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Intraorganizational Benefits of Customer Orientation in International Businesses
-Empirical Evidence from Finnish Service Exporters

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ABSTRACT

This research concentrates to find out whether service employees´ customer orientation has positive consequences relating to job attitudes in international context. A literature review is conducted in order to define the essential concepts and to see what kind of results researchers have found between customer orientation and job attitudes. The job attitudes researched in this research are job satisfaction, role ambiguity, role conflict and commitment.

This research differs from the previous customer orientation and job attitudes researchers with its international context. International services are thus discussed.

Upon the previous literature and findings, four hypotheses are formed. They are tested with data from Finnish service exporters. Three hypotheses are supported, indicating that customer orientation has positive effect on job attitudes also in international context. Upon this research and literature review, future research recommendations are presented as well as managerial implications.

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the research

It is widely known that customer-oriented firms perform better (Appiah-Adu and Singh 1998; Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster 1993; Donavan, Brown, and Mowen 2004; Ge and Ding 2005; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Narver and Slater 1990; Narver and Slater 1994). More demanding customers and the growing importance of services create challenges to organizations and their employees. In today's competitive environment managers should be more aware of the need to design sustainable customer orientation programs, which are vital in surviving (Nwankwo 1995). Customer focus is crucial, after all customers are the ones who are profitable, not products or services (Hartfeil 1996).

Customer focus is known to be important (Aggarwal and Gupta 2005; Dean and Bowen 1994; Hennig-Thurau 2004). Without customers, companies cannot function. Growing interest towards market and customer orientation is shown in academic literature. Employees are the ones implementing customer orientation in practice. It is well established that customer oriented employees benefit the companies in which they are working in several ways. This research concentrates on intraorganizational benefits (i.e., job attitudes), which are closely related to employees.

The service sector plays a more critical role in the growth of societies (Powpaka 2006). It is not only so-called service firms who need to understand services. Providing customers with a large variety of services, in addition to the core product (physical or service), is a way of outperforming rivals. (Grönroos 1990, 2005) The importance of services has grown and is well established. Due to this more and more important role, this research is conducted in service context. In service organizations the role of employees´ customer orientation can be huge, because for most types of service organizations, individual service employees are the ones implementing the marketing concept (Brown et al. 2002). Customer orientation

research has been done in service context also earlier, but international context is new in this sense.

International competitiveness requires vision and internal and external execution. Hence managers and employees have to be customer oriented and capable of building trusting relationships with external partners. (Huff and Kellay 2005) Therefore, globalization of competition is leading to firms becoming customer-oriented. Customer orientation is seen as the key to success in global competition. (Brännback 1997). The importance and essential role of customer orientation in international context is pointed out.

The discussion of customer orientation has been largely limited to domestic markets, though greater interest in addressing customer orientation in an international context has been demonstrated (Anckar and Samiee 2000). At this point, there have been conducted only few researches with international viewpoint (Anckar and Samiee 2000; Huff and Kelley 2005; Katsikea and Skarmeas 2003). This paper concentrates on investigating what kind of relationships exists between customer orientation and job attitudes in international context by filling a gap in knowledge of customer orientation research as well as responding to the request for research of customer orientation in international context.

The examined job attitudes are job satisfaction, role ambiguity, role conflict and commitment to the company. Paper includes theoretical approach to these issues. Theory forms the basis upon which hypotheses are formed. Hypotheses are tested empirically with data from Finnish service export companies.

1.2 Research problem and the objectives

This research has a global view to customer orientation. In academic literature employees´ customer orientation's consequences have not been researched in global context. Customer orientations´ positive consequences for the company are clearly established, but whether these benefits can be attained in international

service context or not, it is not yet known. This gap in knowledge is the basis for the research problem of this paper.

- Do the customer orientation's positive consequences, related to service employees´ job attitudes, apply also in international companies?

Supportive questions, which help in conducting the research, are:

- What are the positive intraorganizational outcomes of service employees´ customer orientation to the company?
- What challenges international context of services brings along and how can it affect customer orientation?

Customer orientation's positive link to employees´ job attitudes have been found in prior research, but international context has been excluded from them. Also literature review shows that the causality of the relationship between customer orientation and job attitudes is not clear. Contradict results indicate that more research is needed. Research problems are formed upon these issues.

Supportive questions help as pointing out the issues that need to be covered. First of all, the researches conducted concerning customer orientation and intraorganizational outcomes need to be reviewed. Knowledge from previous researches forms the basis for this research and forming of hypotheses. As this paper is conducted in international context, it is essential to highlight what are the differences among national and international markets. The context of international services need to be reviewed in order to find out what factors might have effects on the results. Hypotheses drawn from the theoretical literature are set to find answers to the presented problems, which is the object of this research.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Lots of benefits resulting from customer orientation have been discovered. This paper presents what are the established benefits related to employees, more precisely, to their job attitudes. International viewpoint has been excluded from

earlier researches; it has not been researched if the international context has an effect on the discovered benefits.

Additionally, the amount of existing researches, which concentrate on the relation between customer orientation and job attitudes, is very limited. This research acts also in relation to that gap. More proof is needed, because the existing results are partly in contrast. Some researchers claim that customer orientation is an outcome, not an antecedent, of job attitudes.

In theoretical framework the main concepts of this research are presented with the expected relations to each others. See figure 1.
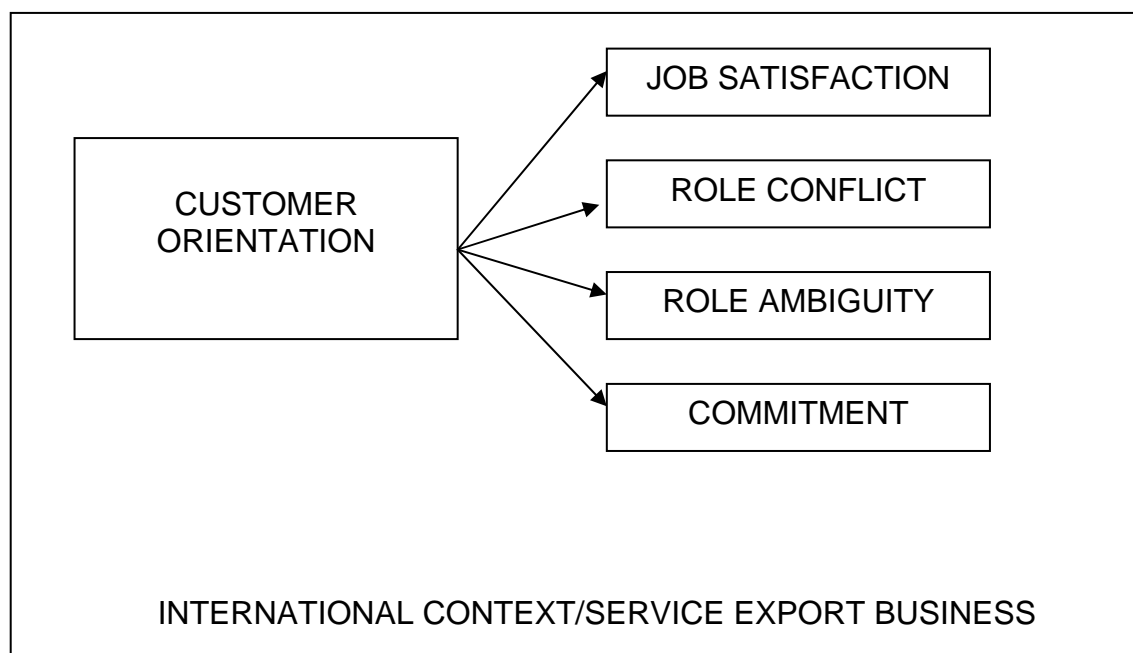
Figure 1

1.4   Delimitations

Certain delimitations have been done concerning this research. These delimitations relate to service and international context as well as to the selected job attitudes.

In this paper only companies operating internationally are included. As the object of the research is to find out whether the benefits established in customer orientation literature apply also in international context, companies functioning only in home markets are excluded.

As an addition to the international viewpoint, the selected frame includes only service companies. As the importance of customer orientation in service companies is given from previous literature, the choice was made to concentrate only on service companies and exclude companies, which do not function in this field.

The customer orientation research has found several benefits, which can be attained by adopting customer orientation. In this research, only intraorganizational benefits (i.e., job attitudes) are included. The selection of job attitudes gives possibility to concentrate and present their characteristics more deeply.

1.5   Research method

A wide literature review based on academic articles is conducted and the theoretical base is built upon these academic articles. Upon theory and findings from previous academic articles, hypotheses for this research are formed.

Hypotheses are later on tested with quantitative research methods. The data used was collected from Finnish service export companies by another researcher in 1999. Previous researches are done with quantitative methods and this research makes no exception. Measures are formed to test the hypotheses with regression analysis.

1.6   The structure of the research

This research is organized as follows. It begins with this introduction chapter, in which the background of the research, research problem, objects, delimitations,

theoretical framework, research methods and the structure of the review are described.

Introduction is followed by two theory chapters, first one concentrating on customer orientation. In chapter two several definitions of customer orientation, established in the customer orientation literature, are presented and discussed. The most common definitions and concepts used in them are gathered in table 1. Upon them, own definition is formed. In this chapter the characteristics of international services are presented along discussion how they might affect the results. The viewpoint of this research is as well opened.

Chapter three concentrates on positive outcomes of customer orientation, which are related to employees and, are thus intraorganizational. These outcomes are job satisfaction, role ambiguity, role conflict and commitment to the company. All of them are presented separately and with the relation to customer orientation. Upon the previous literature, the hypotheses are drawn for empirical testing.

After the theoretical chapter follows chapter four, in which the research methodology is presented. Sample, data collection, data description and measurement development are presented. The results and analysis upon them, in the end of this chapter, sum up the empirical part of the research.

In the last chapter, conclusions are drawn. The most important findings of this research are discussed with theoretical and managerial implications. Limitations of the research are described and future research recommendations are presented.

2   CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

The origins of customer orientation can be traced to the development of marketing concept, which holds that ultimate goal of an organization is to fulfill customer needs for the purpose of maximizing business profits (Appiah-Adu and Singh 1998). For a market orientation to be truly effective employees have to implement the company's market orientation strategy and customers must realize the benefits of a market-oriented company (Jones, Busch, and Dacin 2003). Implementation of marketing concept in service firms is done through service employees and their interactions with customers (Donavan et al. 2004).

In the literature customer orientation has been defined in several ways. Also it is often associated with terms market orientation, marketing concept, customer first, market-driven or market focused organization. (Nwankwo 1995; Saura, Berenguer Contrí, Cervera Taulet and Moliner Velázquez 2005) These terms are used when describing an organization where customer needs are the basis for planning and designing organizational strategy (Saura et al. 2005). The fundamental thrust is the same in every case: the goal to put customer at the center of strategic focus (Nwankwo 1995).

Companies which adopt customer orientation are more likely to provide quality, contribute to customer satisfaction and attain organizational goals more effectively and efficiently than competitors (Saura et al. 2005). It is argued that customer orientation plays even more relevant role in service organizations than in other types of companies (Kelley 1992).

2.1   Conceptual background

As mentioned before, customer orientation does not have only one definition and it is also called with different names. From the definitions, the essential part of customer orientation is clearly pointed out; the concentration on customers. Below are shown the most common definitions of customer orientation, see table 1.

Table 1: Definitions and central concepts of customer orientation

Authors, year	Definition	Help	Satisfy needs	Value	Under-stand	Custom. focus	Conti-nuity	Behavior/ tendency
Saxe and Weitz (1982)	Customer-oriented behavior can be seen as a degree which service providers practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs	X	X					X
Slater and Narver (1990)	Customer orientation is the sufficient understanding of the customers to be able to create superior value for them continuously			X	X		X	
Jaworski and Kohli (1990)	Market orientation is an organization wide market intelligence generation, dissemination and responsiveness related to current and future customer needs. A customer focus is the central element of it			X		X		
Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster (1993)	Customer orientation is the set of beliefs that puts the customer's interest first, not excluding other stakeholders´(owners, managers, employees) interests, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise					X		
Slater and Narver (1994)	Organization is market oriented when its culture is systematically and entirely committed to continuous creation of superior customer value. Market orientation is divided into three components: competitor focus, cross-functional coordination and customer orientation, which is seen to be the heart of market orientation			X			X	
Williams and Attaway (1996)	Customer orientation is specified to be a type of behavior exhibited by organization and group member, e.g. salespeople							X
Brown et al. (2002)	Customer orientation is an employee's tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context		X					X
Hennig-Thurau (2004)	Customer orientation of service employees is the extent to which employee's behavior in person-to-person interactions meets customer needs		X					X

In table 1 the commonly used definitions are presented as well as the most common concepts, which are used in these definitions. In the table, help means helping customers, satisfy needs means the satisfaction of the needs of customers and value means value creation for customers. Upon this list, a conclusive definition is formed:

Customer orientation is a way to behave in order to satisfy customers´ needs continuously. This happens by helping, understanding and creating value for customers; stated simply, keeping customers in the centre of focus.

Customer orientation is a way to behave. It is not just individual acts, even though customer orientation can be seen as individual acts, when employees try to help, understand and create value for customers. Customer orientation should be a permanent way to behave with and for customers. The goal in mind is a satisfied customer. Customers have needs, which have to be successfully satisfied, and always the better when extra value is simultaneously delivered. Companies aim for long-term profitability and to succeed in it, one of the most important factors is the retention of profitable customers. Therefore continuity of customer orientation is required. When customers are continuously kept in the centre of focus, competitive advantage can be attained; it can be a way to stand out from the competitors.

Like the customer orientation of service employees (COSE) is defined differently by authors, also different views concerning the components of customer orientation have been presented. Kelley (1992) proposes that COSE consist of organizational constructs (e.g. organizational climate and socialization) and personal constructs (e.g. motivational effort and direction). According to Brown et al. (2002) COSE is composed of a needs dimension, which includes the employee's belief that he/she can fulfill customers´ wishes, and an enjoyment division, which represents how much the employee enjoys interactions with customers. Donavan et al. (2004) divide COSE to five needs, which are need to pamper, deliver, communicate, read the customer and need for personal relationship. Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) have divided COSE to three

dimensions, which are employee's customer-oriented skills, the motivation to serve customers and authority to make decisions. Hennig-Thurau (2004) continued this division. He divided customer-oriented skills to technical and social skills, when the others remained the same.

The context of customer orientation and its determination is essential when employees' customer orientation is measured in practice. In chapter three intraorganizational benefits are described and the way they have been measured is also clarified. Measurement is extremely essential part in adapting and researching employees´ customer orientation. The definitions of COSE shown above, light up the differences and similarities of researchers´ thinking.

2.2   Background of the customer orientation research

Researches have been done mostly since the beginning of the nineties, from both organization's (employee's) and customer's viewpoints. It has been more common that employees themselves evaluate their customer orientation in empirical researches. Still researches reveal that customers may not consider employees to be as customer oriented as they do themselves (Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster 1993; Donavan and Hocutt 2001).

Differences between high-contact and low-contact group has also been investigated. Employee who has a high degree of contact time with customers belongs to a high-contact group and employee who has little contact time belongs to a low-contact group (Donavan et al. 2004). Customers are most receptive to a customer-oriented approach when they need assistance to solve a new or complex problem and when the relationship with contact employees is close (Saxe and Weitz 1982). The results reveal that the effect of customer orientation and its benefits is stronger in the high-contact groups (Donavan et al. 2004). Higher levels of customer orientation is needed and found when the service or product is more complex and less standardized (Howe, Hoffman, and Hardigree 1994). Services that require higher contact may also be more personal. For example health related

services are usually really important and sensitive, or even shameful issue to people. In these contacts, the role of the service employee is more important and also in these situations, customer orientation seems to play a more crucial role.

The differences between not-for-profit and profit firms are investigated. This research reveals that the correlation of market orientation and business performance is stronger in not-for-profit organizations. Also differences between services compared to manufacturing firms are established. The results reveal that business performance is higher for service firms than manufacturing firms in the same level of market orientation. (Rodriquez Cano, Carillat, and Jaramillo 2004)

The majority of studies about customer orientation and its consequences have been based on large organizations (Appiah-Adu and Singh 1998). Empirical researches have been done e.g. in UK, Germany, United States, Japan and China. International research done upon international businesses, in this sense, is still lacking. This paper will present international viewpoint and examines whether the international context has an effect or not.

Research has revealed several benefits. Most of them benefit the organization directly, but also indirect benefits have been discovered (Brady and Cronin 2001). Sufficient empirical support to a direct link between an organization's customer orientation and its business results has been established. Less interest has been in researching the effect of customer orientation on the attitudes of the employees within the organization. (Saura et al. 2005)

2.3 Viewpoint of the research

The most essential concept of this research is customer orientation. The importance of customer orientation can be clearly seen from the literature. This research concentrates on service organizations. Service organizations are very suitable for the purpose of investigating customer orientation. Also the importance of services overall bring needs to do research in service context.

Constantly growing amount of active workforce is employed within the service sector (Grönroos 1990). Customer-oriented culture is particularly important for service firms, which are "people intensive" and where customers are close to the organization (Parasuraman 1987; Schneider and Bowen 1993). As a result of the service employees´ significant role, their customer orientation can positively effect on customer responses and it is often regarded as a main determinant of service firms´ success. (Hennig-Thurau 2004; Saxe and Weitz 1982)

International context is taken along to the service point of view. In the existing literature, concerning customer orientation and job attitudes, international businesses has not been researched. Because of this, this perspective is taken along in this research. International context is discussed more precisely in the next subchapter.

Information has been collected from Finnish exporters in a research in which customer orientation's impact on export companies´ invoicing practices were examined. Results indicate that exporters using a foreign currency are significantly more customer oriented than the ones using their home currencies. Data was collected from Finnish, Swedish and North-American exporters. Results reveal that Finnish exporters are less customer oriented in a comparison to the other countries. (Anckar and Samiee 2000) Customer orientation has been related to highly effective export sales organizations and it has an important role in company's export involvement and commitment (Katsikea and Skarmeas 2003).

The aspects rising from these researches give an interesting starting point for the research among Finnish exporters. Next the characteristics of international services are discussed.

2.4   Context of international services

This research differs from the traditional customer orientation researches, in which job attitudes are investigated. Because in this research the context is international

instead of national, the special characteristics of international services have to be considered. In this chapter, these characteristics are briefly presented with the discussion about how they might affect the results of this research.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the world has moved toward a service-based economy from manufacturing economy (Clark and Rajaratnam 1999) For the past decade, the fastest growing segment of global trade has been the marketing of services internationally (Javalgi and White 2002). Trade in services has begun to dominate the economics of many nations. International trade in services has also grown significantly. (Clark and Rajaratnam 1999) Still, international services marketing literature is relatively sparse and at an early stage (Knight 1999) as well as limited (Clark and Rajaratnam 1999; Samiee 1999). In the literature, a call for international service researches has been clearly established.

Globalization of markets, the decline of trade barriers, and the emergence of modern communication and information technologies have speeded up the internationalization among service companies. Still, international entry for service firms will tend to be relatively more complex than for traditional manufacturers. (Javalgi and White 2002; Knight 1999)

International services differ from domestic services in two respects: They involve something, which crosses national boundaries, and some type of engagement with a foreign culture (Clark and Rajaratnam 1999). Always when services are the object of interest instead of products, the special characteristics of services have to be understood and taken into consideration.

Because human involvement in services is intensive, the degree of customer contact is a critical factor. It is likely to spell the difference between success and failure. (McLaugflin and Fitzsimmons 1996) As it is stated, the role of employee in service success, nationally and internationally, is crucial. It is presumable that also in international context implementing customer orientation can help companies to be successful.

Internationally functioning companies normally meet a very diverse customer base. Several things make things more difficult to handle. Among cultural issues also legislation and local preferences need to be taken into consideration, as they set own limits. Host government regulations can make some functions, e.g., standardization, difficult. There is also a need to adjust to local preferences. (Hollensen 2004).

A service firm cannot manage its service operations totally on its own. In foreign markets it has to rely on at least postal and delivery systems. The service firm's control over such network partners can be very limited. (Hollensen 2004)

In home markets, customers' cultural background is familiar; abroad it can bring unwanted surprises. Different cultures have varying affects on the marketing of services internationally. Cultural elements, such as religious beliefs, materialism, language, education, the family structure, gender role, customer, manners, and time orientation are closely related with national culture. (Javalgi and White 2002) Cultural issues have a significant impact on the acceptability and adoption pattern of services. Due to the fact that services inherently involve some level of human interaction, the likelihood of cultural incompatibility is greater. (Clark and Rajaratnam 1999; Hollensen 2004; Knight 1999; Samiee 1999)

Cultural differences have been research in relation to customer orientation (Huff and Kelley 2005). They researched the influence of customer individualism and collectivism on customer orientation, according to the division made by Hofstede. The results indicate that customer orientation will be higher for organizations from individualist than from collectivist societies, with one exception (Malaysia´s customer orientation is roughly the same as the United States). (Huff and Kelley 2005)

Culture can not be ignored; firms providing services internationally should consider the provision of appropriate cultural training to staff, the use of local employees and changes to the service offering itself, when needed. Local workers should be trained in their native language. (Hollensen 2004) It is clear that the greater the

cultural differences between service producer and consumer, the greater the associated cognitive and communication gaps (Clark and Rajaratnam 1999). It is possible to get familiar in advance with e.g. language and religion. Often a bigger problem occurs in understanding the underlying attitudes and values of buyers in different countries. (Hollensen 2004)

In this chapter, several differences between national and international companies have been briefly presented. Operating in international markets can be difficult in many senses. These difficulties can become crucial for the success of a company. Customer orientation might be difficult to implement, the employees might have difficulties to communicate and with several other cultural aspects. What is considered in home markets to be customer focused, might not hold true in foreign markets.

As the next chapter shows, based on previous literature, implementing customer orientation has positive consequences to the well-being of employees. Especially in service companies, employees have essential roles for the success of a company, because of the human involvement in services. If companies have understood this importance, it is likely that customer orientation has more or less important part in these companies. If the hypotheses formed later, are not supported, it is possible that international context, in which the companies function, has an effect on the results.

3 POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF CUSTOMER ORIENTATION RELATED TO EMPLOYEES

Prior research has established a link between customer orientation and positive performance outcomes (Donavan et al. 2004). Empirical research has demonstrated several positive outcomes of customer orientation. The outcomes are mostly related to performance, less research has been focused to other important benefits (Donavan et al. 2004).

Employees´ customer orientation has positive outcomes through employees' attitudes and behavior. These outcomes, employee characteristics, can benefit the company straight and also through the founded outcomes. Customer-oriented service employees are regarded as better performers, in both cases when the evaluation is done by self-ratings and supervisor ratings of performance (Brown et al. 2002). It has been noticed that market orientation provides psychological and social benefits to employees (Jaworski and Kohli 1990). The benefits presented in this chapter are largely internal to the organization but also important for the motivational well-being of the service workers and successful day-to-day operation of the service organizations (Donavan et al. 2004).

Job satisfaction, role ambiguity, role conflict and employees´ commitment to the company are discussed next. Characteristics of these concepts are briefly presented with the link to customer orientation; all these benefits are found to be consequences from employees´ customer orientation.

Also other intraorganizational benefits have been researched. Positive connection between ethical behavior and employees´ customer orientation is found. Results reveal that customer oriented employees are more ethical in their work than the ones who are sales oriented. (Howe et al. 1994)

Organizational citizenship behavior (i.e., OCB) altruism is defined as employee's tendency to help co-worker when a work related problem is faced. Customer-

oriented employees are motivated to satisfy customer's needs and to achieve this goal, also help co-workers. These employees go beyond the call of duty to assist co-workers. (Donavan et al.) Donavan et al. (2004) found out that service worker's customer orientation has a positive influence on OCB-altruism.

3.1   Job satisfaction

According to Locke (1976, in Brown and Peterson 1993), job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional condition resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Churchill, Ford and Walker (1974) define job satisfaction as all the characteristics of the job itself and the work environment, which industrial salesmen find rewarding, fulfilling, and satisfying, or frustrating and unsatisfying.

A salesperson, who feels satisfied in his job, can be described as a salesperson that has positive attitudes regarding four basic characteristics of the job; the information, variety and freedom, ability to complete tasks, pay and security (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor 2002).

3.1.1   Importance of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important matter for employees and also for the organization; it is one of the most widely studied constructs in sales force research (Brown and Peterson 1993). Satisfied employees are likely to perform better than unsatisfied ones during the service encounter, which increases customers´ perceptions on service quality. Researches reveal that job satisfaction has positive effect on customers´ perceived service quality. (Hartline and Ferrell 1996) Concrete evidence proves that satisfied employees make for satisfied customers (Zeithaml and Bitner 2003). Results have also shown that higher job satisfaction results in higher levels of organizational commitment (Brown and Peterson 1993; Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell and Black 1990) as well as in lower turnover (Johnston et al. 1990). Additionally, job satisfaction is negatively related to propensity to leave the organization (Johnston et al. 1990).

3.1.2 *Job satisfaction and customer orientation*

Research findings show an association between salesperson job satisfaction and the practice of customer-orientation (Donavan et al. 2004; Hoffman and Ingram 1991; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Mengüc 1996; Pettijohn et al. 2002; Siguaw, Brown, and Widing 1994) Part of the researches reveal that higher levels of customer orientation result in higher levels of job satisfaction. (Donavan et al. 2004; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Mengüc 1996) A customer-oriented service worker fits better to a service job, and as a result, experiences greater job satisfaction. The researchers found strong evidence that customer orientation is an antecedent of job satisfaction, not an outcome of it like some earlier researches have shown. (Donavan et al. 2004)

Jaworski and Kohli (1990) interviewed business´ executives and found psychological and social benefits to employees, which can be attained trough implementing market orientation. The authors propose, on the base of these findings, that higher levels of market orientation result in higher levels of job satisfaction. They were the first ones addressing these benefits in the extant literature. As the latter research show, these proposals have been proved to be true.

Earlier research had claimed that increasing levels of satisfaction produce higher levels customer orientation. Because of this, Donavan et al. (2004) addressed the direction of causality issue in their empirical work. They strongly believed and proved it to be true in their case that the causality relation is vice versa; service-worker's customer orientation has a positive influence on job satisfaction. Their finding is especially important for the motivational well-being of the service worker. The results also show that service-worker's customer orientation plays a much greater role in services organizations than has been understood.

Customer orientation's mediating relationship on job satisfaction has also been found. Saura et al.´s research suggests that customer orientation is not directly associated to job satisfaction, but through service orientation its impact on overall job satisfaction is mediated. Service orientation is significantly linked to job satisfaction. (Saura et al. 2005) In their research the direct link between customer orientation and job satisfaction was not measured or researched at all.

Additionally, mixed findings and conclusions suggesting that customer orientation does not have direct impact on job satisfaction, has been published (Hoffman and Ingram 1991; Pettijohn et al. 2002; Siguaw et al. 1994). Pettijohn, Pettijohn and Taylor (2002) concluded that job satisfaction is an antecedent of customer orientation, not an outcome it. They found that salesperson's job satisfaction is significantly related to the level of customer orientation exhibited by the salesperson. The results support the existence of the positive link between job satisfaction and customer orientation. Also Hoffman and Ingram (1991) got results that indicate customer orientation to be a consequence of job satisfaction, not vice versa.

Siguaw et al. (1994) did not find direct connection between customer orientation and job satisfaction, even though it was what they had conceptualized. Authors presume that it is possible that in cases when the salesperson wants customer orientation to be high, but the company fosters a selling orientation and this way prevents the salesperson from performing in a customer-oriented manner, job satisfaction can be low. (Siguaw et al. 1994) Mengüc (1996) replicated and extended Siguaw et al.´s study (1994). The model was tested and the results were generally closer to Siguaw et al.´s hypotheses than the results from the original study indicating also that job satisfaction is a consequence of customer orientation.

Jaworski´s and Kohli´s (1990, 1993) findings concerning market orientation are important and also provide a link to customer orientation. They found that the market orientation of the firm has significant effect on job attitudes and customer orientation of the employees. Due to these results, in a highly market oriented firm,

sales force practices a greater customer orientation, has reduced role ambiguity and conflict, and expresses greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Jaworski and Kohli 1990; Kohli and Jaworski 1993) According to Mengüc (1996), when market-oriented organizations and their salespeople work toward the common goal of customer satisfaction, a feeling of pride occurs and it has positive effects toward the work situation results in increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Whether the impact is direct or indirect, the most essential thing concerning this benefit, is that there has been established positive link to job satisfaction. According to the majority of the research findings, hypothesis for the relation between customer orientation and job satisfaction is formed. The results indicate that job satisfaction is an outcome of customer orientation. Thus, Hypothesis 1 states:

H1: Service worker's customer orientation has an positive effect on job satisfaction

Employees being in contact with the customers are not the ones enjoying the highest salary in the company and they might not be highly appreciated. This applies especially to boundary spanners (i.e., contact employees) in service companies. In customer-contact position employees are typically underpaid, under trained, overworked and highly stressed (Weatherly and Tansik 1993). In these kinds of situations job satisfaction might be difficult to attain. Here arises the issue of employees´ characteristics, who are naturally customer oriented and who are not. For employers this information is relevant when hiring new personnel.

Job satisfaction has also effects on profitability. It affects indirectly to profitability, because increased amount of sick leaves raises the salary costs. Also when employees are dissatisfied they change easier working places, which also increases costs. Research has shown that job satisfaction positively affects on job retention (Mobley 1977). It is quite obvious that satisfied employees are also more productive. When there is no need to complain and there are not things that stress

or disturb working, results are naturally better and of course, dissatisfied employees are not the right persons to represent the company.

3.2 Role stress

The concept of role pertains to the behavior of particular person (Biddle and Thomas 1966). Role is typically defined as a set of expectations about behavior for a position in a social structure (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman 1970). Role stress corresponds to specific task-related and environment-related salesperson's boundary role perceptions (Mengüc 1996). In this research, role perceptions include two components; role conflict and role ambiguity. The existence of these role constructs result in dysfunctional individual and organizational consequences (Rizzo et al. 1970). In service firms, the contact personnel have demanding roles as boundary spanners between the firm and its customers. Employees can become frustrated and confused in the search for the best way to fulfill their multiple roles. (Hartline and Ferrell 1996) The problem of employees´ role stress is important. Next the natures of role conflict and role ambiguity are presented and their meanings in practice as well as their relations to customer orientation are discussed.

3.2.1 Role conflict

In certain situations a person can find himself exposed to confusing expectations; some people expect him to behave in one way, others in another, and these expectations are incompatible (Gross, McEachern and Mason 1957). The complete fulfillment of all the requirements is realistically impossible (Parsons 1951). Role theory states that when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent, he will experience stress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively than if the expectations towards where did not conflict (Rizzo et al. 1970).

Employees who experience role conflict can become emotionally aroused in their efforts to cope with conflicting role demands (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Exposure to role conflict is an obvious source of frustration (Parsons 1951). Several role conflict situations are temporary but certain positions are constantly under conflicting role pressures (Rizzo et al. 1970), e.g., boundary spanners. Persons, who have reported role conflict, stated that their trust in the persons who imposed the pressure was reduced, they liked them less personally, they held them lower esteem, they communicated less with them, and their own effectiveness was decreased (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal 1964). Additionally, personal confusion, anxiety, ambivalence and social dysfunctions can occur because of the conflict (Biddle and Thomas 1966).

Proofs have been found that role conflict is negatively related to job satisfaction and it also has a significant direct negative effect on organizational commitment (Brown and Peterson 1993; Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Siguaw et al. 1994). The relation between organizational commitment and role conflict suggest that incompatible demands of customers and clients can reduce the salesperson's bond to the company she or he presents. (Brown and Peterson 1993)

3.2.2 Role ambiguity

According to classical organizational theory, every position in a formal organizational structure should have certain set of tasks or position responsibilities. If an employee does not know how much he has authority in decisions, what is expected to accomplish, and how he will be judged, he will hesitate in decision making and will have to rely on a trial and error approach in meeting the expectations of the superior. (Rizzo et al. 1970) Role theory states that role ambiguity can be described as a lack of necessary information available to a given organizational position (Kahn et al. 1964). Role ambiguity can increase the probability that a person will be unsatisfied with his role, will experience anxiety, will distort reality and thus perform less effectively. (Rizzo et al. 1970)

Role ambiguity can diminish employees´ ability to serve customers and indirectly decrease customers´ perceptions of service quality, when it's negative extend into the employee-customer interface (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Especially boundary spanners are highly vulnerable to role ambiguity (Singh 1993).

Role ambiguity has a negative affect on job satisfaction (Brown and Peterson 1993; Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Siguaw et al. 1994; Singh 1993; Weatherly and Tansik 1993) and organizational commitment (Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Siguaw et al. 1994). Beside the negative relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, role ambiguity can diminish employees´ ability to serve customers and indirectly decrease customers´ perceptions of service quality (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Role ambiguity is thought to prevent the opportunity to improve performance and obtain rewards, thus reducing job satisfaction. It also increases employees´ turnover intentions as concerns about how to proceed with critical tasks lead to frustration (Singh 1993). Role ambiguity has also a significant negative impact on sales performance and propensity to leave. The direct effect of role ambiguity on propensity to leave suggest that uncertainty concerning role requirements can be an important contributing factor to intentions to leave the organization. (Brown and Peterson 1993).

3.2.3 Relationship with customer orientation

Role conflict and ambiguity are decreased when personnel is customer-oriented, in other words, increased customer orientation decreases these negative emotions related to job stress (Hoffman and Ingram 1991; Jones et al. 2002; Powpaka 2006; Mengüc 1996). Jones et al. (2002) carried out their research in business-to-business context, in which contact personnel's roles are also vital for the success. Authors think that it is plausible that the more customer-oriented the salespeople are, the more effort they will see to satisfy customer's needs because it is congruent with their own motivation as well as the firms' expectations. As a result they will experience less role conflict. Concerning role ambiguity, the more

customer-oriented the salespeople are, the more they will perceive their main role to fulfill the customers´ needs.

Service employees have especially demanding and crucial roles in organizations. They are the ones presenting and delivering the service. The role is difficult between the needs and wants of management and customers. When an employee suffers from role conflict and role ambiguity, it is presumable that customers can sense this and this way it has an effect on customer's perceptions of the service and its quality.

Contradict results have been found concerning these connections. The suggested positive link to decreased role ambiguity and conflict has not always been supported (Siguaw et al. 1994). Siguaw et al. (1994) conceptualized that greater customer orientation results as lower role conflict and ambiguity. The authors presumed that the surprising results were caused by the overwhelming influence of the company's market orientation on the customer orientation of the sales force. (Siguaw et al. 1994) The replication study to Siguaw et al.´s research conducted by Mengüc (1996) proved the original hypotheses right; role conflict and role ambiguity were found to negatively affect job satisfaction (Mengüc 1996).

Hypotheses concerning role stress are formed upon the previous research findings. As it has been shown employee's customer orientation decreases the amount of role ambiguity and role conflict. Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 3 state:

H2: Service worker's customer orientation decreases role ambiguity
H3: Service worker's customer orientation decreases role conflict

Firms benefit when employees are satisfied with their jobs and they also perform then better. The well-being of employees is important for organizations in several ways and management should pay attention to the actions that enhances it.

3.3   Commitment to the organization

Organizational commitment can be defined to be the degree to which a salesperson wants to continue working in a particular company when having an opportunity to get another position in a different organization. It is an internal feeling, belief or set of intentions that enhances the desire of an employee to remain with an organization. (Hunt, Chonko, and Wood 1985) Commitment can be seen as a more active and positive attitude toward the organization (Johnston et al. 1990).

3.3.1   The meaning of commitment in practice

Commitment is something that all organizations want (Hunt et al. 1985). This is natural, when thinking of how companies benefit when having employees who are committed to their working places. Employees' commitment to the organization is crucial, especially with the best employees.

Research has shown that commitment to the organization is important for employee retention (Morgan and Hunt 1994), which e.g., decreases costs. When commitment to the organization is high, employees do not change organization that easily.

Commitment has an influence on turnover through its significant impact on propensity to leave (Johnston et al. 1990). Hence managers prefer loyal and committed employees (Hunt et al. 1985). In service context employee retention is especially important, because personal and emotional relationships can be born between employees and customers.

3.3.2 Organizational commitment and customer orientation

Organizational commitment is greater among employees who feel that the organization practices the marketing concept (Jaworski and Kohli 1993; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Mengüc 1996). The same effect is also found in the individual level for service workers as service firms implement the marketing concept through their employees. Customer-oriented employees fit the job setting better than employees who have lower levels of customer orientation. As a consequence, these workers experience higher levels of commitment to their organization. (Donavan et al. 2004)

Kohli and Jaworski (1990) proposed that employees' commitment to the organization is higher when the market orientation is higher. The authors later (1993) researched their proposition and found a strong link between these factors. Market orientation leads to a sense of pride in belonging to an organization in which all departments work toward the common goal of satisfying customers. This results in a shared feeling among employees of worthwhile contribution, a sense of belongingness and therefore commitment to the organization. (Jaworski and Kohli 1993)

Donavan et al. (2004) researched the effect of customer orientation on service workers responses to their jobs. They found the relation to organizational commitment important due to the implications for service-worker retention. The authors believe that customer-oriented employees will fit the job setting better than employees who have lower levels of customer orientation and, as a consequence, these employees will experience higher levels of commitment to their organizations. It is the employee's predisposition toward meeting customer needs that produces the opportunity for organizational commitment to develop. (Donavan et al. 2004)

Mengüc (1996) proved Siguaw et al.´s (1994) hypothesis "Greater customer orientation of the salespeople results as greater organizational commitment" to be

true. This replication study succeeded where the original failed; it provides strong evidence for the hypotheses to be true.

There are researches providing mixed findings. These findings did not support the hypothesis that when the customer orientation of the salespeople increases, also the organizational commitment increases (Kelley 1992; Pettijohn et al. 2002; Siguaw et al. 1994) Some results indicate that organizational commitment is an antecedent of customer orientation, not an outcome of it. These results suggest that higher levels of customer orientation result from organizational commitment. (Kelley 1992; Pettijohn et al. 2002)

Pettijohn et al. (2002) found a positive relationship between a salesperson's commitment to the organization and his/her customer orientation. Their findings provide support to the notion that a salesperson's level of customer orientation is related to that person's organizational commitment.

It is not presumable that organizational commitment is developed if the employee does not feel comfortable and satisfied is his/her job. In service organizations customer-oriented employees fit better to the job and also perform better in doing it. The feeling to be successful and good at work seems to be easier to customer oriented personnel in service firms. Considering these thoughts, the results of Donavan et al. seem to make more sense when comparing to the results of other authors. In this research the hypothesis is drawn upon the results, which indicate that commitment is an outcome of customer orientation. Thus, Hypothesis 4 states:

H4: Service worker's customer orientation affects positively on his/her organizational commitment

3.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter job attitudes have been presented and discussed with the relation to customer orientation. All of them are considered to be important for companies and for their employees´ well-being. In academic literature, researchers have investigated job attitudes´ connections to customer orientation and results indicate that these job attitudes are in positive means affected by customer orientation. This research concentrates to test whether these connections apply also in international service context. Thus, these attitudes are the main subject in the empirical research, which is presented in chapter four.

Hypotheses drawn for this research rely on previous research. The essential findings from these academic researches are discussed in this chapter and hypotheses are presented along them.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the characteristics related to the research methodology are described and presented. Sample, data collection, measurement development and descriptives are presented as well as analysis upon the results. The data used in this research was collected by another researcher in 1999.

4.1 Sample

The sample for this research was drawn from the database Kompass Finland. Exporting companies, which employed more than 50 persons, were chosen. From the database, 1205 Finnish exporting companies were found and these companies formed the sampling frame. In total, 237 companies were ineligible (e.g., firms that had never exported/stopped exporting/were listed more than once), 21 refused to participate and 783 returned completed questionnaires. The response rate was 81 % (783/968). Non-response bias was not significant because a) the relatively high response rate reduces the risk of response bias and b) a comparison between the early and late respondents did not reveal significant differences. In this research, only service companies are included. Thus, the sample size consists of 61 exporting service companies.

4.2 Data collection

A mail survey was used in gathering data to test the hypotheses. The contact information of the companies was purchased from the Kompass Finland. Kompass Finland was chosen because it filled all the requirements: representativity concerning Finnish exporters, individual names of target respondents for personalization as well as current and accurate information.

First, all the companies were contacted by telephone to make sure if they were willing to participate to the research as well as suitable for this purpose. The

informant in the company was the export manager/director, CEO, marketing manager/director or someone else who had the best knowledge about the export function. Those, who agreed to participate, were mailed a questionnaire with a cover letter within 24 hours of the telephone call. A reminder card was sent ten days later for non-respondents and seven days after the reminder card was mailed, second questionnaire to the remaining non-respondents with a modified cover letter.

4.3 Data description

In this subchapter the data descriptives are presented. Overall, the data consists of 61 Finnish service export companies. The descriptives give a picture of the respondents´ profiles.

These descriptives are gathered to a table 2.

Table 2. Data Descriptives

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	N
Turnover (million €)	100.37	241.62	2.52-1177.32	59
Export Sales	23.45	65.73	0.084-403.65	58
Number of Employees	1201.90	5225.34	40-40 000	60
Number of Export Units	594.07	3901.91	2-30 000	59
Years in Business	42.55	38.09	2-200	60
Years Exporting	22.24	34.66	1-200	59
Percentage Sales from Exporting	25.44	22.94	1-100	59

As it can be seen from the figures presented in the table, the companies vary a lot in their sizes, experience and ages. The turnover mean was 100.37 million euros with the standard deviation of 241.62. The number of employees varied between 40 and 40 000, expressing that the companies involved in the research vary greatly among their sizes. On average, the companies had 1202 employees with the standard deviation of 5225.34.

Exports sales mean was 23.45 million euros and the standard deviation of 65.73. The range was between 0.084 and 403.65 million, which indicated big differences

among the companies involved in their sizes and as well in the amount of export practices. Percentage sales from exporting were on average 25.44 %, with the standard deviation of 22.94 %. The range was between one and hundred percent of the total sales, indicating that some companies get all of the profits from export functions, while in some companies the amount is really small. The number of export units varied between 2 and 30 000 with the average of 594 units. The standard deviation was 3901.91 for the amount of export units.

The oldest companies involved in this research were 200 years old and the youngest ones were two years old. These figures give an average of 42.55 with the standard deviation of 38.09. The experience in exporting, when comparing the years of exporting, varied also greatly. The maximum number of years was 200 and the minimum was one year of exporting. The mean was 22 years of exporting with the standard deviation of 34.66.

4.4   Measurement development and the items

In this chapter the development of measurement is described and the sources of items used are presented. First, general information about the measurement is reported. After that, follows subchapters in which the sources of the items are presented precisely. In the concluding subchapter, the measurement process of this research is presented.

A summated scale can be created when the items represent a single concept and they are strongly associated with each others. The multi-item scales, formed for this research, are discussed more precisely later on.

Reliability can be seen in the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. Internal consistency is used as a measure of reliability. Individual items should all measure the same construct. Cronbach´s alpha is the most widely used measure for this purpose. The generally agreed limit

for Cronbach´s alpha is .70, although in exploratory research it can decrease to .60 (Hair et al. 1998)

Factor analysis was used in testing the unidimensionality of the scales. The items, which are conseptually similar, were subjected to a factor analysis. Principal axis factor analysis was conducted with rotation method varimax with kaiser normalization. The final scores for the scales were averages of all the items included in the scales.

4.4.1 Job satisfaction measurement development

Job satisfaction was measured with four items culled from Churchill, Ford and Walker´s (1974) job satisfaction scale. These items are presented below, see table 3.

Table 3. Job Satisfaction Items

Item	Statement
I_JS_01	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally have a sense of accomplishment
I_JS_02	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are satisfied with their job
I_JS_03	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally feel discontent
I_JS_04	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally feel their job expectations remain unfulfilled

4.4.2 Role ambiguity measurement development

The items of role ambiguity were chosen from the role conflict and role ambiguity scale by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970).

Table 4. Role Ambiguity Items

Item	Statement
I_RA_01	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are certain about how much authority they have
I_RA_02	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally have clear, planned, goals and objectives for their job
I_RA_03	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally understand the relative importance of their different tasks
I_RA_04	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally know what their job responsibilities are
I_RA_05	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are clear about what is expected of theme in their jobs

4.4.3 Role conflict measurement development

Role conflict's items were culled from the role conflict and role ambiguity scale by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970).

Table 5. Role Conflict Items

Item	Statement
I_RC_01	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company often perform tasks that they think should be done differently
I_RC_02	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company often do not have the resources needed to complete their assignments properly
I_RC_03	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company often have to "bend" a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment
I_RC_04	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company often receive incompatible request from two or more people
I_RC_05	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are given clear explanations about what has to be done

4.4.4 Commitment measurement development

Three items culled from Doucette and Jambulingam´s work ethics scale (1997) were chosen to measure employees´ commitment to the organization.

Table 6. Commitment Items

Item	Statement
I_COM_01	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are highly motivated toward work
I_COM_02	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are a group of hard working individuals
I_COM_03	Employees who are involved with exporting in our company generally are very ambitious about their work

4.4.5 Customer orientation measurement development

The items for customer orientation scale were adopted from Cadogan et al.´s (1999) EMO behaviour scales. The items were selected from export intelligence generation and responsiveness measures.

Table 7. Customer Orientation Items

Item	Statement
GEN_02	We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving export customer needs
GEN_10	We measure export customer satisfaction systematically and regularly
RESP_13	Our export business strategies are driven by our beliefs about how we can create greater value for export customers
RESP_14	Our export strategy for competitive advantage is based on our understanding of export customer needs
RESP_15	Our export business objectives are driven primarily by customer satisfaction
RESP_17	We give close attention to after-sales service in our export markets

4.4.6 Measurement development

Five multi-item scales were formed to measure customer orientation's effect on job attitudes. Four of them were 7-point scales, which measured job satisfaction, role ambiguity, role conflict and commitment. The fifth scale measured customer orientation. All the scales underwent reliability analysis and all of them exceed the .60 minimum reliability level. Job satisfaction scored .62, role ambiguity .91, role conflict .85, commitment .88 and customer orientation .78. Other relevant information concerning the scales is in table 8.

Table 8. Scale Reliability Analyses

Scale	Cronbach´s alpha	Number of items	Number of cases	Mean score	Std. dev.
Job satisfaction	0,619	3	61	0,000	1,938
Role ambiguity	0,911	5	61	13,21	5,768
Role conflict	0,854	5	60	13,97	6,068
Commitment	0,883	3	61	16,64	3,044
Customer orientation	0,775	5	61	25,05	5,475

After the initial reliability assessment, the job attitude scales were entered into factor analysis. The items of job satisfaction and commitment scale were cross loading, as it can be seen in the initial version of the factor analysis, see table 9.

Table 9. Rotated Initial Factor Analysis- Job Satisfaction and Commitment

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
Commitment 1	,638	
Commitment 2	,721	
Commitment 3	,744	
Job Satisfaction 1		,672
Job Satisfaction 2	,486	,669
Job Satisfaction 3		,852
Job Satisfaction 4		,633
Eigenvalue	3,841	1,131
Percentage of Variance Explained	54,871	16,155
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained	54,871	71,026

In order to create a pure measure of job satisfaction, a simple regression analysis was conducted. Item Job Satisfaction 4 (JS_04) was deleted, because its loading to the factor two was the weakest. Three other items of job satisfaction scale were then purified with regression analysis, in which each item from the job satisfaction scale was assigned as the dependent variable and commitment as independent variable. See the results of regression analysis for purification in appendix 1. In the final factor solution, the purified job satisfaction and commitment did not show cross-loading between items from different scales. See table 10.

Table 10. Final Factor Solutions- Job Satisfaction and Commitment

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
Commitment 1	,925	
Commitment 2	,780	
Commitment 3	,839	
Job Satisfaction 1		,553
Job Satisfaction 2		,869
Job Satisfaction 3		,471
Eigenvalue	2,432	1,785
Percentage of Variance Explained	40,527	29,750
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained	40,527	70,277

Role ambiguity and role conflict were entered together into factor analysis. All the items of role ambiguity as well as all the items of role conflict were loaded both to single factors, when the factor matrix was rotated. See the result in table 11.

Table 11. Final Factor Solutions- Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
Role Conflict 1		,689
Role Conflict 2		,690
Role Conflict 3		,628
Role Conflict 4		,795
Role Conflict 5		,687
Role Ambiguity 1	,762	
Role Ambiguity 2	,825	
Role Ambiguity 3	,828	
Role Ambiguity 4	,832	
Role Ambiguity 5	,753	
Eigenvalue	5,340	1,710
Percentage of Variance Explained	53,402	17,102
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained	53,402	70,504

When the customer orientation scale was entered into factor analysis, two items were loaded to different factor than the other items. The item GEN_ 02 loaded most strongly to the wrong factor and was thus deleted from the scale. Then another factor analysis was conducted and this time, all the items were loading to the same factor.

Table 12. Final Factor Solution- Customer Orientation

Variables	Factor 1
Measure customer satisfaction regularly	,577
Strategically led to deliver more value to customers	,789
Competitive advantage is based on understanding customer needs	,845
Export goals are directed by customer satisfaction	,620
Close attention to after-sales service	,521
Eigenvalue	2,810
Percentage of Variance Explained	56,205
Cumulative Percentage of Variance Explained	56,205

4.5 Analysis

Regression analysis was used in testing the hypotheses. Problems with the job satisfaction scale indicated that this meter was not the best suitable to measure job satisfaction. Due to this, it was not surprising to find out that the presumed relation between job satisfaction and customer orientation was not supported. Thus, the hypothesis 1 was rejected. The result was not statistically significant (i.e., sig=.551) and the result was barely positive (r=.006).

In hypothesis 2, customer orientation was proposed to result as decreased role ambiguity. The results were strongly significant (i.e., sig= .002) and the relation was proved to be negative (i.e., beta= -.443). Thus, the hypothesis 2 was accepted.

The results from regression analysis of role conflict and customer orientation showed significant and negative relation between these variables (sig= .002, beta= -.385). The hypothesis presumed that higher levels of customer orientation result as lower degree of role conflict, and thus the hypothesis 3 was accepted.

The last researched relation involved commitment and customer orientation. The hypothesis 4 suggests that employees´ customer orientation results as stronger commitment to the organization. The results showed strong, positive and significant relation between the variables and thus, the hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Table 13. Regression Results

Dependent Variable	R Square	B	Beta	T	Sig	Indep. Var.	Hypot.
Job Satisfaction	,008	,053	,090	,694	,490	CO	H1
Role Ambiguity	,196	-,466	-,443	-3,791	,000	CO	H2
Role Conflict	,149	-,454	-,385	-3,181	,002	CO	H3
Commitment	,202	,416	,449	3,860	,000	CO	H4

The job satisfaction hypothesis was the only hypothesis, which was not supported.

The other ones were significantly and strongly accepted.

5   CONCLUSIONS

This research concentrated to find out whether customer orientation has the same positive intraorganizational consequences, which have been established in the literature, also in international context.

The importance and role of services has grown. All the time growing amount of workforce is employed within the service sector. As the internationalization expands, also services are internationalizing intensively. Customer orientation is needed for international competitiveness (Huff and Kellay 2005).

Customer orientation's meaning in service context is considered really important. Overall the role of services alone and as supportive parts of the whole offering has grown. This enhances also the importance and the role of customer orientation in all organizations. The role of customer orientation is seen important in service organizations as well as in international competition. When these two things are combined, the importance of customer orientation in international service companies is crucial.

International services are relatively new field of research. Customer orientation's relation with international services has seen to be a topic that requires research (Anckar and Samiee 2000). This research answers to that call by investigating customer orientation in international service context. National markets differ from international ones. This sets challenges and presents problems for international firms. Firms whose ultimate goal is to satisfy customer needs, instead of aiming towards quick sales, have better chances to success in a long run. Customer oriented employees can be crucial for the success of a company. When concentration is on customers, the deepest goal can be attained, no matter the markets.

In service companies the role of employees is crucial. Services are characterized to be people intensive. This thing points out the important role that employees

have in service organizations, but it also sets challenges. The work can be stressful and require lot of emotional work. How employees manage to do their work has enormous effects on the results. Employees have to feel comfortable with their job settings and tasks to be able to deliver value and satisfaction to customers. These aspects highlight the importance of employees´ job attitudes and customer orientation.

Three out of four of the hypotheses were accepted. The results indicate that the customer-oriented employees are more committed to their companies and feel reduced role ambiguity and conflict. The hypothesis proposing positive relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction was rejected. This result was not expected, and when considering the other results, it is not in line with them. The meter formed was problematic. It had to be purified and one item had to be deleted. The conclusion is that this meter was not suitable, and because of this the hypothesis was not supported.

Overall, the results support the great majority of the previous findings. As contrary results have been found, the results from this research provide support that the job attitudes really are positive outcomes of customer orientation, not antecedents of it.

As the results, except with job satisfaction hypothesis, were accepted, it seems that international context do not have an effect. Similar researches have not been conducted in international context earlier, so the results are introductory.

5.1 Theoretical implication

The measure of job satisfaction was found to be unsuitable for this purpose. With this data, the proposed hypothesis was not supported. The selection of items has to be done really carefully in order to get reliable results.

Because this research was first of a kind in international context, it forms a basis for future research. The results show a way, along which new researches can be conducted.

The results support the well established causality relation between customer orientation and job attitudes. As the amount of researches with similar results is larger than with opposite results, the job attitudes should be accepted as positive outcomes and the researches should concentrate on other aspects of customer orientation in the future.

5.2   Managerial implication

Firms´ market orientation and employees´ customer orientation are definitely things that service firms should implement and focus on. How to do it in practice is another research topic. Employees are individuals, who have special characteristics. Some people are naturally more social, sympathic, ethical, understanding, helpful and enjoy interaction with people. Managers should hire people who are appropriate to the job and try hard to retain these ones.

Employee selection should be done carefully. In service companies, employees are usually in interaction with customers, which make the process even more crucial. Employee retention is also important issue, and as the results indicate, commitment is enhanced among customer-oriented employees.

When implementing customer orientation, managers have crucial roles. Managers should pay attention to the aspects of customer orientation of service employee and make sure that there are not disruptive things in the way. They should create suitable circumstances for the employees to practice customer orientation in their work. Managers are the ones communicating the goals and values for employees. The organizational climate has to be in line with the objects and values. Customer orientation should be implemented in the whole organization, so that all the actions are in harmony.

5.3   Limitations and future research

This research is done from companies viewpoints. It was not possible to conduct this research also from customers' viewpoint. Yet several researches have been done from companies viewpoints with expected results.

This paper has an international viewpoint to employees' customer orientation. The research data is collected from Finnish service export companies. This data is suitable for this purpose, yet it needs to be noticed that only Finnish service export companies are involved in this research. Due to the limitations, the chosen country is Finland. The Finnish viewpoint is not thus selected for any special reason.

Research has shown that the degree of customer orientation varies in different countries (Anckar and Samiee 2000; Huff and Kelley 2005) as well as its meaning and importance in practice (Powpaka 2006). It was not possible to expand the research to cover also some other nations. When export companies from other countries were not taken along, it was possible to keep the research controllable and possible to conduct in the given time limit.

As the data was collected earlier by another researcher, it was not possible to affect on the amount of service companies involved, and thus to the sample size. The size was big enough to fulfil the purpose of this research.

Based upon this research and the literature review, future research topics are recommended next. The relation between job attitudes and customer orientation has attracted relatively little research when comparing to the other benefits that can be achieved by adopting customer orientation. Only job satisfaction makes an exception. The links to performance (e.g., Appiah-Adu and Singh 1998; Deshpandé et al. 1993; Ge and Ding 2005; Howe et al. 1994; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Narver and Slater 1990; Narver and Slater 1994) as well as to customer related behavior and attitudes (e.g., Brady and Cronin 2001; Donavan and Hocutt 2001; Hennig-Thurau 2004; Jones et al. 2002; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Slater

and Narver 1990; Saxe and Weitz 1982; Williams and Attaway 1996), have gained more attention. Due to this, more research concerning customer orientation and job attitudes should be conducted.

International service research with customer orientation should be researched. In literature there are several gaps in knowledge concerning customer orientation and international services. E.g., customer orientation's positive outcomes, not just job attitudes, should be researched in this context. Differences between countries, organizations and cultures could be examined. Comparison between small and big companies, examining the importance of e.g., experience and resource base is one interesting topic. Cultural issues have enormous impacts on practicing trade; it must have some kind of impact also on customer orientation. Culture's effects on customer orientation and internationalization of services offer lots of researchable issues.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 14. Purification of the items of job satisfaction

Dependent Variable	R Square	B	Beta	T	Sig	Indep. Var.
Job Satisfaction 1	,641	,906	,800	10,254	,000	Commitment
Job Satisfaction 2	,546	,809	,739	8,421	,000	Commitment
Job Satisfaction 3	,318	,728	,564	5,243	,000	Commitment