Customer Burnout and Customer Incivility in Service Settings: examining the potential dark side of customer participation in service delivery process

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Abstract:

The aim of our study is to examine the antecedents and outcomes of burnout from the consumer instead of employees view point. This study will try to fill the gaps by taking count of consumer emotional, physical, economical and spiritual exhaustion during shopping activities, which leads to incivilities. Research on burnout was focus on employees as victims of work place pressure, work aggression which has negative influence on organization over all. This concept is fruitful to explain dysfunctional employees' reactions from environmental situations. A qualitative study offers an understanding of customer emotional exhaustion during their shopping activities. As result, consumer burnout may be linked to attitudes and behaviors.

Keywords: Burnout, Consumer burnout, Shopping experience

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The workplace today is a cold, hostile, demanding environment, both economically and psychologically. People are emotionally, physically and spiritually exhausted (Maslach and Leiter 1997)

Introduction

Retailers and service companies (banks, utilities, railways, airlines, etc.) note a constant increase in customers’ “misbehavior” (Fullerton and Punj 1993; 1997; 2004) and in “dysfunctional” and “inappropriate” behaviors (Yi and Gong, 2008; Fisk et al. 2010). Customer misbehavior does not solely refer to extreme (criminal) or illegal behaviors. Companies are also confronted with customer incivility, i.e. “low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of norms for mutual respect” (Andersson and Pearson, 1999, p. 457).

Prior research has examined how both employee incivility and customer incivility lead to critical service incidents and to employee emotional exhaustion. On the one hand employee incivility negatively affects co-workers performance and customer judgement about the company and the service. For instance, Porath, MacInnis and Folkes (2010) demonstrate that – apart from incivility directed toward the customer - “witnessing an incident of employee-employee incivility causes consumers to make negative generalizations about (a) others who work for the firm, (b) the firm as a whole, and(c) future encounters with the firm, inferences that go well beyond the incivility incident”. On the other hand, customer incivility can lead to employee burnout, especially its emotional exhaustion dimension, and can alter service quality (Ben-Zur and Yagil, 2005; Sliter et al, 2010, Sliter and al, 2011; Chan and Wan, 2012). For instance, Sliter, Sliter and Jex (2012) have examined the unique and combined effects of two sources of incivility (customer and co-worker) on objective sales performance and withdrawal behaviors (absenteeism and tardiness) in the banking industry.

Whereas prior research often examines how to cope with employee or customer incivility, we still miss a deep understanding of why customers behave in an uncivil manner. Many authors suggest that increased customer incivility has two societal causes: 1) the concept of customer service (“the customer is always right”) creates a power differential favouring the customer; and 2) in our individualistic cultures, people often show little consideration for others in most social situations (Sliter et al, 2010). Others consider that customer incivility just results from a service failure (delay, errors, etc.). Gregoire and Fisher (2006) explain that customers see a service failure as an act of betrayal and engage more intensely in retaliation. Then understanding how relationship affects the customers’ responses to service failures is important because service failures have the potential to transform valuable customers into “enemies,” a result that could have serious consequences for a firm’s reputation and long-term profitability.
The researchers defined customer retaliation as a customer’s efforts to punish and make a service firm pay for the damages it has caused. They argue that customers with a strong relationship are more likely to forgive a service failure. Whereas customers who possess a strong relationship tend to retaliate more vigorously than those with a weak relationship.

Then understanding how relationship quality affects customer incivility is very important.

We hereafter propose an additional explanation. Customer incivility might be sometimes a syndrome of customer burnout, which is “a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding” (Pines & Aronson, 1988, p. 9).

Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999) suggest that emotions have implications for action and goal attainment. For them categories of events or physical circumstances are frequently associated with particular emotional responses it is depend on the person evaluating and interpreting the events and circumstances.

Different people can have different emotional reactions (or no emotional reactions at all) to the same event or happening. In our research, we need to identify what kind of coping responses customer adopt when they experience a negative emotion (e.g., anger, sadness, exhaustion).

In service settings, customers tend to become partial employees, i.e. “temporary participants in the service delivery process of the service organization” (Kelley, Donnelly and Skinner, 1990, p 316). They are required to succeed in their buying task and to become co-producer within the service organization (self-service, turn back to reshelving products, being nice with service workers, promotes the company’s products, etc.). They have been sometimes given an extra-role to perform and time pressure is increasing on them. Consumer burnout may then occur when the customer feels exhausted because of service coproduction demands, of a stressful environment and of dissatisfaction with their provider. For instance, customers who take the train everyday can become exhausted because they co-produce the service and they are regularly involved in situations that are emotionally demanding (time pressure, social factor, role ambiguity, role conflict, etc.). These customers can then become aggressive and uncivil as soon as a critical incident occurs (strike, delay, etc.). They start shouting, insulting or even violating contact persons or other customers. And their personality is probably not the main determinant of their uncivil behavior. Why do customers demonstrate uncivil behaviors? Gregoire & Fisher (2008) questioned what leads loyal customers to try to punish a firm even if there is no material gain for doing so? They find out that betrayal is a key motivational force that leads customers to restore fairness by all means possible including retaliation. Are they also exposed to burnout symptoms?

While an extensive literature address the issue of coworkers, salespersons or supervisors’ burnout and its links with incivility, we still miss a conceptual framework and empirical studies which address the issue of customer burnout in service settings and examine its potential effects on customer incivility. We will hereafter try to understand why and how an emotional exhaustion can occur and lead customers to incivility. What kind of stressors can induce customer burnout? How could interactions with contact person induce consumer burnout? Is there any environmental context that causes emotional exhaustion?
Furthermore, we need to investigate why customers retaliate, according to the potentially harmful and varied actions they take against firms.

In order to answer these questions, we will hereafter 1) review the literature on customer misbehavior and incivility, and retaliation, customer revenge behaviors, 2) apply and adapt the existing conceptual framework on employee burnout to customer burnout, and 3) conduct a first qualitative study among managers and customers in a retailing context. We will strive to explain how consumer incivility can occur in retail settings. Finally, we will highlight a series of managerial solutions to reduce harmful effects of consumer’s incivility. We will discuss how management can cope with these “low-intensity deviant behaviors”.

1/ Customer incivility: the customer is not always right!

Fisk et al. (2010) provide an overview of existing research into customers behaving badly and note a wide and confusing range of terms and phrases to explore this phenomenon. The most commonly accepted definition refers to customer behavior in exchange setting which violates the generally accepted norms of conduct in such situations and have a negative impact on organizations. Fisk et al. (2010) highlight dysfunctional customer behaviors which can be intentional or non-intentional, economically or non-economically motivated. They also underline the serious challenge within this topic which considers the clandestine side of consumer activities. These behaviors (shoplifting, fraud, wardrobing, use and return clothing, cheating on service guarantee…) are deemed undesirable and questioning respondents may cause offence, embarrassment or stress.

Customer incivility does not refer to extreme (criminal) or illegal behaviors. It refers to “behaviors that violate interpersonal norms with ambiguous intentions, such as rudeness or ignoring someone (Grandey, Dickter, and Sin, 2004) and to “insensitive, disrespectful or rude behavior directed at another person that displays a lack of regard for that person” (Cortina et al. 2001). Grandey, Dickter, and Sin (2004) fill in gaps in existing literature by extending the recognition that antisocial behaviors may come from the very people the organization is trying to help, namely, the customers. They also use the term interpersonal conflict to describe negative treatment that may be verbal or behavioral. They provide two explanations: First, they argue that customer aggression is likely to be a common hassle of work life for boundary-spanners who are the intermediaries between the company and the public. Furthermore, the slogan “the customer is always right” communicates the unequal power in the customer-employee transaction, which is also a key aspect of being a target of aggression. Second, service employees are always obliged to ensure organizational control over emotional expression, with “service with a smile” as the goal even if customers do verbally attack employees, they have to regulate their response. Thus, customer verbal aggression becomes particularly stressful for the employee and problematic for the organization.

Burnfield et al (2004) have developed a measurement scale of customer incivility with items on customer condescension (i.e., customers putting down the efficacy of an employee), displaced customer frustration (i.e., customers taking out their own frustrations on employees) and insulting remarks (i.e. overt and intentional hostility).
For Sliter and colleagues (2010, 2011 and 2012), incivility refers to interpersonal conflicts and is then directed toward a person (Sliter et al., 2010).

In reverse, research also underlines the importance of customer citizenship behaviors directed to service personnel. Garma and Bove (2011) identify six customer citizenship behaviors that are perceived as helpful and not expected for successful service delivery: assumed employee behaviour, advocacy, consultancy, sportsmanship, social support and courtesy. According to Organ (1988), citizenship behaviour is a type of discretionary behaviour beneficial to an organization but falling outside of the individual’s formal role requirements. To prosper, service companies need customers behaving as good citizens by engaging in all sorts of positive behaviors. Partial employees have to behave as good citizens and to avoid violation of norms of conduct.

Research on customer incivility often deals with verbal aggression directed specifically toward an employee or toward another client. However, customer incivility may also be directed toward the service organization and its employees as a whole without any specific target. In retail for instance, a customer who does not purchase but does not reshelving products in store can be seen as an incivility. It is a low-intensity deviant behaviour, perpetrated by someone in a customer or client role, with ambiguous intent to harm an employee or an organization, but in violation of social norms of mutual respect and courtesy. From the consumer point of view however, the act of “not re-selhing products” is not seen as an inappropriate behavior (Djelassi and Perron, 2009). When a customer decides to not re-shelving products, (s)he should calculate a trade-off between the benefits and costs of returning back to the right shelf. Wasting time and personal contact task are the results of this questioning. This situation points out the need to understand how do customers plan and feel during their shopping time?

Gregoire & Fisher (2006; 2008) examine the concept of betrayal to explain the psychological mechanism that underlies the “love becomes hate” effect. This concept means that customers can take extreme actions to hurt the firm, such as insulting frontline employees and thereby become its worst enemies. Authors underline many acts of betrayal from customers viewpoint, they believe that firms have lied to them, taken advantage of them, tried to exploit them, violated their trust, cheated, broke promises, or disclosed confidential information. How do customers answer to firm co-production demands? Asking customers to reshelving product can be seen as exploiting them. They spend money on buying products and the firm wants them to waste their time by reshelving. This is seemed like breaking fairness norm process.

Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux (2009) discover that time does not fully “heal” the problem related to online public complaining. Although customers’ desire for revenge decreases with time, they hold a grudge through their growing desire for avoidance. For Gregoire and Colleagues, relationship quality affects the evolution of revenge and avoidance desires.

2/ Customer burnout and the dark side of customer participation

The most proposed antecedent of customer misbehavior is service failure. When service encounter failed, customers tend to express their feelings by physical, verbal, non verbal and displaced expression even revenge, anger, exit, and negative word of mouth towards the organization (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). Daunt and Harris
(2010) also underline the respective roles of five personality-based variables (consumer alienation, Machiavellianism, sensation seeking, aggressiveness, and self-esteem) and four demographic variables (gender, income, age, and education) as antecedents to past customer misbehavior.

However, in this perspective, customer incivility is solely attributed to the company or to the customers’ personality traits. Customers are often seen as passive consumers. But in retail and service settings, customer are more and more co-producers, have to perform a specific role, work as partial human resources - but without wages, punishments and rewards - and may be exposed to conditions similar to employees: stress, role ambiguity, role conflict and time pressure. Partial employees might be viewed as human resources who need to be hired, motivated and kept forever by service companies. For instance, to examine the clients’ participation to the service delivery process, Kelley, Donnelly and Skinner (1990) underline the respective roles of organizational socialization (learning of roles), of identification and involvement with the organization, and of customer satisfaction. However, they do not consider the potential dark side of customer participation, i.e. customer burnout.

Research on burnout has typically focused on employees (salespersons, supervisors or colleagues) as emotionally exhausted by high stress and pressure environments. This state can lead them to aggressive behaviors and attitudes (Singh, Goolsby and Rhoads, 1994). Professional burnout is a key construct in explaining a wide range of behaviors and attitudes in high stress work environments (Low and al. 2001; Rutherford et al, 2011). This concept has been expanded toward all types of professions and occupational groups, whereas it was originally restricted to the human resource management domain (health care, education, and social work) (Dormann and Zapf, 2004; Cordes and Dougherty, 1993). Schaufeli et al. (2002) examine university students’ burnout: they feel exhausted because of study demands, having a cynical and detached attitude toward one’s study and feeling incompetent as a student. Burnout is characterized by three distinct but interrelated dimensions:

1. **Emotional exhaustion** (feelings of lacking energy due to excessive psychological demands and interactions);

2. **Reduced personal accomplishment** (when efforts repeatedly fail to produce results and are characterized by attributions of inefficacy, reduced motivation, and low self-esteem), and

3. **Depersonalization** (tendency to dehumanize others through a cynical or uncaring attitude, treating others as if they were objects) (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Cordes and Dougherty, 1993).

Sliter and colleagues (2010, 2011 and 2012) have recently emphasized the links between customer and coworker incivility and employee burnout. Ben-Zur and Yagil, (2005) also argue that customer aggression is positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of salespeople. To define salesperson burnout, Hollet (2002) introduces four components in the stress process: 1) external or internal stressor agent, 2) cognitive evaluation of cost, 3) Coping response process used to face burnout conditions, and 4) Harmful effects on « mind » and « body ». In line with her, we can identify different conditions (stressor agents) which enhance customer burnout in service settings.
First, organizational research recognizes employees’ role ambiguity, conflict and stress as antecedents of burnout (Low et al., 2001; Singh, Goolsby and Rhoads, 1994; Forgaty et al., 2000). Role conflict is the degree of incompatibility of expectations associated with the role. Role ambiguity is the degree to which clear information is lacking about the expectations associated with a role, including the consequences. Finally, role overload exists when role expectations are far greater than the individual's abilities and motivation to perform a task. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) categorize antecedents into three broad categories: job and role characteristics (employee-client relationships), organizational characteristics (job context, rewards, and punishments) and personal characteristics.

Second, time pressure constitutes another source of emotional and physical exhaustion for customers during shopping activities (Lallement, 2006). Time pressure may also be seen as a source of customer burnout. For instance, the time factor has a strong effect: time allocated for shopping and time needed for visiting stores or finding products / services (Barth and Bobot, 2009; Barth and Antéblion; 2006; Remy, 2006; Antéblion-Lambrey, 2002; Lique and Ghewy, 2002). Achieving a complex buying task under a high time pressure can increase the likelihood of going to burnout. In retail for instance, settings size, placement of merchandise, space design and allocation significantly increases customer stress (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Shopping activities produce burnout because shopping is stressful and customers always do not have enough money or time.

Third, some customers have also to shop with their children or partners (other sources of stress) and to cope with other clients and service employees. Individuals, who are married, for example, report lower levels of burnout than their single counterparts. Likewise, individuals who do shopping with children report lower levels of all three components of burnout.

Customer and employee burnout might not be exactly similar (facets, intensity and outcomes) and the burnout conditions and stressor agents can differ. Nevertheless, we suggest that customers and employees both can demonstrate emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization in service/working environments. Table 1 examines the antecedents, outcomes and sources of employee and customer burnout.

Table 1: from employee to customer burnout in retail and service setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent of Burnout</th>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Customer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role ambiguity and conflict</td>
<td>intrinsic motivation, role ambiguity and conflict</td>
<td>role ambiguity and conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome of Burnout</td>
<td>Psychological (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to leave) Behavioral (performance)</td>
<td>Emotional exhaustion Mistreating contact person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Burnout</td>
<td>Lacking of energy, excessive demands from work task</td>
<td>Inefficacy, additional work,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td>Negatives attitudes</td>
<td>Do not Re-shelving products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Strategies</td>
<td>Engagement training</td>
<td>Commitment, Store placement</td>
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</table>
According to these statements, we will analyze how customers react when they are frustrated during shopping time. We choose the same methodology as in HRM studies on employee burnout and use narrative and in-depth interviews to obtain optimal discovery of personal meaning and understand everyday actions.

In our qualitative study, we conduct an empirical study with independent samples of customers in a Mall, using scenarios and structured questions. Respondents were exposed to pictures which describe consumers behaving badly and they had to react to them. They also were asked to describe situation in which they feel exhausted, and contexts which lead them to verbal abuse, or facial expression. They were also asked about the length of the relationship with organization, how they express their emotions during the service encounter and during their shopping activities, and if the interaction with contact persons contributes to emotional exhaustion. We also conduct semi-structured interviews with store managers to figure out how they define and explain their own customers’ incivility.

Our thematic content analysis generates preliminary contributions (see appendix). Customers are constantly dealing with their own problems when they enter stores. They have their own way of classifying products which is not the same as the management. In that case searching or reshelving becomes a stressful occupation during shopping time. All these factors absorb shopper’s precious time, which raises the pressure. Our face-to-face questionnaires with customers after shopping time (sales, weekend shopping, Christmas) have revealed the following stressors:

1. An “unsatisfied request”: generally customers return angrily to the sales point for recovery “if I come back and they can’t find a solution, I’ll create a scandal and see the Manager!” [Woman, 24 years]

2. “Depersonalizing store environment “In Hypermarkets, shoppers often have difficulty in finding what they are looking for. It’s frustrating not to have a shelf plan nor somebody to ask. Hypermarkets are too large, too big, too confusing to return back for reshelving. [Man, 30 years]; “sometimes I make negative comments about organization aloud, just in case if someone catch them I change things the way I want” [Woman, 18 years]

3. Too many changes on placement (merchandising, equipment, space and design). “liquor shelves were on the left side, they move them at the back” [Men, 48 years]; “I am always in hurry, so I don’t have time to reshelve…”[Woman, 33 years]

4. « Role conflict » asking customers to reshelve products can be considered « incompatible » by some. « Salespeople are paid for that!! That’s their job!!! » [Woman, 23 years]

5. «Depersonalization of the service provider » customers expression displaced facial expression or sarcasm to manifest their dissatisfaction

6. « Organizational commitment » “it’s about eleven years am living in the neighborhood, I would still keep buying there” [Woman, 42 years]

7. Customer reaction to emotional exhaustion experienced in service setting is the use of negatives attitudes and expression, offensive language.
Furthermore, when an individual perceives environmental conditions as being uncontrollable, they feel helplessness. In order to cope with the situation, individuals tend to depersonalize their relationships with contact person by using facial expression or increase their task. Finally, feelings of inefficacy in reshuffling can be perceived as non accomplishment for customers who really want to help salespeople in their job. It has different consequences: physical, emotional, interpersonal, attitudinal, and behavioral irritability (helplessness, or anxiety and fatigue).

On the other hand, store managers strongly regret customer condescension, displaced customer frustration, and insulting remarks. However, they often tend to justify and attribute these incivilities to external factors, such as the size and depersonalisation of stores, to the stores’ stressful environment or to the economic crisis.

**Conclusion**

Companies face many difficulties in managing their partial employees, i.e. customers who are also subject to stress, time pressure, and to other customers’ aggressiveness. While many studies examine employee burnout and incivility, relatively few empirical studies strive to understand customer incivility and to consider a potential customer burnout of these partial employees. Customers are more and more required to perform an extra-role and to behave as good citizens without obtaining any reward or gratitude from companies. Talking about critical incidents they experienced, managers and customers feel they are emotionally involved in high pressure environments. As traditional employees, these partial employees are regularly exposed to time pressure, to role ambiguity and conflicts and to others’ behavior and incivility (contact person and other customers). The potential stressfulness of shopping activities is likely to affect consumer emotions and leads to burnout. As a result, customers may be aggressive, passive dependent, or defensive.

This research is an attempt to understand customer incivility from the customers’ and managers’ point of view. We review existing literature on a phenomenon which significantly affects service quality and service companies’ performance: customer incivility, misbehavior, verbal abuse, interpersonal conflict, customer citizenship behavior, customer burnout, customer stress, etc. We also conduct a preliminary qualitative study among customers and managers in a retailing context.

From a managerial point of view, increasing commitment is seen as the most frequently proposed solution used to cope with burnout effects. Schaufeli et al. (2002) define commitment as a positive, fulfilling and work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. In retailing context, managers also have to enhance their customers' commitment, i.e. "enduring desire to continue a relationship with a retailer accompanied by this consumer's willingness to make efforts at maintaining it" (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2005).

This is a first study and further research is needed to better describe the key facets of customer incivility and customer burnout. Yet, relatively few empirical studies examine customer incivility and, to our knowledge, no research underlines a potential customer burnout. As a result, new empirical studies are necessary. Our qualitative solely concern retailing and other service contexts may also be appropriate to study these phenomena (railways, hospitality, restaurants, etc.). We must especially
consider service contexts which imply more regular interactions between persons and strong co-production activities between them.

An experiment is also necessary to: 1) develop measurement of customer incivility and customer burnout, 2) estimate the correlations between incivility and burnout and 3) test multiple stressor agents (time pressure, role ambiguity and conflict, other clients and contact persons, atmospherics). One of the challenges could be to adapt the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson, 1981) instrument to gauge customer exhaustion and descriptions of contextual factors and personal meanings surrounding burnout processes. This instrument might be useful to examine correlations between emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization. Certain demographic characteristics can also contribute to an explanation of why some individuals experience burnout and why others remain virtually unaffected by it.

In this research, we aimed at underlining the potential dark side of customer participation and co-production in the service delivery process. By making traditional clients become co-producers, companies are likely to contribute to customer burnout and incivility. The negative effects of burnout on employees cause turnover, absenteeism, negative work attitude, reduced productivity and performance level (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Schaufeli et al.2002; Low and al. 2001; Maslach and Jackson 1981; Cordes and Dougherty, 1993). Partial employees’ burnout can also cause many negative outcomes, such as a decrease in service quality and in companies’ performance... Making customers work for the service company might finally become counter-productive.
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APPENDIX:

Table 1: Customer incivility: the customers’ point of view

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verbatim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incivility in stores</strong></td>
<td>« parfois je range mal, je range comme je peux et les vendeurs feront le reste » [Femme, 33 ans]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« les salariés ont du temps et de l’argent pour le faire…cela fait partie de leur job » [Femme, 23 ans]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« j’aime aller dans ce magasin, leurs expositions sont relaxantes…. je n’irai pas toucher de peur de tout faire tomber » [Homme, 28 ans]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>« si je reviens en magasin et qu’ils ne trouvent pas une solution à mon problème, je fais un scandale et je demande à parler au responsable » [Femme, 24 ans]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stressors in stores</strong></td>
<td>« Pour moi faire les courses c’est contraignant, et en plus si je dois me taper tous les rayons non merci »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« Je n’ai pas beaucoup de temps, je sais ce que je veux je file droit vers les rayons… je n’hésite pas à laisser un produit que j’aurai pris en plus à côté de la caisse » [Femme, 24 ans]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« Si je suis pressée je ne range pas, je dépose à l’endroit le plus proche …» [Homme, 25 ans]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>« Même si c’est un produit frais, si je suis pressée si le magasin est trop grand je ne fais pas le tour, je laisse discrètement le produit au premier rayon… » [Femme, 31 ans]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« ce n’est pas évident de tout remettre à sa place, on fait ce que l’on peut » [Femme, 27 ans]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« j’étais tellement énervée par sa réponse…, que j’ai hurlé dans le magasin…du foutage de gueule… tout le monde me regardait » [Femme, 22 ans]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>« s’il y a le bazar je ne range pas…. je ne sais même pas par où commencer… je fais comme les autres…. les vendeurs sont payés pour ranger de toute façon» [Femme, 22 ans]</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 2: Customer incivility: the managers’ point of view

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Customer condescension, displaced customer frustration, and insulting remarks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« Et plus les gens sont euh… font preuve d’une certaine agressivité entre guillemets dans leurs propos… aujourd’hui tout le monde est stressé de la vie, c’est un mode de fonctionnement actuel, tout le monde peut être agressif pour une raison ou pour une autre…soit ils sont stressés par leurs propres problèmes et ils râlent, soit c’est à cause du monde, mais surtout du stress qu’ils ramènent avant d’entrer dans le magasin, » [Jérôme, Gérant d’une boutique de vêtement, Homme, 35-44]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« Il y a des clients qui se disent c’est moi qui paye, tu fais ce que je veux et toi tu es de la merde.. » [Sophie, Gérante Boutique Bien être, Femme, 35-44]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« Lorsque vous achetez un produit à 500 ou 1000€ un produit à forte valeur et qu’il tombe en panne on a du mal à concevoir euh qu’un produit à forte valeur puisse tomber en panne, oui donc le client revient fréquemment en magasin énervé et plutôt agressif dans son comportement » [Thomas, Gérant chez Leroy Merlin, Homme, 35-44]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inappropriate customer behavior in stores</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« il y a des gamins et même des adultes qui vont massacrer les produits de maquillage, ils vont taguer le meuble avec » [Sophie, Gérante Boutique Bien être, Femme, 35-44]</td>
</tr>
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<td>« l’acte de prendre le produit et de le mettre dans le caddie procure une satisfaction mais il y a une réalité économique qui rattrape c’est ce que l’on appelle le porte monnaie, est ce que l’on a les moyens de payer ? Les clients prennent les produits et reviennent à la réalité cela arrive plus dans les quartiers défavorisés que dans les quartiers argentés, je ne lie pas ça à l’éducation mais plus aux problèmes économiques, la limite de son pouvoir d’achat…plus le client se rapproche de la caisse plus il réalise ses limites financières, du coup se n’est que tout naturellement qu’il remet le produit au rayon le plus proche ». [Patrice, Gérant d’un magasin de Décoration, Homme, +45ans]</td>
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<td><strong>Causal attributions concerning customer incivility</strong></td>
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<td>« Chacun a ses problèmes… le contexte autour est difficile…c’est plutôt les maux de la société qu’ils subissent plus ou moins que ça soit personnel ou professionnel, qui ressortent dans leur comportement ça va du phénomène de fuite c’est-à-dire vous allez vers la personne, vous lui dites Bonjour…je peux vous renseigner ? Là déjà s’il y a le bonjour dans ces cas là c’est bien parce qu’il n’existe pas forcément, il n’existe plus …et euh c’est soit une fuite c’est-à-dire non non comme si on les agressait » [Jérôme, Gérant d’une boutique de vêtement, Homme, 35-44]</td>
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<td>« ah sur les grandes superficies c’est plus difficile de refaire le tour alors les clients laisse les produits au rayon le plus proche même si c’est du saumon ! »</td>
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<td>« par exemple vous rentrez dans un magasin , dans un Zara rue de Rivoli, ou dans les magasins des Halles c’est quand même le foutoir il y en a de partout, mais stratégiquement c’est voulu par ce que si vous changez de quartier et vous allez dans un quartier moins populaire vous allez avoir de belles présentations, des choses bien posées c’est simple c’est parce que cela correspond aux clients, il ya des endroits où vous cherchez à vendre du volume, ça brasse, c’est comme ça que cela marche » [Jean-Pierre, Gérant d’un magasine de Bricolage, Homme, +45]</td>
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<td>« moi je dis et je reviens toujours, ils sont tellement habitués dans les hyper à faire euh ce qu’ils veulent , vous allez dans un hyper, la viande qu’ils viennent de couper vous la trouvez dans les jouets, et vous trouvez des jouets dans la bouffe, et ça c’est à la fois les adultes qui le font et puis</td>
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Les enfants et si les enfants le font c’est que les adultes ne disent rien et si les adultes le font les enfants voient le faire et puis ils le font aussi ça c’est un phénomène qui ne date pas d’aujourd’hui, ce genre de comportement on l’a depuis la grande distribution, les gens sont moins regardant dans ce qu’ils font. » [Pierre, Manager chez Leroy Merlin, Homme, 35-44]

« En France le processus d’achat en Hypermarché est trop complexe pour le client il n’est pas assez clair on est en train de faire comme les compagnies de téléphonie et d’assurance ou quand on rentre dans les détails du contrat on ne comprend plus rien, entre les promotions, les bons d’achat, les bons de fidélité, les cartes de l’enseigne, bref c’est compliqué et c’est un mécanisme qui n’est pas facile à mettre en place et des erreurs se glissent, et le client a toujours raison, car on le met dans une situation d’achat qui est assez complexe, et pour en bénéficier c’est pas facile donc quand il s’aperçoit qu’une remise n’a pas été effectuée il a l’impression que l’on veut le rouler dans la farine c’est pour ça que l’aggressivité se met en place, au départ c’est la stratégie de l’enseigne qui nourrit l’agressivité, globalement comme toutes les enseignes font ça, le client est monté en exigence, c’est nous qui l’amènons à être plus exigeant à faire plus attention ; lui il veut bien rentrer dans le jeu et quand il a fini de faire son parcours du combattant et l’amène à faire plus attention à mieux acheter, c’est comme ça que l’on construit l’exigence, on lui demande de beaucoup travailler, à beaucoup s’interroger… on développe la méfiance du client. » [Ludovic, Manager chez Carrefour, Homme, 35-44]

« Nous avons une politique de base qui diffère des autres enseignes, on ne force pas à l’achat, tandis que dans d’autres il faut forcément que le client reparte avec quelque chose, et puis chez nous ils font des achats plaisir alors qu’au Supermarché, c’est dur la vie, ils ont besoin d’acheter pour manger quoi, leur agressivité dépend du but de l’achat alors oui, il faut encore acheter un cadeau pour la belle mère… à force de faire du marketing pour du marketing, de vendre pour vendre, dans notre société c’est ça et tous les centres commerciaux souffrent d’une diminution du nombre de clients, avec la crise les clients se posent de justes questions est ce que j’ai vraiment besoin de ça ? » [Marion, Manager chez Nature et Découverte, Femme, 35-44]

Managers’ tactics to cope with customer incivility

« Je m’autorise au désintérêt »

« le seul moyen de l’adoucir c’est d’aller dans son sens »,

« il faut répondre avec le sourire »

« garder son calme et écouter le client et puis le prendre en considération à partir du moment où le client voit que l’on s’intéresse à son problème et qu’on lui apporte une solution instantanée ou difféérée peu importe, mais qu’il sente qu’il est pris en charge et que la personne en face de lui garde son calme, il redescend rapidement en pression et puis après on peut alors avoir une communication plus sereine. »

« Moi ma stratégie s’est de les déstabiliser dans leur truc, j’essaie de rester toujours calme tu vois j’essaie de lancer un petit pic, sympa, un peu humoristique »

« j’ai besoin d’en parler derrière, moi je cherche la réserve, où je peux aller me défouler, moi devant le client je ne le montre pas mais j’ai les nerfs »

« un incident peut tourner en positif pour le commerce … ça peut se transformer en fidélisation exemple l’erreur de prix à la caisse on a des chartes qui disent que l’on rembourse, on peut faire un geste supplémentaire il sera très surpris avec un bon d’achat avec une invitation une soirée découverte pour les vins et cela permet de fidéliser encore plus le client » [Jean Luc, Manager chez Carrefour, Homme, 35-44]

« Amener le client agressif vers le fond ou le milieu du magasin loin de la...
caisse, parfois il y a des clients qui crient et cela donne une mauvaise image du magasin auprès des autres clients » [Alain, Manager dans un magasin de Chaussure, Homme, +45]

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<th>Influence of stores’ atmosphere</th>
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<td>« oui c’est vrai ouais, ben nous dans notre cas précis on avait un magasin axé, basé petit prix, un peu bazar il y a quelques années et on a changé notre dépôt, en montant en gamme en faisant des produits plus déco et là on s’est aperçu qu’on a eu un basculement de clientèle, on a eu une montée en gamme de la clientèle et je dirais que toute la clientèle bas de gamme qui justement piquait et qui venait avec les gamins et foutait le bazar on en a moins qu’avant et depuis que le magasin est structuré avec ce style, on présente les produits en exposition, les clients n’osent pas déranger les déco, on a moins de clients qui foutent la bazar ils n’osent pas déranger, et à l’extrême on fait plus de chiffre qu’avec les petits prix quoi, cela a été une grande réussite »</td>
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<td>« bien sûr, oui parce qu’aller dans un magasin pour certaines personnes c’est un moment de plaisir et pour d’autres personnes c’est un moment de contrainte, à partir du moment où pour le client pour qui se déplace dans un magasin c’est une contrainte, s’il trouve un magasin bien agencé, avec des implantations qui sont claires, et où il a l’impression de ne pas perdre son temps, de faire ses courses rapidement »</td>
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