



Standing in my customer's shoes: Effects of customer-oriented perspective taking on proactive service performance

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We develop a theoretical framework that delineates the process by which customer-oriented perspective taking contributes to employees' proactive service performance. Drawing from motivated information processing and proactivity perspectives, the model hypothesizes that employees' customer-oriented perspective taking enhances their role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE), which in turn enhances proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. A three-wave, time-lagged study, involving 145 frontline employees and their immediate supervisors in the Chinese hospitality industry, tests the research model. The results of structural equation modelling show taking customers' perspectives results in a high level of RBSE. This relationship grows stronger if employees exhibit a strongly proactive personality. A high level of RBSE also mediates the interactive effects of customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive personality on proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. These findings provide insights for research on perspective taking, RBSE, and proactive service performance.

Practitioner points

- Taking customers' perspectives results in a more satisfactory service encounter and significantly enhances employees' service performance.
- Organizations should work to increase their employees' customer-oriented perspective taking capabilities.
- Service organizations could use intervening mechanisms in the service marketing process to help employees enhance their confidence in proactively expanding their roles.

In competitive business settings, customer centricity cannot be simply aspirational; it is essential (Lapr e, 2011). To be customer-centric, employees must properly understand customers' needs and then work accordingly to deliver them at the highest level.

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Therefore, customer-oriented perspective taking – the employees' cognitive process of imagining themselves in a customer's position and adopting the customer's viewpoint (Axtell, Parker, Holman, & Totterdell, 2007) – should be crucial to customer service performance.

Consistent with Parker and Axtell (2001), we define perspective taking as the cognitive process of adopting another's viewpoint. Perspective taking is different from some related concepts, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and prosocial motivation.¹ It is generally found to be beneficial to relationship quality and can increase helping and cooperation. In customer service, perspective taking is found to enhance employees' well-being (Arnold & Walsh, 2015) and their helping behaviour with customers (Axtell *et al.*, 2007), reduce the customers' mistreatment with the employees (Song *et al.*, 2017), and reduce employees' surface acting or cognitive impairment when they face customer injustice or aggression (Rafaeli *et al.*, 2012; Rupp, McCance, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008). In line with the strategic aim of striving for customer satisfaction in service organizations, we focus on employees' perspective taking with customers.

Although research has offered preliminary evidence of the role of customer-oriented perspective taking in enhancing employees' service performance (e.g., Axtell *et al.*, 2007), the theoretical underpinnings of this linkage remain unclear. Moreover, the relationship between perspective taking towards interaction partners and behavioural outcomes varies in existing research: Most studies demonstrate a positive effect, but some scholars argue that the effect of perspective taking is subject to various boundary conditions. According to Maner *et al.* (2002), more integrative models are necessary to understand the boundary conditions in which perspective taking generates beneficial outcomes.

Furthermore, existing research has not explored the association between perspective taking and beneficial outcomes, such as employees' perspective taking and their proactive customer service performance or complaint-handling performance. When service employees adopt customers' perspectives, their customer-oriented thoughts likely motivate them to satisfy customers' needs, beyond their formal duties, such that they engage in proactive customer service performance. In this sense, we recognize the need to explore the effects of employees' customer-oriented perspective taking on service performance.

To address these research gaps, this study develops a model of customer-oriented perspective taking to explain its influence on employees' proactive service performance. Drawing on a motivated information processing perspective (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000), we establish a theoretical linkage and delineate how focusing on customers' viewpoints enhances employees' proactive service performance, because it enables them to be more confident to perform a broader set of roles than is required, which we refer to as role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE). According to Parker (1998, p. 835), we define RBSE as employees' 'perceived capability of carrying out a broader and more proactive set of work tasks that extend beyond prescribed technical requirements'. We study RBSE as the mediator of this relationship for three main reasons. First, self-efficacy has been

¹ 'Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of recognizing, understanding, regulating, and using of one's own and others' emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), which is the dispositional antecedent of perspective taking (Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2011). Empathy is the emotional connection with others which involves a high degree of emotionality, and perspective taking is the cognitive process which results in empathy (Davis, 1980; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). While perspective taking indicates one's emotional stability, empathy involves a high degree of emotionality. Prosocial motivation is the desire to put effort to protect and promote the well-being of others (Grant, 2007, 2008). It is the motivational antecedent of perspective taking (Grant & Berry, 2011).'

consistently identified as an important predictor for performance (Bandura, 2001; Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). While the general self-efficacy represents a trait-like generalized efficacy belief which predicts general job performance and task-specific self-efficacy captures people’s efficacy for a single task, RBSE, which refers to the efficacy in taking a broad range of tasks beyond the job description, reflects the similar level of generality as proactive service performance (Sonnentag & Spychala, 2012). Second, RBSE has been demonstrated to be a key psychological mechanism between various antecedents and proactive behavioural outcomes (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Sonnentag & Spychala, 2012). We therefore extend the similar logic to the linkage between customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive service performance. Finally, we believe that people’s RBSE will be high if they have high customer-oriented perspective taking.

A high level of RBSE requires both interpersonal skills and proactivity. Customer-oriented perspective taking indicates employees’ interpersonal skills, but employees also must be proactive to facilitate the presentation of customer-oriented perspective taking in RBSE. Proactive personality, the dispositional characteristic reflecting a person’s tendency in taking initiative and enacting behaviours for desired outcomes (Bateman & Crant, 1993), can represent the proactive component required in RBSE. Our choice of proactive personality as the moderator is guided by the proactive emphasis of RBSE and employees’ substantial differences proactivity which is showed in previous research (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012). We posit that the ownership and accountability from a high degree of proactiveness may amplify the likelihood that employees who take customers’ perspectives are more confident in carrying out the wider range of social and integrative tasks. Figure 1 shows our theoretical framework.

Specifically, this study extends literature in perspective taking and proactive service performance in four main ways. First, previous research on the importance of employees in increasing customer satisfaction and organizational profits has focused mainly on the effect of employee satisfaction (Yee, Yeung, & Cheng, 2008). By exploring the effect of employees’ customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive personality on service performance, we integrate two essential capabilities and dispositions that service employees should possess because of the increasing interdependence among people

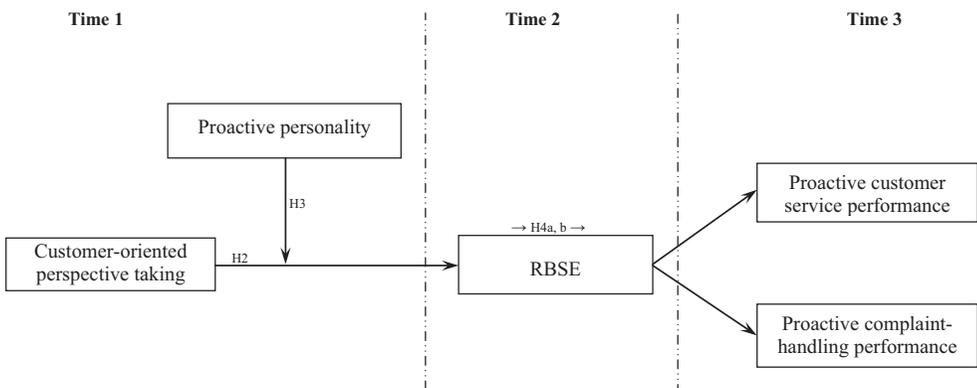


Figure 1. Conceptual framework and hypotheses. H1. Main effects from customer-oriented perspective taking to (a) proactive customer service performance and (b) proactive complaint-handling performance.

(e.g., co-workers, employees, and customers) and dynamic uncertainty trends. Second, existing research has linked employees' customer-oriented perspective taking to behavioural and performance outcomes, without specifying the process by which taking customer' perspectives translates into high service performance. We propose RBSE as an important mediating mechanism, linking customer-oriented perspective taking and service performance. Third, the empirical evidences on the effects of perspective taking are equivocal (Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006). The moderating effect of proactive personality in our study helps address the boundary conditions of perspective taking in more depth. Finally, by including proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance as outcome variables, this research extends the service performance-related outcomes of employees' customer orientation from general service performance to proactive customer service performance.

Theory and hypotheses development

Customer-oriented perspective taking and service performance

A review of perspective taking literature suggests the need for greater attention to its influences on contextual behaviours and performance (e.g., Arnold & Walsh, 2015; Song *et al.*, 2017). Research in social psychology indicates that husbands and wives who frequently put themselves in each other's place create a better marital experience and have smoother interactions (Long & Andrews, 1990). According to research in organizational behaviour and service marketing, employees' customer-oriented perspective taking relates positively to customer satisfaction (Aggarwal, Castleberry, Ridnour, & Shepherd, 2005). Service employees who adopt customers' perspectives likely understand and identify with customers' experiences, feel more genuine concern for their misfortunes, and experience greater pleasure when satisfying their needs (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). When employees take the perspective of customers, their helping behaviours increase (Axtell *et al.*, 2007).

In line with previous research on the perspective taking–performance link and the self-initiated customer-oriented thinking inherent in perspective taking, we posit that customer-oriented perspective taking relates positively to employees' proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. Proactive customer service performance reflects a service delivery approach that is self-starting, long-term oriented, and forward thinking (Raub & Liao, 2012); proactive complaint-handling performance means managing complaints in a comprehensive and proactive way (Hansen, Wilke, & Zaichkowsky, 2010). Motivated information processing theory suggests that employees selectively search for, attend to, encode, and retrieve information tied to their desires (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; De Dreu *et al.*, 2000).

According to motivated information processing theory, when service employees take customers' perspectives, their desire to solve customers' problems leads them to focus on the customers' thoughts and feelings. That is, customer-oriented perspective taking sensitizes employees to customer needs, such that they try to identify ways to help customers. As a result, these employees tend to gather information to anticipate customers' thoughts and behaviours during service interactions, which enables them to obtain a clearer, more integrated understanding of customers' specific needs and expectations. Being aware of customers' perspectives and concerned about their preferences, employees take customers' possible reactions into account and prepare corresponding solutions. Thus, when employees stand in customers' shoes, to anticipate

their specific needs, they can initiate self-started service behaviour that moves beyond formal job descriptions (e.g., seeking feedback from customers, learning service-related skills to increase customer satisfaction). Anticipation of and forward thinking about customers' needs also enables these employees to handle customers' complaints more proactively and comprehensively (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2003). Thus,

Hypothesis 1: Customer-oriented perspective taking relates positively to (1) proactive customer service performance and (2) proactive complaint-handling performance.

Customer-oriented perspective taking and RBSE

Why would customer-oriented perspective taking enhance employees' proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance? To address this question, we focus on the potential psychological mechanisms that evoke employees' proactive service performance and propose RBSE, or an employee's beliefs about the important aspects and boundaries of his or her work roles (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997), as a promising intermediate variable. Employees' RBSE depends on their confidence in their abilities to take multiple, flexible roles during their work. Greater RBSE may result from customer-oriented perspective taking because, as the motivated information processing perspective suggests, taking customers' perspectives into account enables employees to pay attention to customers' needs, consolidate customer-oriented and comprehensive thinking during service interactions, and enhance their confidence in engaging in a broader set of roles beyond the job description in serving customers. This confidence in turn should make employees more proactive in serving. RBSE has been consistently shown as a predictor of proactive behaviour (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Parker, 1998).

Service employees' customer-oriented perspective taking could build their RBSE. First, a key requirement of RBSE is interpersonal skills (Parker, 1998; Parker *et al.*, 1997). According to Parker (1998), interpersonal dynamics are critical to RBSE, and employees in modern organizations often must possess the interpersonal ability to carry out tasks and make decisions while accepting greater interdependence with internal and external customers. Perspective taking with customers helps employees clarify the boundaries of their role-expanding and role-breaking behaviours, which makes them more confident in appropriately modifying their behaviour and expanding their roles and take initiatives in serving customers (Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Parker & Axtell, 2001; Richardson, Green, & Lago, 1998). In addition, taking the customers' perspectives can smooth the employee–customer interaction and increase the likelihood of customers' cooperation and acceptance of employees' role-expanding behaviour (Parker & Axtell, 2001). The customers' favourable reaction in turn enhances employees' confidence in their proactive service. Therefore, perspective taking enhances RBSE by fulfilling the interpersonal skill requirement.

Second, the motivated information processing perspective indicates that by focusing on customers' perspectives, service employees begin thinking in more integrative ways to combine, consolidate, and refine these perspectives. Proactively engaging in a broader range of tasks, beyond formal job duties, is risky and challenging (Crant, 1995, 2000), but a more solid and accurate view of customers' needs and thoughts can help employees make appropriate decisions in producing new ideas to best serve the customers and satisfying the customers with their discretionary actions. Consequently, the accumulated accomplishment can maintain their efficacy belief about expanding their roles, even when they

face uncertainty and risks. That is, with a more accurate and integrative understanding of customers' points of view, employees may believe that they are capable of extending their prescribed tasks to help and serve customers at the highest level. Therefore,

Hypothesis 2: Customer-oriented perspective taking relates positively to RBSE.

The moderating effect of proactive personality

People adapt to the environment in different ways. Employees show different levels of initiative in taking extra-role actions after they understand customers' needs (Parker & Sprigg, 1999). Since RBSE is defined as a concept of self-efficacy that specifically refers to employees' confidence in carrying out integrative and proactive roles (Parker, 1998), proactive personality should be highly relevant. An employee with a highly proactive personality—that is, 'one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces, and who effects environmental change' (Bateman & Crant, 1993, p. 105)—is likely to develop greater feelings of ownership and accountability for a range of role-breaking and expanding behaviours according to customers' desires. Our choice of proactive personality is also consistent with the call for examining narrow traits which are theoretical linked to the respective dependent variables (Ashton, 1998).

We hypothesize that employees' customer-oriented perspective taking will be a better predictor of their RBSE for more proactive than for less proactive individuals. We base this hypothesis on research in both proactivity and motivated information processing. First, literature on proactive personality shows that one of the defining characteristics of proactive employees is their propensity to seek opportunities for improvement (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Fuller & Marler, 2009; Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010). A proactive personality increases an employee's vigilance in using his or her understanding of customers to enhance perceived confidence in serving customers in a more integrative and proactive way. Such employees are likely to identify opportunities that they can act on, thus they interpret and utilize their customer-oriented perspective taking as a way to enhance their confidence in expanding their roles.

Second, proactive people engage in forward thinking and are action oriented (Loi, Liu, Lam, & Xu, 2016; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). They search for solutions actively and communicate their thoughts and concerns with customers effectively. Since proactive employees are featured by acting in advance and intended impact, they have the initiatives to put their customer-oriented thoughts into actions. Translating customer-oriented perspective taking into a belief in one's own ability to deal with flexible and uncertain job demands often requires such a proactive disposition. Finally, proactive people express a strong desire to control their surroundings (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000). As motivated information processing theory predicts, perspective taking draws employees' attention to information that could satisfy customer needs, and a control desire amplifies the link between perspective taking and RBSE by motivating employees to take advantage of their customer-oriented thinking to manage customers' demands, which in turn builds their confidence in conducting a broader range of service tasks.

Conversely, when employees have a less proactive personality, they work in a passive and reactive way (Loi *et al.*, 2016). They just want to carry out the prescribed roles required by the organization. Even if they can understand customers' perspectives well, such an understanding is less likely to be associated with the enhancement of their RBSE because they lack the desire to use the information in actively expanding their roles. In addition, supervisors may have a less favourable view of employees who are not proactive,

in terms of their performance and overall career prospects (Crant, 1995, 2000). As a result, compared with those high in proactivity, to have the same level of confidence in their ability to expand service roles satisfactorily, these employees need higher levels of the understanding of customers' needs.

Hypothesis 3: A proactive personality moderates the positive relationship between customer-oriented perspective taking and RBSE, such that it is stronger for employees who exhibit more, rather than less, proactive personalities.

The mediating effect of RBSE

Proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint handling are both essential to service performance. Griffin, Neal, and Parker (2007) propose a model of positive work behaviour in uncertain and interdependent contexts and demonstrate the significant relationship between RBSE and proactive work performance. In line with their findings, we suggest that RBSE relates positively to employees' proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. When employees engage in service behaviours or handle customers' complaints that are not prescribed by their roles, they may lack relevant information and specification, leaving them uncertain about their ability to successfully handle customers' needs (Raub & Liao, 2012). The concept of self-efficacy, people's belief about their ability to successfully perform a certain task, has been extensively related to better task performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). The basic premise is that the expectation of high self-efficacy stimulates the initiation to cope with the task requirement, the effort to accomplish the task, and the persistence in overcoming difficulties to solve task-related problems (Bandura, 1977; Vroom, 1964). In line with the reasoning on self-efficacy, people with high RBSE, that is, those who are more confident in their ability to take on new, integrative, and interpersonal tasks, are more likely to be convinced that they will successfully implement such role-expanding behaviours. Therefore, they will exert more effort in uncertain and difficult situations (Raub & Liao, 2012), will be more persistent in the face of challenges which are inherent in proactive behaviours, and thus can cope more successfully with the demands of proactive customer service and proactive complaint handling. This hypothesis is consistent with the positive relationship between RBSE and proactive work behaviour found in previous studies (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Sonnentag & Spsychala, 2012).

We do not hypothesize a negative effect of increasing RBSE on proactive performance because the relationship between self-efficacy and performance in the field setting may be different from the laboratory experiment. The inflection point should be higher and more difficult to be reached in real life since successful proactive behaviour involves more challenging and complex work (Tierney & Farmer, 2011).

If we combine our arguments about the influences of RBSE on proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance with H1 (positive effect of customer-oriented perspective taking on proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance), H2 (positive effect of customer-oriented perspective taking on RBSE), and H3 (moderating effect of a proactive personality on the relationship between customer-oriented perspective taking and RBSE), we attain a mediated moderation model, in which the interaction between customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive personality enhances employees'

RBSE and relates positively to their proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance.

Hypothesis 4: RBSE mediates the interactive effect of customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive personality on (1) proactive customer service performance and (2) proactive complaint-handling performance.

Method

Sample and procedure

We obtained three waves of data in 6-month intervals from a five-star Chinese hotel located in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, a developed region in mainland China. We considered the 6-month interval as a reasonable time frame for increases in employees' RBSE, as well as for RBSE to have an impact on proactive customer service behaviour. First, a meta-analysis by Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, and Tucker (2007) noted that when changes in self-efficacy are included in the model, the average time lag between each wave of data collections is 5-month (e.g., Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006) or 6-month (e.g., Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). Second, this choice was in line with the previous longitudinal research on innovative and creative behaviour which uses a 6-month time frame to predict the changes from self-efficacy to work behaviour (e.g., Tierney & Farmer, 2011). We chose the hotel because the HR Director was an Executive Master of Business Administration (MBA) student at a university in Mainland China. The researchers and the hotel management have reached agreement to conduct the research. We collected data from the hotel's full-time frontline customer service employees who frequently interact with customers in their routine works (e.g., receptionists, concierges, porters, housekeepers, and waiters in the restaurants).

We personally visited all respondents on site. Two sets of questionnaires were used in the study: one for service employees, and another for their supervisors to evaluate their proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. Questionnaires were sent to employees and their supervisors separately. We explain the purposes of the study and the procedures for the survey with grouped employees and supervisors separately. All respondents received a cover letter explaining the study, a questionnaire, and a return envelope. Each questionnaire was coded with a researcher-assigned identification number in order to match employees' responses with their supervisors' evaluations. To ensure confidentiality, the respondents were instructed to seal the completed questionnaires in the envelopes and return them directly to us on site.

At Time One, we distributed questionnaires to 195 service employees and obtained valid data from 175 (89.74% response rate). At Time Two, we invited the 175 potential subordinates and their immediate supervisors and received 158 useful dyads (90.29% response rate). At Time Three, we also collected data from both employees and their supervisors, which produced a total of 145 out of 158 dyadic questionnaires (91.77% response rate). Therefore, the final response rate for this three-wave longitudinal study was 74.36% (145/195). The 145 employees worked under 39 supervisors. Among the frontline employees, 65% were men, and 34.4% had earned at least a college degree. Their mean age was 27.3 years. In the supervisor sample, 61% were men, and 66.7% received at least a college degree. Their mean age was 30.4 years. The average length

of the dyadic relationships between the service employees and their supervisors was 1 year.

Measures

The service employees reported their customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One), proactive personality (Time One), and RBSE (Time Two); their immediate supervisors rated employees' proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance twice (Times Two and Three). Unless otherwise indicated, all items used seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). All questions used in the study are listed in the Appendix. All questionnaire items were originally written in English, translated into Chinese by a bilingual scholar, and then back-translated into English by another bilingual scholar (Mullen, 1995), to ensure that all the translated items offered a high degree of accuracy and clarity.

Customer-oriented perspective taking

We used Axtell *et al.* (2007) conceptualization of customer-oriented perspective taking, defined as a psychological process of adopting customers' viewpoints, which is not readily apparent to supervisors or customers. This construct was self-rated by the employees, using a four-item scale adapted from Axtell *et al.* (2007). The alpha coefficient of this measure was .86.

Proactive personality

Employees indicated their proactive personality using Seibert *et al.*'s (2001) 10-item scale. The alpha coefficient of this measure was .92.

RBSE (Role breadth self-efficacy)

We assessed RBSE with the seven items from Parker's (1998) measure of this construct. We modified the items to fit the context of service jobs and asked respondents how confident they felt when performing different tasks. The alpha coefficient was .91.

Proactive customer service performance

The immediate supervisors rated employees' proactive customer service performance using a seven-item measure developed by Rank, Carsten, Unger, and Spector (2007); this scale has been validated by Raub and Liao (2012). The alpha coefficients were .88 and .87 at Times Two and Three, respectively.

Proactive complaint-handling performance

We asked the immediate supervisors to assess employees' proactive complaint-handling performance using a three-item scale from Chan and Lam (2011). The alpha coefficients were .88 and .89 at Times Two and Three, respectively.

Control variables

We controlled the demographic variables of both employees and their supervisors, including employee age ($M = 27.3$ years, $SD = 7.7$), supervisor age ($M = 30.4$ years, $SD = 5.5$), employee gender (woman = 0, man = 1; 65% were men), supervisor gender (61% were men), employee's educational level ($M = 2.3$ years, $SD = 0.86$; junior secondary or lower = 1, senior secondary = 2, vocational college = 3, university or higher = 4), supervisor's educational level ($M = 2.8$ years, $SD = 0.74$), employee's current job tenure ($M = 11.1$ months, $SD = 3.9$), supervisor's current job tenure ($M = 12.7$ months, $SD = 3.5$), and the length of dyadic relationship between employee and supervisor ($M = 10.4$ months, $SD = 5.1$).

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses

Before testing the hypotheses, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses to check the convergent and discriminant validity of the five substantial variables in the model (i.e., customer-oriented perspective taking, proactive personality, RBSE, proactive customer service performance, and proactive complaint-handling performance). The results of the analyses showed that the five-factor model ($\chi^2 = 658.33$, $df = 418$; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.94; incremental fit index [IFI] = 0.94; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.06) yielded a significantly better fit than the four-, three-, or two-factor models.

Hypotheses testing

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all the variables in the research model. We can find the correlations in Table 1 initiatively support H1 and H2. Customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) is positively related to proactive customer service performance (Time Three) ($r = .29$, $p < .001$; H1a) and proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($r = .25$, $p < .01$; H1b); and customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) is also positively related to RBSE (Time Two) ($r = .45$, $p < .001$; H2).

We conducted moderated-mediated test by Mplus 8 controlling for the nested structure on supervisor–employee dyad and age, gender, education level, and the current job tenure of both employees and their supervisors, as well as the length of dyadic relationship between employee and supervisor. The within-structure results of the SEM (Figure 2) showed that controlling for proactive customer service performance (Time Two) and proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Two), customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) positively predicted proactive customer service performance (Time Three) ($B = .286$, $SE = .143$, $p < .05$) and proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($B = .223$, $SE = .103$, $p < .05$). Thus, H1a and H1b are supported.

Although researchers have often used Mplus to test for moderation, it does not produce regular model fit indexes when calculating interactions. Therefore, we examined regular model fit only in the model without the interaction term, and it was good ($\chi^2 = 69.708$, $df = 49$, $p < .05$; CFI = 0.905; RMSEA = 0.056). The Bayesian information criterion (BIC) can measure model fit, even in analyses involving interactions; smaller values indicate better model fit (Henderson, Dakof, Schwartz, & Liddle, 2006). Therefore,

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities of measures (in parentheses)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Subordinate age	27.29	7.83	—														
2 Supervisor age	30.43	5.69	.10	—													
3 Subordinate gender	.65	.48	.02	.06	—												
4 Supervisor gender	.52	.51	.02	-.09	.41***	—											
5 Subordinate education level	2.29	.86	-.14 [†]	.05	.05	-.27***	—										
6 Supervisor education level	2.90	.72	.12	.03	-.13	-.02	.28***	—									
7 Subordinate job tenure (in month)	11.08	3.93	-.03	.11	.04	.02	.02	.12	—								
8 Supervisor job tenure (in month)	12.68	3.58	-.13	.09	.10	.18*	.24***	-.02	.14 [†]	—							
9 Dyadic tenure (in month)	10.38	5.05	-.02	.22**	.08	.07	.08	.02	.65***	.35***	—						
10 Perspective taking	5.35	.61	.04	.01	-.09	-.16 [†]	.08	.12	.21*	.11	.24**	(.74)					
11 Proactive personality	5.68	.53	.00	-.03	.01	-.04	.04	.30	.13	.06	.17*	.53***	(.75)				
12 Deep acting	5.10	.95	.09	.11	-.03	-.16 [†]	.08	.07	.17*	.09	.24**	-.44***	.60***	(.76)			
13 Surface acting	3.68	1.32	-.03	-.04	.06	-.02	.19*	.08	.09	.01	.01	-.30***	-.32***	-.25***	(.86)		
14 Job satisfaction	5.59	.85	.06	-.01	-.22**	-.15 [†]	-.01	.23**	.02	-.07	.07	.33***	.32***	.44***	-.29***	(.88)	
15 Carrier satisfaction	4.73	1.06	.12	.17*	-.08	-.16 [†]	.08	.18*	.18*	.10	.21*	.34***	.40***	.47**	-.33***	.34***	(.82)

Notes. $N_{\text{subordinate}} = 145$; $N_{\text{supervisor}} = 39$.

Gender: Female = 0; Male = 1.

Education level: junior secondary or lower = 1; senior secondary = 2; vocational college = 3; university or higher = 4.

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Two-tailed.

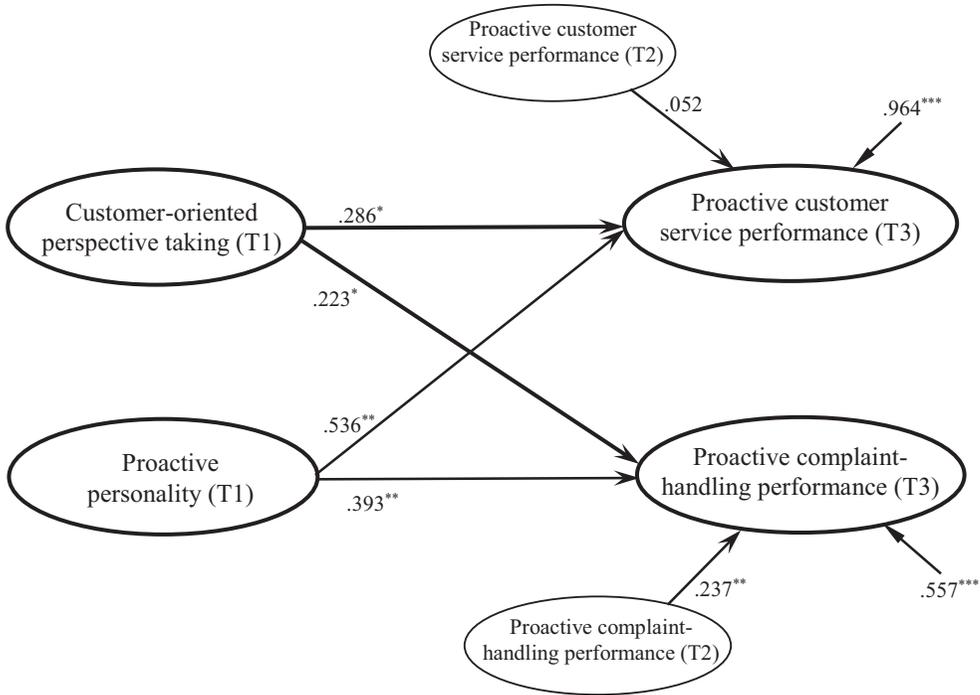


Figure 2. Unstandardized parameter estimates of within-structure MSEM results for Hypothesis One testing. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. –Major significant links. –Other significant links. Standard error nor reported here.

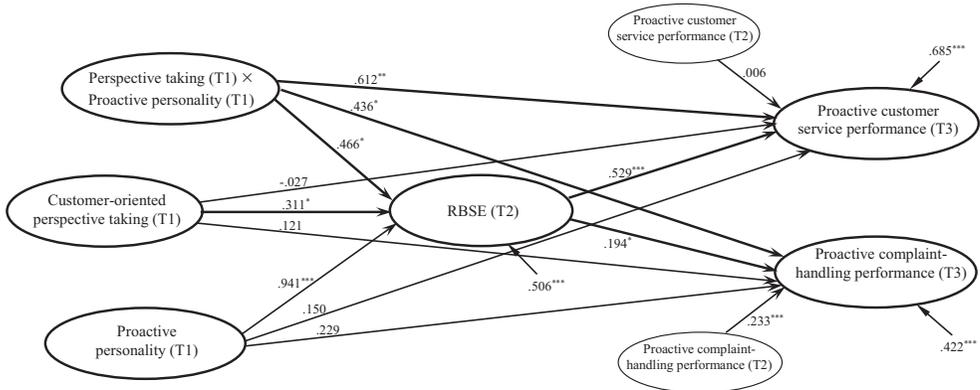


Figure 3. Unstandardized parameter estimates of within-structure MSEM results for the whole model testing. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. –Major significant links. –Other significant links. Standard error nor reported here.

we compared the BIC values of the model that contained the interaction (Figure 3) with those of the model without the interaction. The fit of the model with the interaction was better (ΔBIC value = -7.429). Thus, the statistical results confirmed the good fit of this final model shown in Tables 2 and 3, and Figure 3.

Table 2. Estimated path coefficients for the SEM moderated mediation

Variables	RBSE (T2)		PCSP (T3)		PCHP (T3)		Intercepts		Variances		Residual variances	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Predictors												
COPT (T1)	.311	.144*	-.027	.131	.121	.135	5.342	.056***	.461	.067***		
PP (T1)	.941	.170***	.150	.195	.229	.124	5.679	.044***	.275	.037***		
Interaction (1st stage)												
COPT (T1) × PP (T1)	.466	.204*	.612	.218**	.436	.207*						
Mediator												
RBSE (T2)			.529	.104***	.194	.089*	5.041	.082***			.506	.075***
Interaction (2nd stage)												
PP (T1) × RBSE (T2)			-.123	.163	-.014	.163						
Control variables												
PCSP (T2)			.006	.068	.233	.070***	4.782	.089***	1.079	.128***		
PCHP (T2)							5.441	.081***	.893	.093***		
PCSP (T3)							3.873	.586***			.685	.096***
PCHP (T3)							5.504	.494***			.422	.069***
Employee age			.005	.012	.003	.007						
Supervisor age			.008	.015	-.002	.011						
Employee gender			-.181	.169	-.273	.124*						
Supervisor gender			-.146	.186	.119	.149						
Employee education			-.004	.104	-.010	.067						
Supervisor education			.158	.118	.226	.092*						
Employee job tenure			.023	.019	-.027	.020						
Supervisor job tenure			-.018	.021	-.037	.021						
Length of dyadic relationship			.016	.013	.022	.012						

Notes. RBSE (T2) = Role breadth self-efficacy (T2); PCSP (T2) = Proactive customer service performance (T2); PCHP (T2) = Proactive complaint-handling performance (T2); COPT (T1) = Customer-oriented perspective taking (T1); PP (T1) = Proactive personality (T1); PCSP (T3) = Proactive customer service performance (T3); PCHP (T3) = Proactive complaint-handling performance (T3).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. The results of moderated mediation analysis including first stage moderation effect, and direct, indirect, and total effects (all effects are computed with 95% Monte Carlo CI)

Dependent variables	PCSP (T3)	PSHP (T3)
Indirect effect of COPT1 through RBSE2		
(at value PPI of -1SD)	.041 [-.1812, .2787]	.016 [-.08544, .1285]
(at value PPI of Mean)	.162 [.01342, .3422]	.063 [-.0001137, .1612]
(at value PPI of +1SD)	.253 [.05818, .5155]	.098 [-.0319, .2827]
Direct effect of COPT1		
(at value PPI of -1SD)	-.314 [-.6719, .04742]	-.177 [-.5267, .175]
(at value PPI of Mean)	-.016 [-.2836, .2513]	.108 [-.1564, .3759]
(at value PPI of +1SD)	.282 [-.07071, .6446]	.392 [.04085, .7402]
Total effect of COPT1 through RBSE2		
(at value PPI of -1SD)	-.273 [-.1829, .2695]	-.161 [-.07825, .1279]
(at value PPI of Mean)	.146 [.01439, .3445]	.17 [.0001299, .1646]
(at value PPI of +1SD)	.535 [.05988, .5127]	.491 [-.03266, .2742]

Notes. RBSE (T2) = Role breadth self-efficacy (T2); COPT (T1) = Customer-oriented perspective taking (T1); PP (T1) = Proactive personality (T1); PCSP (T3) = Proactive customer service performance (T3); PCSP (T2) = Proactive customer service performance (T2); PCHP (T3) = Proactive complaint-handling performance (T3); PCHP (T2) = Proactive complaint-handling performance (T2).

Model Fit:

Pure Mediation (Nested Model) - Loglikelihood Value = -1085.681, Scaling Correction Factor = 47.

Moderated Mediation (Comparison Model) - Loglikelihood Value = -1079.021, Scaling Correction Factor = 51.

Difference in -2LL = 15.7182, p -value = .8474.

Bayesian Information Criteria:

BIC (Nested Model)—2402.256.

BIC (Comparison Model)—2408.587.

Adjusted BIC (Nested Model)—2253.574.

Adjusted BIC (Comparison Model)—2247.251.

In Table 2, we reported the whole set of results of first, second, and third stage of moderated mediation effects; and in Table 3, we further reported the direct, indirect, and total effects of this moderated mediation analysis. The within-structure results of the SEM (Table 2) showed that customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) positively predicted RBSE (Time Two) ($B = .311$, $SE = .144$, $p < .05$), in support of H2. Moreover, for the first stage moderated mediation effect, proactive personality (Time One) positively moderated the positive relationship between customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and RBSE (Time Two) ($B = .466$, $SE = .204$, $p < .05$), in support of H3. However, for the second stage moderated mediation effect, we cannot find the significant interactive effect between proactive personality (Time One) and RBSE (Time Two) on proactive customer service performance (Time Three) ($B = -.123$, $SE = .163$, $n.s.$) and proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($B = -.014$, $SE = .163$, $n.s.$). These results support our research model, indicating that proactive personality (Time One) moderates the relationship between customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and RBSE (Time Two), rather than the relationships between RBSE (Time Two) and proactive customer service performance (Time Three), and between RBSE (Time Two) and proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three). We further drew Figure 3

to show the results of the whole model testing. In Figure 3, we do not include the results of the second stage moderated mediation effect to make the model clearer and simpler.

To test H4, using the results from Tables 2 and 3, and Figure 3 (also for the third stage moderated mediation effect), we found that the direct effect of the interaction between customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and proactive personality (Time One) on proactive customer service performance (Time Three) ($B = .612, SE = .218, p < .01$; controlling proactive customer service performance at Time Two) was positive and significant; similarly, the indirect effects through RBSE (Time Two) on proactive customer service performance (Time Three) ($B = .247, p < .05$; controlling proactive customer service performance at Time Two) were positive and significant. These results provide partial support for H4a, because RBSE (Time Two) partially mediated the interactive effect of customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and proactive personality (Time One) on proactive customer service performance (Time Three).

For H4b, we found that the direct effects of the interaction between customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and proactive personality (Time One) on proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($B = .436, SE = .207, p < .05$; controlling proactive complaint-handling performance at Time Two) were positive and significant; similarly, the indirect effects through RBSE (Time Two) on proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($B = .090, p < .05$; controlling proactive complaint-handling performance at Time Two) were also positive and significant. Therefore, the results provide partial support for H4b; RBSE (Time Two) partially mediated the interactive effect of customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and proactive personality (Time One) on proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three).

To demonstrate the interaction effects, we conducted simple slope tests and used the plots in Figure 4 (H3–H4). The positive relationship between customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) and RBSE (Time Two) grew stronger when employees were proactive (Panel A, $b = .556, p < .01$), rather than otherwise ($b = .066, n.s.$), in further support of H3. In addition, customer-oriented perspective taking (Time One) related more significantly to proactive customer service performance (Time Three) (Panel B, $b = .518, p < .01$) and proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) (Panel C, $b = .450, p < .01$) among proactive employees than among less proactive ones ($b_{customer\ service} = -0.274, n.s.$; $b_{complaint\ handling} = -.090, n.s.$), in partial support of H4a and H4b.

In Table 2, we can also find that two control variables influenced employees' proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three). Employee's gender negatively related to

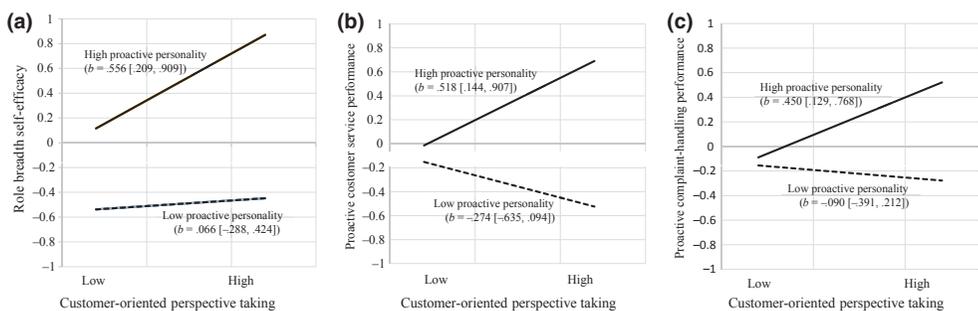


Figure 4. Moderating effects of proactive personality on the relationships between perspective taking and RBSE, customer service performance, and proactive complaint-handling performance.

employees' proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($B = -.273$, $SE = .124$, $p < .05$) indicating that female employees can handle customers complains more smoothly than male employees. Supervisor educational level positively related to employees' proactive complaint-handling performance (Time Three) ($B = .226$, $SE = .092$, $p < .05$) indicating that supervisors receiving higher levels of education may nurture their employees to handle customers' complains more smoothly than those supervisors receiving lower levels of educations.

Discussion

Using a three-wave, time-lagged design, this study investigates how and why service employees adopting customers' perspectives can achieve high-quality service. Service performances begin with people. When focusing their attention on customers' viewpoints, service employees build confidence in their abilities to engage in a broader set of roles to serve customers, which results in better proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. These performance criteria are especially salient when employees are highly proactive. When employees are less proactive, customer-oriented perspective taking has no significant effect on proactive customer service performance or proactive complaint-handling performance.

Theoretical contributions

This study makes several key contributions to the literature. First, although research has recognized the importance of employees in the service profit chain (Gelade & Young, 2005), few effort has been devoted to examine the qualities and capabilities that enable employees to deliver satisfactory service performance (De Jong, De Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2006). Focusing on motivational aspects, previous studies have identified the critical roles of employee satisfaction (Gelade & Young, 2005) and employee motivation (Hays & Hill, 2001) in increasing service performance and customer satisfaction. We contribute to this line of research by investigating two indispensable attributes of employees: their capacity to take customers' perspectives and their proactive dispositions. Customer-oriented perspective taking facilitates interactions between employees and their customers, and a proactive personality amplifies the positive effects of such customer orientation.

Second, despite the relative robustness of the effects of customer-oriented perspective taking, little is known about the perspective taking process itself or specific cognitive processes associated with it. Drawing on motivated information processing theory (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; De Dreu *et al.*, 2000), we move beyond the typically invoked customer-oriented perspective taking–service performance link to examine how employees adopting the perspective of customers can enhance their service performance through RBSE. Motivated information processing theory states that people's cognitive processing is shaped by their motivation (De Dreu *et al.*, 2000). That is, people selectively notice, encode, and remember information consistent with their desires and beliefs (Kunda, 1990). Active role-taking efforts can reduce or eliminate conventional distinctions between perspective takers (i.e., service employees) and their targets (i.e., customers). The degree of self–other confusion and ambiguity thus should diminish markedly (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996). When employees engage in active role taking by helping customers, they make a greater effort to interpret cues and persuade themselves that they possess sufficient capabilities to perform a broader set of roles than

might typically be required to serve customers. Beyond the estimated relationships, our results provide compelling evidence in support of a theoretically derived model that explains the effects of customer-oriented perspective taking on service performance.

In addition, it is important to obtain a complete understanding of not only the bivariate relationships but also the boundary conditions that influence the link between customer-oriented perspective taking and service performance. Our findings further illustrate that the customer-oriented perspective taking–service performance link varies according to employees' proactive personality. Proactive personality can directly enhance employees' performance (Li, Liang, & Crant, 2010); our study also shows that it can moderate the association between customer-oriented perspective taking and RBSE, as well as proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance. When taking the perspective of customers, customer service employees do not just passively encode the target's (i.e., customer's) viewpoints but also shape the situation and adjust their roles to reduce the difference between themselves and their targets. Proactive employees likely go beyond the call of duty to deliver outstanding customer service. Grant and Parker (2009) note that interdependence and uncertainty are two critical challenges for both organizations and employees; research has seldom integrated both perspectives in one study to explore the possible influences between them. This study therefore contributes to extant literature by investigating the joint effect of service employees taking others' perspectives in interdependent situations and their proactivity on those same employees' proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance.

Finally, this study expands literature on the service employees' customer orientation–service performance link by investigating important outcomes that have largely been neglected. Nowadays, customers expect something more beyond just good service. They want to receive something special and memorable (Heineke & Davis, 2007). Our research fills an important void by taking a finer-grained approach to investigate how employees' customer-oriented perspective taking enhances proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance, which are particularly relevant facets of service performance and customer satisfaction in the highly uncertain service sector.

Practical implications

The findings offer valuable practical insights for both service employees and organizations. Taking others' perspectives has always been linked to helping behaviour and benefits towards others. However, to be motivated to take the customers' perspectives, the employees need to recognize how perspective taking can benefit themselves. Our research showed that for employees, taking customers' perspectives results in a more satisfactory service encounter and significantly enhances their service performance. Employees thus should adopt the customer-oriented service philosophy to improve their service performance. One possible strategy is finding a role model to observe the behaviours and actions in serving customers to enhance the skills in taking others' perspectives (Ho & Gupta, 2012).

For organizations, to ensure employees' proactive service performance, in the recruitment and selection process, HR specialists and managers should assess the applicants' customer-oriented perspective taking tendency and proactive personality. Those employees high in customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive personality are more likely to provide service and solve the customers' complaints proactively. After the employees have joined the organization, managers can increase the employees'

motivation to take customers' viewpoints by linking incentives to exceptional demonstrations of transcending role limitations to help customers. The selection process should also get the information about service employees' RBSE. Psychometric assessment can also be used as a reference to indicate the applicants' RBSE. The interview questions can address the applicants' previous experience in breaking and expanding their roles to solve problems.

Finally, our findings regarding the mediated moderation suggest that service organizations could use intervening mechanisms in the service marketing process to help employees improve their confidence in proactively expanding their roles. To promote RBSE, for example, managers might provide employees with more control over their service encounters, encourage employees to attend a broad range of training activities, and offer them opportunities to participate in continuous improvement groups (Axtell & Parker, 2003; Parker, 1998). Managers can also assign employees tasks that they need to extend beyond their role skills to achieve success.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, although we collected the data in three waves (at 6-month intervals) and from different sources (service employees and their immediate supervisors), common method variance still may affect some of our results. However, methodology researchers have demonstrated that in interaction regression models, common method variance severely deflates, rather than inflates, the effects of the interaction terms (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Thus, in our model, the interaction effects cannot be artefacts of common method variance. In addition, we did not control the effect of concepts relating to customer-oriented perspective taking, such as employees' emotional intelligence, empathy, and prosocial motivation. Further studies may examine the discriminant validity of customer-oriented perspective taking by controlling these similar constructs.

Second, we focus on customer service employees in high-contact service organizations; nevertheless, we posit that the findings may extend to industries involving low-contact services because interpersonal relationships and social interactions are increasingly recognized in various jobs, projects, and tasks (Grant & Parker, 2009). Besides external relationships with customers and clients, employees' internal interactions with their team members and people from other departments within the organization are increasingly critical (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Therefore, it stands to reason that the implications regarding the positive consequences of customer service employees' perspective taking from our study might generalize to other organizations in which interpersonal interactions are required among internal customers (i.e., colleagues).

Third, while we specifically investigate the mediating effect of RBSE in translating the interaction of customer-oriented perspective taking and proactive personality into proactive service performance, there are other psychological mechanisms that may constitute potential mediators along with RBSE. For example, previous studies found that perspective taking can lead to altruistic motivation (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997), empathetic motivation (Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003), motivation to help (Maner *et al.*, 2002), etc., which are likely to result in favourable proactive service performance. Therefore, an ideal complete model may also include these motivations as the underlying processes.

Finally, regarding the generalizability of the findings, the respondents were from mainland China, limiting the applicability of the results to other countries and research

contexts. We argue that the overall pattern of our theory appears broadly applicable because the philosophy of customer service is universal (Knight, 1999). The data came from Hangzhou, one of the most economically flourishing regions in mainland China and a region in which different cultures often come in close contact (Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007). Moreover, we only included proactive service performance in our study. Proactive service performance constitutes a significant part of employees' general service performance, and the high-quality service involves employees' willingness to go 'above and beyond' the formal job roles. Thus, we expect the similar pattern of results for general service performance. However, a complete understanding about the outcomes of customer-oriented perspective taking can incorporate general service performance in the model.

Future research directions

Further research into the effects of customer-oriented perspective taking could include the team or organizational level contextual factors as potential moderators in the relationship between customer-oriented perspective taking and RBSE. For example, a good service climate may create a contagion effect, promoting the RBSE of employees with a perspective taking tendency with customers. Transformational leadership or servant leadership would also enhance the RBSE when individuals taking the customers' perspectives.

Second, we did not include variables on employees' skills and abilities. For example, an employee's high emotional intelligence may increase employees' RBSE when the employee takes the customers' perspectives. Moreover, proactivity is not always desirable, and proactive personality can be adaptive or maladaptive (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Chan (2006) found that proactive personality resulted in favourable employee performance only when the employees have effective situational judgement skill. Therefore, future research may explore other possible skills or abilities that constitute a three-way interaction with employees' perspective taking and proactive personality to influence their motivational and behavioural outcomes.

Third, perspective taking can have different targets which induce different psychological states (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Prior studies have demonstrated that perspective taking towards colleagues leads people to behave more egoistically among group members competing for resources (Epley *et al.*, 2006); perspective taking towards a cheerleader results in decreased performance due to stereotyping (Galinsky *et al.*, 2008); and perspective taking towards a close other may increase bias and reduce satisfaction due to the overestimation of their own transparency to the other (Vorauer & Sucharyna, 2013). Besides perspective taking with customers, further research may continue to explore the similar or different consequences of employees' perspective taking with different stakeholders (e.g., supervisors, teammates).

Fourth, although the existing studies have predominately showed a positive relationship between RBSE and various work behaviour (e.g., Nauta, Van Vianen, Van der Heijden, Van Dam, & Willemsen, 2009; Parker & Collins, 2010; Sonnentag & Spsychala, 2012), the actual situation may be more complicated. Grant and Schwartz (2011) discussed the possible inverted-U-shape effects of positive traits, states, and experiences and called for more empirical research to investigate the inflection point after which the effects become negative. The excessive levels of self-efficacy have been showed to reduce performance (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002) and time and resources invested in planning and learning (Vancouver & Kendall, 2006). Future research can

employ the similar reasoning to RBSE and find the inflection point after which RBSE may harm the individual's proactive behaviour or other outcomes.

Finally, Bandura (1977) proposed that there are four types of major sources which can be used to develop self-efficacy: repeated performance success, observing the role models, verbal persuasion, and the overall psychological judgement. Extending the similar logic to RBSE, employees' accomplishment in previous proactive customer service performance and proactive complaint-handling performance can build their capabilities and skills needed for coping with such situations (Gist, 1987), thus enhance their confidence in expanding the roles when serving customers and handling customers' complaints. While the extant research on RBSE and proactive behaviour has been exclusively focused on the effect of RBSE on proactive behaviours, future research may break this trend by exploring the possible flow from proactive performance to RBSE.

Conclusion

The transformation from a manufacturing economy to a service economy has made the employee–customer–profit relationship more salient. We develop a mediated moderation model of the process of how customer-oriented perspective taking influences service performance. The mediating role of RBSE and the moderating role of a proactive personality deepen understanding of the psychological processes and boundary conditions of employees' service orientation in improving service performance and handling customers' complaints. The findings from our research thus highlight several novel and promising research directions for enhancing current understanding of customer-oriented perspective taking, RBSE, and service performance.

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Appendix : Study measures

Customer-oriented perspective taking Axtell *et al.* (2007).

- (1) I imagine how things look from the customer's perspective.
- (2) I think about how I would feel in customers' situation.
- (3) I try to see things from their customers' viewpoints.
- (4) I try to imagine myself as a customer in a similar situation.

Proactive personality Seibert *et al.* (2001).

- (1) I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.
- (2) Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.
- (3) Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.
- (4) If I see something I don't like, I fix it.
- (5) No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.
- (6) I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.
- (7) I excel at identifying opportunities.
- (8) I am always looking for better ways to do things.
- (9) If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.
- (10) I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

RBSE Parker (1998).

- (1) Presenting information to a group of colleagues.
- (2) Helping to set targets in your area.
- (3) Designing new procedures for your work area.
- (4) Contacting people outside the company (e.g., customers) to discuss problems.
- (5) Analysing a long-term problem to find a solution.
- (6) Representing your work area in meetings with senior management.
- (7) Visiting people from other departments to suggest doing things differently.

Proactive customer service performance Rank *et al.* (2007).

- (1) Proactively shares information with customers to meet their financial needs.
- (2) Anticipates issues or needs customers might have and proactively develops solutions.
- (3) Uses own judgement and understanding of risk to determine when to make exceptions or improvise solutions.
- (4) Takes ownership by following through with the customer interaction and ensures a smooth transition to other service representatives.

- (5) Actively creates partnerships with other service representatives to better serve customers.
- (6) Takes initiative to communicate client requirements to other service areas and collaborates in implementing solutions.
- (7) Proactively checks with customers to verify that customer expectations have been met or exceeded.

Proactive complaint-handling performance Chan and Lam (2011).

- (1) This employee handles customer complaints proactively.
- (2) This employee responds to customers' complaints proactively.
- (3) In general, customers are satisfied with this employee's proactive attention to their complaints.