her lunch or something which is not the best response we could have expected ((laughing))</p>	<p>Employee explained the situation further</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: How did the interaction with another customer make you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: It was not too bad it was good that he let me know what was going on otherwise I would have gone to the customer service desk but he told me he had already done that so it saved me a job</p>	<p>Useful interaction that passed information on – positive reaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Is there anything that customers do that you don't like?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: I don't think so (...)</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer: Any shouting or blocking the aisles or anything?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: No I don't shop with trolleys or anything and I make sure I don't come when it is really busy like Saturdays or rush hour time or anything like that I don't like crowds like boxing day sales and stuff (.) I remember coming here with my mom at Christmas to do the Christmas shop the day before Christmas eve and it was horrible there was queues all up to the middle of the shop and people pushing and forgetting all of their manners</p>	<p>Too busy at a particular time meaning crowds Incident location indicated general business</p>
<p><b>Interviewer: Could the staff have managed the situation any better?</b></p>	
<p>Customer27: There were no staff on queue management and there should have been because people were getting really agitated and it should have been a nice pleasant experience filled with families ready for Christmas but unfortunately it was not</p>	<p>No staff intervention but there should have been. Lack of staff.</p>

**Interviewer: What could they have done?**

Customer27: Just having someone there would have been good just to calm everyone down and give a presence that staff are there and in control (.) because nobody seemed in control and was not great

**Interviewer: Ahh how did you feel?**

Customer27: Like I was having a panic attack I told my mom next year count me out this is my idea of hell ((laughing))

**Interviewer: Ah brilliant did anyone do anything that stood out in particular?**

Customer27: Not really but people had no respect for other people and was touching pushing passed reaching for products moving trolleys that sort of thing (.) just stuff that would not normally happen but because everyone seemed to be doing it even I was pushing past people just trying to survive ((laughing))

**Interviewer: Brilliant anything else?**

Customer27: No I don't think so hope it was helpful somehow I had more than I thought I would

**Interviewer: Thank you**

Staff presence would have helped

Result of the negative C2C

Physical contact and crowding  
Perhaps time of year could be seen as C2C intensifier