CUSTOMER-TO-CUSTOMER INTERACTION (CCI): AN EMPLOYEE-BASED PERSPECTIVE

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CUSTOMER-TO-CUSTOMER INTERACTION (CCI)

- CCI / C2C is used in a range of ways:
  - WOM; on-site direct (& indirect); e-CCI

- This presentation's focus:
  - Direct interactions occurring between customers in physical service settings

- CCI has become mainstream within services marketing research

SELECTED EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON CCI

Study	Method	Perspective
Harris, Baron & Ratcliffe (1995)	Asked customers, as they left a large retail store, to recall any spoken interaction with other customers	Consumer
McGrath and Otnes (1995)	Observation of customers in retail stores by the researchers	Consumer
Grove and Fisk (1997)	Asked tourists to recall recent memorable occasions involving other tourists in theme parks	Consumer
Harris & Baron (2004)	Participant observation of other passenger behaviours and conversations during rail travel.	Consumer
Thakor, Suri & Saleh (2008)	Used image-supported scenarios of consumption situations (health club, restaurant & seminar) to gain undergraduate students attitudes towards consuming with other consumers of different ages	Consumer-like

CCI FROM AN EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

▶ <u>Minimal research</u>

❖ Studies have discussed the potential for FLEs managing CCI (especially service recovery)

▶ Pranter & Martin (1991); Martin (1995); Grove & Fisk (1997); Levy (2010)

❖ A few studies have included consumer views on FLE response to CCI

❖ <u>BUT</u> employee views of CCI have rarely been sought (Nicholls 2010)

▶ <u>Employee views may have advantages:</u>

❖ *A more overall and balanced view of the CCI taking place*

❖ *Insights on how to deal with CCI situations*

STUDY CONTEXT: THE HIVE – WORCESTER, UK

- A public-university library (the first in Europe)

- 10,000 m² of space over five open-plan floors

- User diversity & strong desire to be socially inclusive

- CCI rich

Negative	Positive
• Noise (type & level) • Inappropriate language • Inappropriate content on • Other inappropriate behaviours (e.g. PDA; smell of food …)	• SST assistance from others • General helpfulness • Shared interests & networking at events

LIBRARIES ARE CCI-RICH ENVIRONMENTS

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE ON CCI AT THE HIVE

▸ Objectives:

❖ To explore the extent to which FLEs are aware of the CCI taking place around them;

❖ To acquire insights into how FLEs make sense of the CCI they encounter

❖ To develop understanding of how FLEs approach and experience dealing with CCI encounters

❖ To gain implications for management based on FLE insights

▸ Method:

❖ *focus groups*

❖ *in-depth interviews with FLEs*

❖ *Thematic analysis conducted*

EMERGING THEMES

▸ Employee capacity to recall CCI

▸ Employees ability to discuss CCI in detail

▸ Employees aware of variation in levels of seriousness of CCI
  ▸ wide spectrum of interventions

▸ Varied FLE comfort in CCI intervention

▸ HRD potential around CCI handling skills
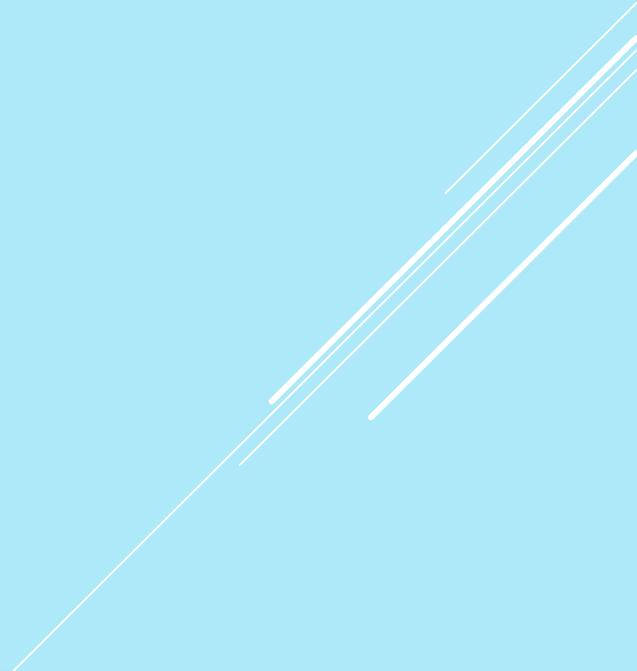
THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

- Highlights the usefulness of gaining an employee perspective on CCI

- Employees can reveal 'hidden' CCI behaviours

- Distinguishes between two types of CCI situations:
  - gradual & immediate

- HRD implications

- Examines a *complex, non-traditional and inclusive service* (thus widening the body of CCI research)

SELECTED MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

▶ Need to consider strategies to:

  ▶ systematically capture FLE 'service wisdom' on CCI

  ▶ emphasise CCI aspects of the customer experience during staff training

  ▶ encourage Hive users to report CCI situations

  ▶ intensify communication of the culture of each Level

TAKING THE RESEARCH FORWARD..

- Further research could include:

  - Comparison of *employee-generated and customer-generated CCI*

  - Exploration of *FLE stress*

  - Identification of *the skill level*

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