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**THE EFFECT OF CUSTOMER EMPOWERING BEHAVIORS ON  
SERVICE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE**

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The Effect of Customer Empowering Behaviors on Service Employee Performance  
Müşteri Güçlendirme Davranışlarının Hizmet Çalışanlarının Performansına Etkisi

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## **ABSTRACT**

Under highly competitive service industry, customers are more selective while making their decisions. Due to high level of customer complexity in service industry, each customer wants to feel as a unique entity. Companies have to not only respond to customers' needs and wants immediately, but also meet their expectations by creating unique services. Customers' actions may encourage and motivate employees to make decisions about successful service delivery which is called customer empowering behaviors (Dong, Chuang, Liao, Zhou & Campbell, 2015). This thesis aims to explain antecedents of customer empowering behaviors which have impacts on employee absorption and customer service performance in the service industry. In this study, a multilevel conceptual model is used and the thesis suggests that customer empowering behaviors will be efficient on customer service performance through fostering job engagement (i.e. employee absorption). The thesis proposes that these relationships can be moderated by hotel-level factor which is customer complexity. In this study, quantitative research method is used by collecting questionnaires from frontline employees who work either at the reception desk or guest relations in hotels with 4 and 5 stars in the South and South Western districts of Turkey. The results indicate that customer empowering behaviors play a vital role that affects customer service performance through promoting employee absorption at the employee-level, however, at the hotel-level customer complexity has not any significant effect on relationships between customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption and customer service performance. Based on the study's results, theoretical and managerial implications are presented in detail.

**Keywords:** Customer empowering behaviors, job demands and resources theory, services marketing, customer complexity, employee service performance.

## ÖZET

Yüksek oranda rekabetçi hizmet sektöründe tüketiciler satın alma kararlarını verirken çok daha fazla seçicidirler. Hizmet endüstrisinde yüksek seviyede müşteri karmaşıklığı olduğu için hizmet süresince her bir müşteri kendine eşsiz davranılmasını ister. Bu yüzden, firmalar sadece müşterilerin istek ve ihtiyaçlarına hemen cevap vermekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda standardize olmamış hizmet yaratarak onların beklentilerine cevap verirler. Hizmet endüstrisinde müşterilerin hareketleri başarılı bir hizmet alabilmek için çalışanları cesaretlendirebilir ve motive edebilir, buna da pazarlama literatüründe müşteri güçlendirme davranışları adı verilmiştir (Dong, Chuang, Liao, Zhou & Campbell, 2015). Bu yüzden hizmet çalışanları bazı hizmet satın alma kararlarını müşterileri adına vermektedir. Bu doğrultuda işbu tez çalışmasının amacı hizmet sektöründe çalışanların emilimini ve müşteri hizmet performansını etkileyen müşteri güçlendirme davranışlarının önceliklerini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu tezde çok düzeyli bir kavramsal model kullanılmıştır ve bu tez müşteri güçlendirme davranışlarının, iş ilişkisini (yani çalışanların emilimini) teşvik ederek müşteri hizmet performansında etkili olacağını göstermektedir. Ayrıca tez, bu ilişkilerin müşteri karmaşıklığı gibi otel düzeyinde faktörler tarafından etkilenebileceğini önermektedir. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'nin Güney ve Güney Batı bölgelerindeki 4 ve 5 yıldızlı otellerde resepsiyonda ya da misafir ilişkilerinde çalışan ön büro çalışanlarından anket toplanarak nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu tezin sonuçları müşteri güçlendirme davranışlarının, çalışanların emilimini çalışan düzeyinde teşvik ederek müşteri hizmet performansını etkileyen bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Sonuçlar, otel düzeyinde müşteri karmaşıklığının, müşteri güçlendirme davranışları ile çalışanların emilimi ve müşteri hizmet performansı arasındaki ilişkiler üzerinde önemli bir etkisi olmadığını göstermiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, teorik ve yönetsel uygulamalar detaylı bir şekilde sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: müşteri güçlendirici davranışı, iş talepleri ve kaynakları teorisi, hizmet pazarlaması, müşteri karmaşıklığı, hizmet çalışan performansı



## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Service industry constitutes almost the half of Turkish economy (TUIK, 2014). 48% of the Turkish workforce is employed in a service industry in Turkey (Özsağır & Akın, 2012). The rising significance of service in both global and domestic economy attracts more people to the service industry (Dong, Liao, Chuang, Zhou & Campbell, 2015). Additionally, an improved service industry reflects the country's development and welfare level (Şit, 2016). In other words, an improved service industry is associated with a heightened level of income and amount of leisure times (Öztürk, 1998; Özsağır et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, it is possible to state that service industry has become more complicated in line with the rising and more sophisticated customer expectations. Due to the intangible, heterogeneous, perishable and inseparable nature of any service context, satisfying customers' needs and wants is a challenging task (Parasuraman, Zeithalm & Berry, 1985). More particularly, the inseparable characteristic of any service context imposes the employee and the customer to be in constant interaction with each other (Parasuraman et al., 1982; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Due to a lack of standardization in any service delivery context, the employee-customer interaction in a given service situation will be unique, playing a vital role in order to satisfy the customers (Parasuraman et al. 1985, Grönroos, 1978).

Service industry, though, has been known to be a challenging one. Besides the increasing expectations coming from customers' side, number of organizations in the service context are rising in line with more diverse customer demands, rising competition in the global context, and advanced technology (Spreitzer, 1997; Tekin & Köksal, 2012). This is possibly because of this challenging nature of the work context, in many service industries including the hospitality industry, the employee turnover rate is the highest and the job performance has been in constant drop (Kruja, Ha, Drishiti & Oelfke, 2016) as well as the employee motivation (Pelit & Turkmen, 2008).

It should be remembered that high level of customer service performance is the source of competitive advantage through creating customer satisfaction (Lashlay, 1996), and the role of frontline employee in the creation of competitive advantage is noteworthy (Kruja et al., 2015; Özturk, Hancer & Im, 2014). Hence, the context of empowerment carries major importance. In other words, empowering the frontline employees in most of the cases yields effective service delivery, and returns as heightened customer satisfaction (Chiang & Jang, 2008).

Though the extant literature has focused on supervisor or manager-sourced empowering behaviors in the service settings (Auh, Menguc & Jung, 2014), some recent studies focus on the fact that customers can also empower the employees in the service process (Dong, Liao, Zhou & Campbell, 2015). Such studies further claim that customer-sourced empowering behaviors foster the employee satisfaction and performance by increasing their creativity in their work (Dong et al., 2015).

### **1.1.Limitations of Previous Researches and the Contribution of the Present Research**

To the best of our knowledge, Dong et al. (2015) constitutes the only study on the concept of customer empowering behaviors until so far. In line with aforementioned backdrop, the study states that customer empowering behaviors that is frontline employees' actions to decide on behalf of the customers in service settings, might instigate employee creativity (Dong et al., 2015). Therefore, the study posits that customer empowering behaviors have a positive role in employee attitudes and behaviors in the service settings. Particularly in tourism industry, customer empowering behaviors might cause motivation and creativity in frontline employees, which might increase the employees' performance. In hospitality industry, such a finding has not been tested for the context of customer empowering behaviors, and yet to be investigated.

In line with this limitation, we formulate our research question in this study as “Do customer empowering behaviors have a positive effect on customer service performance through enhancing absorption in frontline employees working in the service context?”. This thesis particularly focuses on the effects of customer empowering behaviors in the hospitality industry. Addressing to the aforementioned gaps, we suggest that customer empowering behaviors will influence employees’ job performance, namely customer service performance, by creating employee absorption in them. In order to propose these relationships, our study borrows from the Job Demands-Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti; 2001, 2007). By using this theoretical framework, the thesis further suggests a different factor in the hotel-level (i.e., customer complexity) conditioning the aforementioned relationships.

In line with these objectives, the thesis first introduces the concept of empowerment and leader empowering behaviors in order to set the base for the concept of customer empowering behaviors. The thesis, then, explains the Job-Demands Resources Theory and introduces the variables that take part in our conceptual model. The hypothesis development section follows with the detailed discussions of the research hypotheses proposed in this study. The thesis, then presents the methodology to be used in collecting the data needed for the testing of our study hypotheses.

## **1.2.Purpose and Motivations of the Study**

This thesis first aims to enrich the understanding of the positive role of customer empowering behaviors on employee performance. The thesis also focuses on the hindering effects of customer complexity on customer empowering behaviors - employee performance relationship in line with Job Demands and Resources Framework and tests these relationships in a service setting in the hospitality industry. Our initial motivation for studying customer empowering behaviors and its effects on customer service performance comes

from a variety of reasons. First of all, customer empowering behaviors have an enhancing effect on the customer service performance (Dong et al., 2015). We also believe that customer empowering behaviors are likely to benefit organizations, are particularly key motivators of employee's creativity and enhances customer satisfaction. Second, customer empowering behaviors are unexamined in the marketing literature and only by a limited extent by Dong et al. (2015). We believe that studying the positive effects of customer empowering behaviors on service employee performance may provide significant contributions for both marketing theory and practice.

Due to the fact that customer empowering behavior literature is limited to Dong et al., (2015), we use empowerment and leader empowering behaviors concepts to observe the effects of customer empowering behaviors on service employee performance at the employee – level. Therefore, we establish a link between empowerment and customer empowering behaviors by noting supervisors' (i.e. leader empowering behaviors) effect (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie & Morrin, 2009). Additionally, this will be the first study that customer empowering behaviors are related with the tourism industry.

Our study suggests that the effect of customer empowering behaviors on service employee performance at the employee-level will be through job engagement, which is conceptualized as employee absorption. Furthermore, our study aims to investigate whether the employee-level relationships between customer empowering behaviors –job engagement-customer service performance are contingent on different factors at the hotel-level (i.e., customer complexity).

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

This study is essential in the sense of a variety of gaps in the literature. First of all, as far as we know, the study is the second effort that focusses on customer empowering behaviors, that has been limited by the literature except the study by Dong, Liao, Chuang, Zhou and Campbell (2015). Second reason is that our

study differs from Dong et al. (2015) due to its inclusion of employee absorption into the research model that associates customer empowering behaviors to customer service performance through Job Demand-Resources Theory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2001). This is the first study that uses JD-R theoretical framework to analyze the effects of customer empowering behaviors.

Third, our study is the first attempt that will be applied in both tourism industry and in Turkey. Since there is high interaction between customers and employees in tourism industry, the concept of customer empowering behaviors is likely to be appropriate in this sector. Furthermore, our thesis is the first study that investigates the effects of the interaction of customer empowering behaviors and customer complexity.

The final significance of the study is that it observes the role of customer empowering behaviors on customer service performance via the mediating effects of job engagement. Therefore, we investigate whether job engagement, which is conceptualized as employee absorption, can act as the underlying mechanism that explains the relationship between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance relationship. Our study particularly aims to improve the knowledge on customer empowering behaviors that was first introduced by Dong, Liao, Chuang, Zhou and Campbell (2015).

#### **1.4. Organization of the Study**

This thesis explains the effect of customer empowering behaviors on service employee performance. First, in Chapter 2, the concept of customer empowering behaviors will be explained in general. Since the customer empowering behaviors concept is limited in the literature (Dong et al., 2015), empowerment and leader empowering behavior literature will be used in order to understand our subject in detail. Then, in Chapter 3, our theoretical

framework which is Job Demand Resources Theory will be explained. (Demerouti & Bakker, 2001). In Chapter 4, we will introduce our conceptual framework and our model's constructs. In Chapter 5, our research hypotheses will be examined in detail. After providing information about the methodology that we use in our study in Chapter 6, we present our findings in Chapter 7. In the final chapter, we will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and suggest ideas for potential future studies.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT**

#### **2.1. Empowerment**

##### **2.1.1. Definition of Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment was first introduced in the organization literature in the 1980s (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2013). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) observe that employee empowerment means sharing power which grants them the authority and energy to undertake various roles and responsibilities within the organization. In a world with highly sophisticated customer needs demanding flexibility and quality, Hill and Hug (2004) define empowerment as a crucial component of sustainable competitive advantage among firms. Furthermore, empowerment helps the organizations to be successful and it is strongly related to the active use of employees (Hill & Hug, 2004). Moreover, empowered employees perceive themselves as being valuable assets in the organization. (Ukil, 2006). According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), empowerment is an increased task motivation which inspires the attitude to accomplish. Furthermore, it promotes the feeling of self-efficacy and the overall organizational job performance (Velthouse, et al.1977; 1986, p. 474). Employees perform their best when they have the opportunity to express themselves with respect to the issues that influence their work.

The term of employee empowerment refers to the flow of authority from supervisors to subordinates, as well as, the shift of responsibility and decision making initiative from managers to employees (Biemann, Kearney & Margraff, 2015, p.2). Adding to this definition, there exists a different point of view in the literature which notes that empowerment cannot be captured by a single concept, but could only be explained as a multifaceted construct (Spreitzer, 1995;1996, Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This point of view further conceptualizes empowerment with four dimensions which are namely meaning,

competence, self-determination and impact. Meaning refers to the extent of fit between an individual's values, identity, actions and the requirements of occupation (Rapp, Ahearne, Methieu & Schillewart, 2006). Another dimension is competence which refers to one's confidence over his abilities and capabilities to perform his job requirements (Spreitzer, 1995;1996; Gist, 1987). One's degree of autonomy in determining how he is doing his job related tasks is called self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995; 1996; Ryan & Connel, 1989). The last dimension impact indicates the extent of one's perceived effect and influence over work related matters (Spreitzer, 1996; Ashforth & Mael 1989).

### **2.1.2. Consequences of Empowerment**

The marketing literature has attributed the concept of empowerment to a variety of consequences. In terms of employee-level consequences, empowerment enhances the employee motivation and job performance by determining employees' work roles clearly, supporting them to achieve high effect-requiring job tasks and involving them in organizational decision making processes (Kruja, Ha, Drishiti & Oelfke, 2016). Furthermore, employee empowerment increases employees taking initiative, concentration and resiliency (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Speitzer, 1996).

Employee empowerment, further, enhances productivity, provides better customer satisfaction, and builds employee loyalty. Additionally, it reduces employee turnover, stress at work, increasing employee job performance (Kruja, Ha, Drishiti, & Oelfke, 2016). Moreover, employee empowerment enhances employee productivity by decentralizing the decision making process since employees can participate proactively in addressing the issues affecting their respective departments (Raub & Robert, 2010). Majorly, employees become responsible where they can address issues effectively by taking initiative without having to wait for the supervisors. Including employees in the

decision making process as a type of empowerment during service context results in greater customer satisfaction and retention (Raub & Robert, 2010; Hug & Hill, 2004).

Employee empowerment also gives employees motivational energy and fosters organizational commitment, the ability to take risks, and innovativeness, which results in higher job performance and increasing level of work related task concentration (Prathiba, 2016). Wooddell (2009) states that employee empowerment is instrumental in supporting employee learning and knowledge via involving employees in decision-making and problem solving process. Thus, employee empowerment encourages self-development, which is required in achieving various targets within the organization (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). In this regard, employees feel confident and ready to handle the challenges within the organization. According to Spreitzer (1996) feeling confident during solving customer-related problems give employees resiliency while making decisions on behalf of customers. Particularly in service industry, which has high level of customer complexity, employees can take actions freely and solve their problems immediately against customers' high demanded expectations (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Therefore, empowerment reduces the management workload especially on the operational roles and responsibilities within the organization (Kruja et al. 2016).

Despite its benefits, various scholars argue that extensive employee empowerment sometimes leads to disrespect, overconfidence, and insubordination. Prior studies posit that empowered employees experience frustration and role conflict (Chan & Lam, 2011). While sharing autonomy with leaders provides employees better performance tenure in organizations, it also boosts role conflict which in turn might inhibit job performance and promote distrust between the employee and the manager (Hug & Hill, 2004). Participating in important decision making processes, and sharing organizational risks load the employee extra responsibilities, which sometimes interferes with their performances. Therefore, they extend their efforts to

overcome high workload, which would, again, hinder the job performance and motivation of the employee (Chan et al. 2011).

## **2.2. Leader Empowering Behaviors**

### **2.2.1. Definition of Leader Empowering Behaviors**

A particular source of employee empowerment, which has received significant attention in the organizational literature, is leaders' empowering behaviors, namely empowering leadership behaviors. Since this concept builds a stepping stone for the customer empowering behaviors in this study, the empowering leadership behaviors is discussed in this part. Raub and Robert (2010) define empowering leadership as "a shift in the source of control from leader to the follower" and further states that an empowering leader's main role is "to lead others to lead themselves" (Raub & Robert, 2010, p. 1747). Empowering leadership behavior is the authorization of responsibility to the lowest organizational level by top managers (Ahearne, Methieu & Rapp, 2005). Furthermore, empowering leadership permits employees to take initiative during decision making process as relevant to work related issues (Auh, et. al, 2014).

### **2.2.2. Consequences of Leader Empowering Behaviors**

The marketing literature posits that empowering leadership behavior has both positive and negative outcomes on the part of empowered employees. Empowering leadership refers to having belief in employees' ability to achieve a specific task about their work in the organization. The ability of taking initiative during the service context enhances job satisfaction and creativity in employees (Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie & Morin, 2009). Furthermore, empowering leadership behaviors enable employees to feel motivated in terms

of contributing to the organization's goal (Biemann, Kearney & Maggraf, 2015).

On one hand empowering leaders have a great deal of positive impacts on employees' motivation and job performance, on the other hand, some research states that such behaviors might yield effect on employees (Chan & Lam, 2011). According to Cheong, Spain, Yammarino and Yun (2016), sharing power and responsibilities with employees may result in a conflict in the minds of employees. Delegating authority and responsibility to the employees further creates high work load for them. In this sense, employees need to handle and achieve more than one work at the same time (Chebat & Kollias, 2000). This situation includes customer complexity which means high demand expectations from employees in order to provide unique and unstandardized services that responds to customers' needs and wants. While meeting customers' over expectations, they have to set balance between high number of customers and be creative to deliver individualized and customized service. Employees have to display greater performance to understand customers' expectations better and this may engender psychological and behavioral disorder (i.e. role conflict refers confusion about employees' roles and duties at work) on employees (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). As a consequence of this, work overload and taking extra responsibility and pressure to be able to do their work better will not only make employee dissatisfied but also decrease his job performance (i.e., the responsibilities of being a regular employee and delegated responsibilities that would otherwise be expected from supervisors in order to meet customers' over expectations) (Schimitz et al., 2014; Cheong et al., 2016).

### **2.3. Customer Empowering Behaviors**

Customers usually convey valuable information to employees prior to how the service should be provided to them, and they may contribute to the service process by sharing their opinions with the service providers (Dong, Chiang, Liao, Zhou and Campbell, 2015). Nevertheless, this may not be essential for all

customers where they may not prefer communicating such information but instead empower the frontline employees to make service-related decisions on behalf of them (Dong et al., 2015). Despite the fact that, type of this employee empowerment coming from the customer side has received minor attention in the extant literature with the exception of Dong, et al. (2015). This study defines the customer empowering behaviors as a “customer action that make employees feel motivated, and able to make decisions on their behalf regarding how to achieve desired outcomes during the service encounters” (Dong, Chuang, Liao, Zhou & Campbell, 2015, p.1365).

According to Dong et al (2015), customer empowering behaviors are instrumental in fostering employee creativity through instigating employee promotion focus. The employee creativity would, in turn, create higher customer satisfaction (Dong et al., 2015). Nevertheless, our knowledge on customer empowering behavior is limited to the extent of Dong et al. (2015) the article which the thesis aims to build upon in this research.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:**

#### **JOB DEMANDS- RESOURCES THEORY**

Our research aims to observe the effects of customer empowering behaviors on employees' customer service performance through the mediating role of employee absorption. In line with this objective, our research uses Job Demands-Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti; 2001, 2007) as a theoretical framework. Since its inception, Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R) has been used by many studies in the organization and marketing literature (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007) to observe employee job performance in organizations. At the heart of JD-R theory, lies the assumption stating that employee performance will be affected by absorption experienced by employees, which are in turn are influenced by certain factors (Bakker, Demerouti & Vergel, 2014). This chapter first explains these factors, namely, job demands and job resources, and later delve into the analysis of the interactions between them to explain their role on employee absorption, and job performance.

#### **3.1. Job Demands**

According to Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke (2004) the term job demands can be defined as “the psychological, physical, social or organizational characteristics of a job that require mental, cognitive ability, physical ability of employees to complete the overall goal of the organization” (Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke 2004, p. 87). In marketing literature, common examples of job demands are stated as workload, cognitive ability, poor working environment and emotional demands. In the literature, job demand aspects are also related to high work pressure and emotionally demanding interactions with clients or customers in the work place (Bakker et al., 2017). An employee who

deals with high job demands such as high workload, high customer complexity, high mental and cognitive abilities may face a health impairment. Due to health impairment, an employee may experience anxiety and stress on the job that can affect the overall performance of the employees. The marketing literature further posits that job demands are associated with both physiological and psychological costs. The former refers to high blood pressure, heart diseases and while the latter indicates depersonalization which refers to distance oneself emotionally from others (Bakker, 2000). Therefore, an unfavorable physical environment and irregular working hours affect one's job performance and evoke strain in the work place (Tastan, 2014). In addition to this, another consequence of job demands is self-undermining which is related to "high level of job strain" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017, p. 277). Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) state that job demands have negative effect on employee's adaptation and motivation within the work environment. In this sense, over demanding work conditions, job related stress and undesirable physical environment at work have negative impact on one's working process (Bakker et al., 2007).

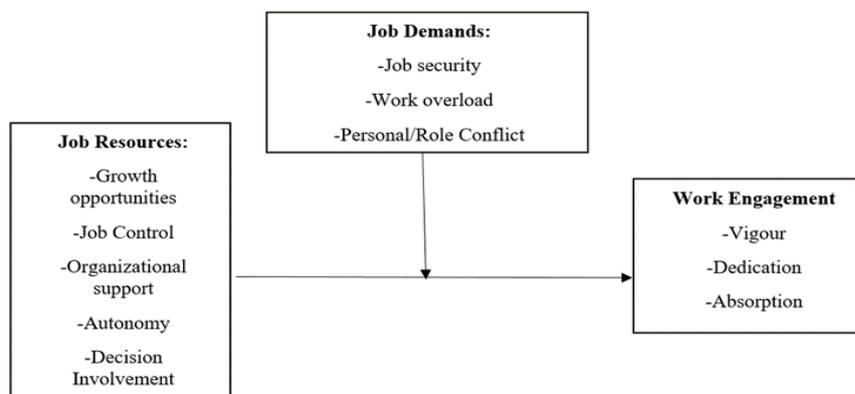
### **3.2. Job Resources**

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), the term job resources are the factors that are used by the employee to complete the requirements of a job. The most common examples of the job resources that are mentioned in the extant literature include job autonomy, employee feedback, opportunities for the growth for the employee in an organization. Prior studies further posit that job resources are significant antecedents of employee work engagement (Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007). Besides any other factor that enhances the personal growth and learning in employee (Tastan et al., 2004), job resources may include factors like salary, job security, supervisor support and positive physical environment (Nahrang et al. 2010). Moreover, job resources also include interactive relations with colleagues, strong relationships

with the supervisor and has positive relationship with work engagement which is defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Bakker, Hakkanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007, p. 274). Absorption which is the cognitive element of engagement can be defined as “to be characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Bakker, Hakkanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007, p. 274). Additionally, work engagement has a great deal of organizational and individual consequences similar to job resources (Taştan, 2014). According to previous studies, it is identified that the job resources are critical in enhancing the employee motivation levels and engagement towards their job and organization which would further increase their job satisfaction and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Aforementioned above, marketing literature posits that the JD-R model foresees the positive or negative outcomes of burnout and work engagement (Taştan, 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). To be able to explain job resources and job demands as antecedents of work engagement the JD-R model of Taştan (2014) is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 3.1 – Job Demands-Resources Model**



**Source:** Taştan (2014, p. 155)

### **3.3. The Premises of JD-R Theory**

As has been discussed before, JD-R posits that each work has its own demands and challenges which may produce strain and stress. JD-R theory more particularly identifies two factors, namely job demands and job resources (Nahrang, Morgesson & Hoffman, 2010). Prior literature posits that while job demands refer to social and organizational aspects that cause physical or psychological costs in employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006), job resources refer to the aspects that motivate employees. To illustrate; helping employees to achieve their goals or personal growth, improved social relations with colleagues and supervisor support reflect job resources aspects (Bakker, Hakkanen, Demerouti & Xanthpoulou, 2007). Nevertheless, job demands include work overload, long working hours and inconvenient working environment causing which, in turn, hinder the job performance (Bakker et al., 2007). JD-R theory further states that it will be up to the job resources to weaken the adverse effects of job demands (Bakker et al., 2006). More particularly, the presences of resources will reduce the negative effects created by job demands, in turn, affect the job performance.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

JD-R theory posits that two types of working aspects exist within each organizational context in the form of job demands and resources. The former hinders the job engagement which consequently reduces the employee performance. It is with the presence of the latter (i.e. resources) that this adversarial effect of the former (i.e. demands) can be replenished. Borrowing from JD-R theory, we propose that customer empowering behaviors which this thesis refers as a job resource will increase the level of job engagement (i.e., employee absorption) experienced by the frontline service employee. This would, in turn, enhance frontline employees' service performance to customers. In line with the premises of JD-R, this thesis study proposes that customer complexity, which we refer as a job demand will have a hindering effect on the way customer empowering behaviors bolster the employee absorption. This part explains each variable mentioned above for a better understanding of our relationships that will be delineated in the following section.

#### **4.1. Employee- Level Factors**

##### **4.1.1. Customer Empowering Behaviors**

Reminding the discussion in chapter 2, the concept of empowerment was defined as “the flow of authority from managers to subordinates” (Biemann et al., 2015, p.2). Nevertheless, the literature has recently altered this argument where managers may not be the sole source of empowering the employees. This empowering behavior might further come from the customer himself (Dong et al., 2015).

Particularly, marketing literature states that customers have become a part of production particularly in the service industry. Moreover, the service industries

see frequent interaction between customers and employees (Kotler, 2014). This makes frontline service employee attitudes and job behaviors more affected by customer actions. As an extension of regular customer employee interactions in service industries, frontline service employees also have more opportunities to improve their service performance by getting more input from customers (Dong, Chuang, Liao, Zhou & Campbell, 2015, p. 1366). Nevertheless, this may not be possible for each customer employee relationship in service settings. Namely, some customers instead of providing input might “make employees feel motivated and able to make decisions on their behalf to achieve desired outcomes during the service encounters” (Dong et al., 2015, p.1365; Ahearne et al.,2005; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse. 1990). This customer action refers to customer empowering behaviors in which customers create “conditions that make employees feel motivated and capable of making important decisions” (Dong, et al.2015, p. 1366) on their behalf regarding their service needs.

In line with this definition, customers who are involved in high levels of employee empowering behaviors are expected to help the employees to see the importance of their work for them, consult the employees on their service related decisions about the service outcome or allow the employee to provide service their way (Dong et al. 2015). As far as we know, the concept of customer empowering behaviors has received minor attention in literature except Dong et al. (2015) who associated this customer behavior to employee service creativity via fostering employee promotion focus. Our conceptual model identifies customer empowering behaviors as a job resource, which, in line with JD-R framework, will increase service employee absorption that eventually affect customer service performance.

#### **4.1.2. Employee Absorption**

The concept of work engagement is defined as one’s extent of willingness, enthusiasm and identification with his work (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-

Vergel 2014). More particularly, engagement refers to a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007, p .274). The first component, vigor, refers to an employee’s level of energy and eagerness to one’s job. The second component, which is dedication, refers to the employee’s extent of in devoting himself to his work (Tuckey, Bakker & Dollard, 2012; Bakker et al., 2007). The last component, absorption which relates to engagement’s cognitive component, is about one’s level of concentration and focus on his job. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) absorption is experienced by an employee when “one is highly concentrated and happily engrossed in works so that he feels time passes quickly and it is difficult to detach from work” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295). Following this information, absorption can be defined as an individual’s sense of involvement in job and ignoring everything else around him/herself during work (Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007).

According to Bakker and Geurts (2004) employee absorption has an important influence on employee’s private life, while having a cheerful and successful day at work. In other words, absorption has a positive impact on both employee’s work performance and work to home interface which is a significant consequence of job demands and resources at work and one’s psychological well-being (Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007). In addition to this, Mauno et al. (2007) claim that employee absorption is also related to time demand which means that whether an employee has lots of things to do on duty as time flies and it promotes employee absorption at work. Furthermore, when an employee works very hard and fast on duty, he feels himself more significant compared to others. As a consequence of this, being a busy person at work not only increases work motivation, but also influences work performance in a positive way (Bakker et al., 2004; Mauno et al., 2007). In our thesis, job engagement is indicated as an employee absorption which affects customer performance in employee-level.

### **4.1.3. Customer Service Performance**

In the literature, customer service performance represents employees' behaviors to customers during the service encounter (Menguc, Auh & Yeniaras, 2017; Menguc, Auh, Fisher & Haddad, 2011). In fact, customers may motivate employees for their work and make them believe their abilities for their job and give them freedom to make decisions on behalf of them during the service process (Dong et al., 2015). Furthermore, when frontline officers feel themselves free about satisfying customers, positive outcomes are a natural result in customer service performance and creativity (Martin, Liao & Campbell, 2013). According to Dong et al. (2015) customer empowering behaviors also increase employees' customer service performance by creating situations which involve employees' in decision making processes on behalf of customers during the service encounter. In addition to this, when employees decide on behalf of customers, they feel motivated and believe that they can achieve important duties at work.

Prior studies state that better working conditions affect customer service performance since they improve employees' work attitude in a positive way, which in turn would foster employee service performance (Menguc, et al. 2017; Menguc et al. 2013). As mentioned above, work engagement is about positive work – related outcomes that include not only any object, event or a behavior in the work place, but also high level of job satisfaction, organizational loyalty and productivity (Taştan, 2014). Besides, service employees who have high level of engagement in their work, provide customer satisfaction and display higher customer service performance (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel 2014; Bakker, et al, 2017). Against above backdrop, our study concentrates on the use of frontline employees who interact with customers during the service delivery process in the hospitality industry.

## **4.2. Hotel-level Factor**

### **4.2.1. Customer Complexity**

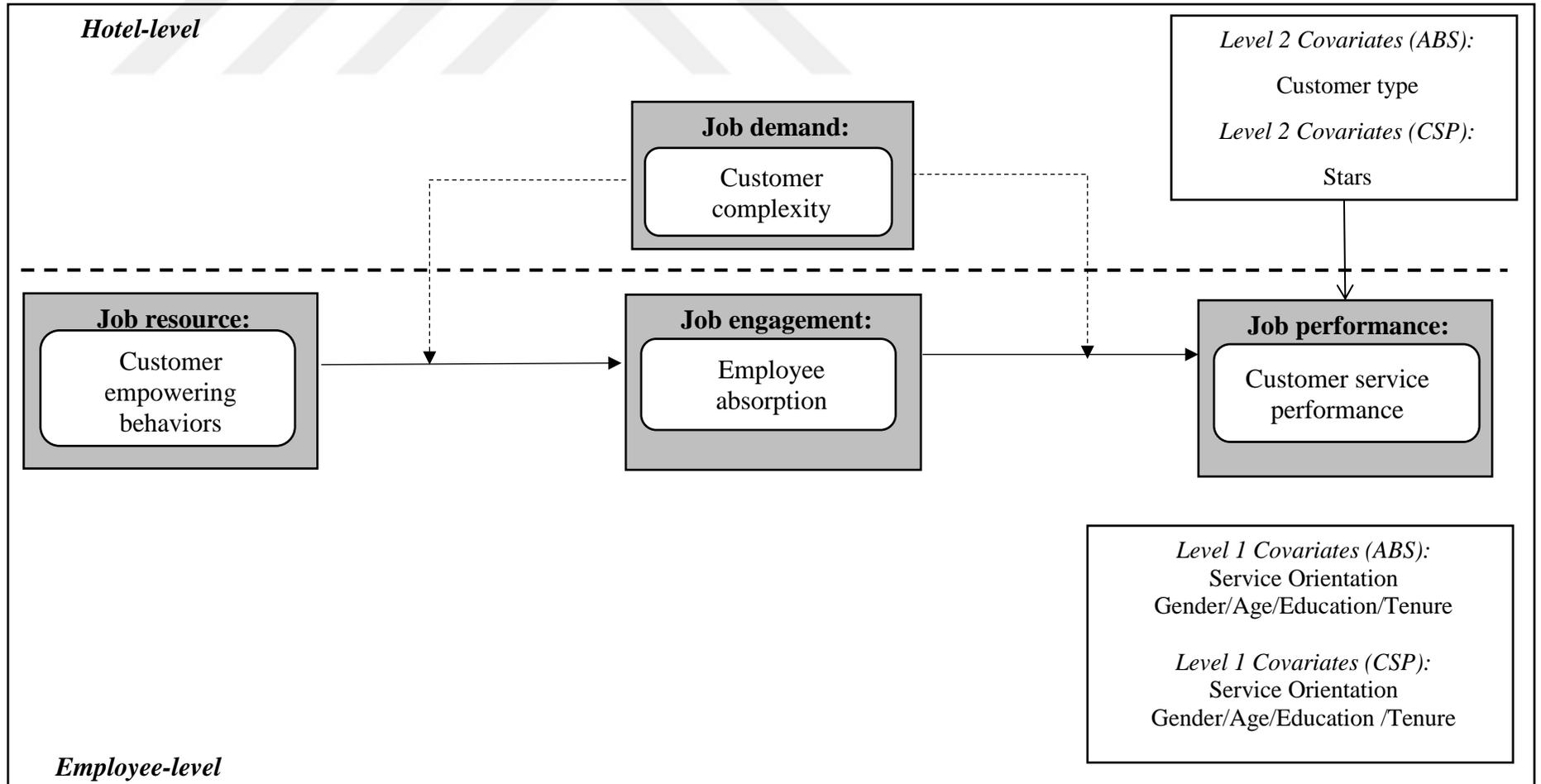
Especially in service industry, customer complexity is related to higher customer expectations, ever increasing customer demands, more multiple influences on purchasing decisions and increased customer diversity (Ingram, 2004). In line with globalization, advanced technology, cheaper transportation and communication costs caused the rise of competition between different service providers in order to satisfy high demanding customers and their expectations (Özsağır et al, 2012; Dilber, 2007). Additionally, not only reasonable price and good service are striking features for customers, but also excellent customer service and customer satisfaction constitute sources of gaining sustained competitive advantage in the hospitality industry (Lashlay, 1996). Furthermore, as a result of all those technological developments, customers are better informed than the past and they have become partners of service providers by being involved in the production process in the long term. Therefore, customer diversity and complexity have increased in the service industry (Schimitz & Ganesan, 2014).

Due to the lack of standardization of the service delivery process, especially in labor intensive services, the relationship between customers and employees plays a vital role in order to satisfy customers' expectations and demands. To be able to respond to their unique expectations, employees need to understand customers' expectations better, show greater coordination effort, present individualized offerings and customized services during the service process (Schimitz et al. 2014). However, dealing with complex customer expectations may create pressure on employees' side given that they are required to meet the expectations of customers with different needs, which may consequently create a higher sense of work overload (Ingram et al., 2004). Particularly in hospitality industry, which is known to have a high presence of employee-customer

interaction, high customer complexity may result in psychological and behavioral consequences in the form of role conflict and ambiguity in employees (Singh, Marinova, & Brown, 2012; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Our conceptual model suggests that customer complexity can harm the relationships between customer empowering behaviors - employee absorption and employee absorption - customer service performance.



Figure 4.1- Conceptual Model



## **CHAPTER V**

### **HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

In this part of the thesis, research hypotheses are presented which will allow us to test the proposed relationships in our conceptual model. In the first part, the thesis introduces main effects hypotheses for the direct relationships at the employee level. In the second part interaction effects, the moderating effects of customer complexity at the hotel level on employee level relationships are explained.

#### **5.1. Main Effects**

##### **5.1.1 Customer Empowering Behaviors – Employee Absorption**

Customer empowering behaviors refer to situations where customers create “conditions that make employees feel motivated and capable of making important decisions” about their service needs on behalf of them (Dong et al., 2015, p. 1366). Customers who are involved in empowering behaviors are expected to show how meaningful the employees’ work will be for them, require the employee to make service-related decisions on behalf of them, showing confidence in employee’s skills and capabilities to deliver service in a satisfactory way, and provide more autonomy to the employee (Dong et al., 2015; Ahearne et al., 2005; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow, 2000; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

The extant literature has dominantly stated that empowering behaviors in general result in higher employee motivation by fulfilling the employees’ need for control and mastery at work (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Dong et al., 2015). According to Dong et al. (2015), deciding on behalf of customer, need for control and mastery at work will develop employees’ self- regulation which provides employees increased self

–confidence and to be able to handle all the problematic issues in the workplace. Customer empowering behaviors let employees provide service on their own way, so that they take initiative when they are faced with a problem during the service process. As a result of this, employees' creativity and motivation will raise while they are working and they feel immersed in their job (Dong et al., 2015).

More particularly, empowering customer behaviors require employees to make decisions and take actions without much intervention coming from the side of the customers (Dong et al., 2015). In other words, an employee who is empowered by a customer might be required to involve in actions like decision-making or action-taking that would normally be expected from the customer. As a consequence of this, employees feel more engaged to their job and they feel more absorbed in their work (Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Dong et al., 2015). In addition to this, when customers believe in employees in how they can handle demanding task, how they satisfy the customers' needs in the hotel, this means that customers trust the employees about their choices. Furthermore, it enables the employees to realize the importance of their contribution in the organization and create meaningfulness in their work. Therefore, employee's motivation and willingness to work will increase and cause the employee to be carried away happily when he is working (Dong et al., 2015).

In line with the aforementioned information, the thesis argues that customer empowering behaviors, might be a source of absorption in employees since they tend to participate in customers' decision making process, as well as to create new ideas, actions or solutions while conducting their own work. Therefore, customer empowering behaviors will foster the sense of absorption for the employee at work. Accordingly, we hypothesize that,

H1: Customer empowering behaviors have a direct and positive effect on employee absorption.

### **5.1.2. Employee Absorption and Customer Service Performance**

Service employees who feel engaged and dedicated to their jobs display higher job performance such as feeling positive and are eager to work. The prior studies in marketing literature suggest that engagement has a great deal of customer service performance related outcomes (Menguc et al.,2017). Engaged employees feel more energetic, active and have positive emotions as well as having a higher level of willingness towards the job that ends up with displaying a better job performance, better understanding about business context, decreased turnover, increased organizational commitment and higher productivity (Taştan, 2014). Furthermore, engagement conceives a decent energy and enthusiasm and engaged employees tend to be active learners, well-organized, careful and hard working in the organization (Menguc et al., 2017)

According to Basikin (2007) “absorption which is a sub-dimension for engagement, refers to the state in which one is highly concentrated and happily engrossed in works so that he feels time passes quickly and it is difficult to detach from work” (Basikin 2007, p. 5). In line with this information, highly absorbed employees feel energetic at work, they are willing and positive about the work they do and immersed in that work. As a result, absorbed employees willing to display more effort, desire to work make their job better and feel happy while they are working (Taştan, 2014). Additionally, organizational outcomes of engagement include customer satisfaction, higher customer service performance, and feel engrossed in the organization (Karatepe, 2013). According to Bakker and Geurts (2004) absorption has also significant impact on employee’s private life. Because, if an employee has a cheerful and successful day at work, it reflects on both employee’s work performance and work to home interface in positively influenced which is about one’s psychological well-being (Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007). All in all, having high absorption at work will conceive high customer service performance.

Accordingly, we hypothesize that,

H2: Employee absorption has a direct and positive effect on customer service performance.

## **5.2. Interaction Effects**

### **5.2.1. Moderating Effect of Customer Complexity on Customer Empowering Behaviors and Employee Absorption Relationship**

The next hypothesis is related to whether the extent of customer complexity in a hotel will affect the effect of customer empowering behaviors on employee absorption at the employee-level. We suggest that customer empowering behaviors will have less impact on the employee absorption in a hotel when there is a high customer complexity. Accordingly, the positive relationship between customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption will be weakened in hotels with high level of customer complexity.

According to Ingram (2004) globalization has brought advanced technology, greater communication tools and cheaper transportation costs to all of us. Especially, in service industry, these changes have affected the global market diversity which has increased the competition in the market place. In addition to this, advanced technology presents us the internet and social media where consumers can interact each other freely (Özsağır & Akın, 2012). As a consequence of this, these technological developments influence customer buying behavior, increase customer diversity and customer complexity. Besides, greater competition push employees to perform better customer service and spend long work hours at work (Ingram, 2004). Ingram (2004) also states that on the one hand, under low customer complexity, customers' needs and wants will be low and their expectations can be met by presenting standardized service. On the other hand, under high customer complexity

customer's needs and wants have become more diverse and they always demand far more from the service employees. Therefore, meeting customers' high demanded expectations require customized and individualized offerings which result high workload, long and irregular working hours, and decreased motivation in the tourism industry (Taştan et al., 2014; Schimitz et al., 2014).

Aforementioned above, customer complexity leads customer diversity, wide range of different demanding customers, need individualized solutions and set a balance between maximum number of customers and employees. Nonetheless, employees who have to work with high customer complexity, need to understand each customers' expectations better and respond to them in order to exceed their expectations by surprising them with unique service. As a result of this, employees have to display extra effort, take extra responsibility and present a greater coordination between the customer and hotel with long working hours (Singh, Marinova, & Brown, 2012; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Moreover, during the service process, deciding on behalf of the customer may cause stress rather than trigger employee creativity and motivation. Therefore, these difficult situations may hinder employees' feel immersed and happy at work.

Accordingly, we propose,

H3: Customer complexity negatively moderates the effect of customer empowering behaviors on employee absorption such that the relationship between customer empowering behavior and employee absorption will be weaker when there is a high level of customer complexity.

### **5.2.2. Moderating Effect of Customer Complexity on Employee Absorption and Customer Service Performance Relationship**

Our next interaction hypothesis describes the role of customer complexity on the relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance at the employee-level. We suggest that customer complexity will have weakening effect on the positive relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance. Against the above backdrop, particularly in service industry, under high customer complexity, not only customers' needs and wants will diverse, but also they will demand service that exceeds their expectations by receiving unique service from the employees (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Besides, we claim that displaying maximum effort and taking extra responsibilities to deliver creative service to customers may weaken employees' customer service performance.

Under high level of customer complexity in the hotel, service employees try to understand each customers' expectations better and have to take care of them more than every day's routine. Therefore, they will experience a variety of difficulties while displaying extra performance in order to offer individualized service. During providing unstandardized service to each customer, employees need to not only predict each customers' favorite service delivery, but also take initiative for these customized offerings. Furthermore, complex customers' expectations may cause confusion about employees' roles and duties at work, because sometimes they cannot understand what is expected exactly from them to serve in the hotel (Schmitz et al., 2014; Singh, 1998). In the literature, customer directed effort is defined to display employees' total customer service performance to direct interactions with customers such as presentations, meetings or all service introductions in the hotel. According to Parasuraman, Zeithalm & Berry, (1985) they claim that particularly in service industry which is known as having strong inseparability of employee-customer interaction, high customer complexity can cause psychological and behavioral disorder on employees (Schimitz & Ganesan, 2014). Consequently, these psychological

and behavioral troubles may influence customer service performance in a negative way.

As mentioned above, especially in tourism industry, customer complexity leads to customer diversification who have unlimited expectations that have to be surprised by presenting unique and unstandardized offerings during the service process (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Moreover, employees need to show extra effort in order to understand customers' over expectations and response quickly to any problems that may occur during the service process. As a result of this, employees may suffer from over workload, long working hours and taking extra responsibility (Singh, Marinova & Brown, 2012; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Such extra efforts will consequently effect employees' motivation and service performance. Thus, we conclude that in a hotel, under high customer complexity working environment, even an employee who feels highly absorbed and immersed about his work, he will display lower customer service performance. This suggests that high customer complexity will have weakening effect on positive relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance.

Thus, we propose,

H4: Customer complexity negatively moderates the effect of employee absorption on customer service performance such that the relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance is weaker when there is a high level of customer complexity.

## CHAPTER VI

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As mentioned before, our thesis focuses on hospitality industry, which sees extensive interaction between employees and customers (Kruja, Ha, Drishti & Oelfke, 2017). In this chapter, the hospitality and tourism industry are described in Turkey. Then this chapter presents information about our methodology and sample.

#### 6.1. Research Context

Tourism industry has been in steady growth in Turkey (Kozak & Bahçe, 2012). Since the early 1990s, a number of factors have contributed to this. First, the general increase in challenging working conditions as well as the rising consciousness in general employee rights (Kozak et al., 2012; Trauer, 2004; Kerr, Clifford, & Burgess, 2012) have created a higher need in people for holidays. Second, with cheaper transportation costs across the globe, and higher income levels as well as the heightened desire to visit new places (Dilber, 2007), the concept of holiday has changed from a luxury to a necessity.

Tourism industry is an integrated sector that combines different businesses such as transportation services (land-sea-air), hotels, restaurants, recreation centers, clubs, theme parks and many more. (Kozak et al., 2012). The tourism industry plays an important role in Turkey's economic development by providing foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities (Şit, 2016). Tourism industry is also less affected by economic quotas and governmental restrictions compared to other industries (Rooney, 2002). Despite the recent terrorist attacks in Turkey, the Turkish tourism industry and investments still continue. In the year of 2016, a number of 36.9 million tourists arrived to Turkey and were accommodated in hotels (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016). From this number of people 38.6% percent of tourists were foreign visitors.

Additionally, annual average of length of stay for foreign visitors was 5 nights in hotels and for Turkish tourists were 2 nights and the annual percentage of occupancy for hotels was 41.5%. According to the reports published by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the revenues of Turkey in tourism increased by 28.01% from 2015 to 2016 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016).

**Table 6.1- The Distribution of Foreign Coming Visitors Come to Turkey per Months and Years**

<b>MONTHS</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016/2015</b>	<b>2017/2016</b>
<b>January</b>	1,250 941	1,170 333	1,055 474	-6,44	-9,81
<b>February</b>	1,383 343	1,240 633	1,159 833	-10,32	-6,51
<b>March</b>	1,895 940	1,652 511	1,587 007	-12,84	-3,96
<b>April</b>	2,437 263	1,753 045	2,070 322	-28,07	18,10
<b>May</b>	3,804 158	2,485 411	2,889 873	-34,67	16,27
<b>June</b>	4,123 109	2,438 293	3,486 940	-40,86	43,01
<b>July</b>	5,480 502	3,468 202	5,075 961	-36,72	46,36
<b>August</b>	5,130 967	3,183 003	4,658 463	-37,96	46,35
<b>September</b>	4,251 870	2,855 397	4,076 630	-32,84	42,77
<b>October</b>	3,301 194	2,449 948	2,992 947	-25,79	22,16
<b>November</b>	1,720 554	1,353 280		-21,35	
<b>December</b>	1,464 791	1,302 157		-11,10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	36,244 632	25,352 213		-30,05	
<b>10 MONTHS TOTAL</b>	33,059 287	22,696 776	29,053 450	-31,35	28,01

**Source:** Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Statistics, 2016

In tourism and hospitality management, regular customer-employee interactions occur and employees are expected to display high performance during the service process (Kozak, et al., 2012). In most of the cases, the satisfaction of customer relies on his/her positive experience during their stay in hotel (Kozak, et al., 2012). With that being said, frontline officers in the tourism industry get the first contact with customers who have an impact on customer experience, and thus their work-related attitudes are significant in

their ability to deliver higher work performance (Tekin & Köksal, 2012). The literature further posits that frontline staffs are very important for setting strong relationship with hotel consumers (Tekin et al., 2012). Moreover, because of a necessity of quick response to customers' needs and wants as well as meeting and exceeding customer expectations, making decisions on behalf of customers has become inevitable for frontline employees working in the hotels (Chiang & Jang, 2008).

## **6.2. Study Design**

In line with the aforementioned situation on the Turkish tourism industry, this thesis investigates the effect of customer empowering behaviors on service employees' performance through mediating role of employee absorption. Additionally, the study claims that customer empowering behaviors have positive effects on customer service performance through creating employee absorption. In order to collect the data needed to test our hypotheses, quantitative face to face surveys are conducted with frontline employees who work either at the reception desk and in guest relations in 4 or 5 star hotels in the South and South Western districts of Turkey.

Surveys to be used for the data collection process, which incorporate measures and the demographic variables were initially prepared in English. Since the surveys are conducted in Turkey, the survey items are translated into Turkish in line with the findings of indepth interviews and back translation method (Brislin, 1970). Accordingly, two different bilingual translators translated the original items in English into target language in Turkish. Once the translations had been completed by each translator, the outputs were compared in order to come to the terms with a final and mutually agreed version of the Turkish translation. This final version was then sent to a third bilingual translator, which in line with the group and back translation method, was responsible for translating the Turkish version back into English. After this process, the items

in the original and translated versions were compared in terms of whether the items in the latter match the meaning of those in the former.

Once the translation process had been completed, the finalized Turkish questionnaire has been tested with 14 participants who share the same characteristics with our target research sample. Each participant was required to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback about items' clarity and relevance as well as the questionnaire's format and ease of administration. Accordingly, further modifications had been done in the questionnaire for a final time, which formed the latest version of the questionnaire.

Before data collection, the final questionnaire is sent to Istanbul Bilgi University's Ethics Board Committee for the approval.

### **6.3. Sample**

Once approval of the survey by Istanbul Bilgi University's Ethics Board Committee has been gained, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the correspondents in each hotel. The correspondents then distributed the surveys to the employees in closed envelopes. Employees returned the completed surveys back to the correspondents in the hotels in closed envelopes who then returned the surveys back to researcher. At the first part of the survey, details about the thesis and confidentiality of employees' responses have been provided by the researcher. The research questionnaire can be seen in Appendix B. By the end of the study, we received 421 usable surveys from reception desk or in guest relation employees working in 37 units (hotels). The overall response rate was 67.9%. Table 6.2 demonstrates the number of distributed questionnaires alongside the number and percentage of useful surveys of each hotel.

Table 6.3 demonstrates that 45.6% of the participants are female and 54.4% are male. The age of the participants dominantly ranges between 25-31 (38.7%), followed by participants whose ages range between 18-24 (24.2%), 32-38 (24.20%), 39-45 (9.7%) and 46 and higher (2.4%). 62.5% of the participants

are university graduates whereas 31.1% have graduated from high school. A small portion of our sample 4% reported that they completed a master degree. 66.3% of the participants are single and the rest of participants are married. In our study, while 310 participants work as receptionist, 111 employees work in guest relation department. On average, the participants mentioned that they are working in tourism industry approximately around 7 years (85.4 months), and at their current position since 3 years roughly (36.5 months).



**Table 6.2 - Number of Distributed and Usable Surveys for Each Hotels**

	<b>Number of Distributed Surveys</b>	<b>Number of Usable Surveys</b>	<b>Percentage of Usable Surveys</b>
Hotel 1	10	7	70
Hotel 2	10	3	30
Hotel 3	21	20	95.2
Hotel 4	30	23	76.6
Hotel 5	20	14	70
Hotel 6	20	17	85
Hotel 7	12	10	83.3
Hotel 8	10	8	80
Hotel 9	15	13	86.6
Hotel 10	10	8	80
Hotel 11	12	9	75
Hotel 12	20	19	95
Hotel 13	10	8	80
Hotel 14	10	8	80
Hotel 15	10	8	80
Hotel 16	8	7	87.5
Hotel 17	10	8	80
Hotel 18	7	7	100
Hotel 19	15	14	93.3
Hotel 20	20	9	45
Hotel 21	22	9	40.9
Hotel 22	15	10	66.6
Hotel 23	12	7	58.3
Hotel 24	10	8	80
Hotel 25	15	11	73.3
Hotel 26	20	8	45
Hotel 27	40	15	37.5
Hotel 28	10	8	80
Hotel 29	30	22	73.3
Hotel 30	18	12	66.6
Hotel 31	18	15	83.3
Hotel 32	30	20	66.6
Hotel 33	20	12	60
Hotel 34	20	18	90
Hotel 35	20	9	45
Hotel 36	20	10	50
Hotel 37	20	7	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>67.9</b>

**Table 6.3 -Sample Information and Demographic Variables**

		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	229	54.4	
	Female	192	45.6	-
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	279	66.3	
	Married	142	33.7	-
<b>Age Group</b>	18-24	105	24.9	
	25-31	163	38.7	
	32-38	102	24.2	
	39-45	41	9.7	-
	46+	10	2.4	
<b>Education Level</b>	Primary school	3	.7	
	Middle school	7	1.7	
	High school	131	31.1	-
	Undergraduate	263	62.5	
	Post graduate	17	4	
<b>Position at the hotel</b>	Guest relations	111	26.4	
	Receptionist	310	73.6	-
<b>Star of the hotel</b>	5 stars	376	89.3	
	4 stars	45	10.7	-
<b>Tenure in tourism industry (month)</b>	-	-	-	85.4
<b>Tenure at the current hotel (month)</b>	-	-	-	36.5

Appendix A presents the items to be used for each measure to be included in this study. The questionnaire measures all the constructs by using a five-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree; 5-strongly agree). We adopted the questions' statements in the scales adequately for a hotel context. Appendix C reports the original items in English for each scale and their factor loadings.

#### **6.4.1. Employee- Level Variables**

The employee level variables consist of customer empowering behaviors, employee absorption and customer service performance.

##### **6.4.1.1. Customer Empowering Behaviors**

In this thesis, customer empowering behaviors are measured by using an adapted version of Dong et al.'s (2015) customer empowering behaviors scale. The scale consists of eight items. Items are "Customers help me understand the meaning of my service to them", "Customers help me see the importance of my service to them", "Customers make decisions about the service that they receive from our hotel together with me", "Customers consult me on decisions about the service they receive from our hotel", "Customers believe that I can handle demanding tasks about their needs in our hotel", "Customers express confidence in my ability to deliver service at a high level", "Customers allow me to provide service my way" and "Customers allow me to make important decisions to satisfy their needs in our hotel".

##### **6.4.1.2. Employee Absorption**

In order to measure employees' absorption, an adapted version of Schaufeli and Bakker is (2004) job engagement scale is used in this research. The scale consists of seven items. Scale items include "I find my job challenging", "Time

flies when I'm working", "When I'm working, I forget everything else around me", "I feel happy when I'm working intensely", "I'm immersed in my work", "I get carried away when I'm working", and "It is difficult to detach myself from my job".

#### **6.4.1.3. Customer Service Performance**

In order to measure customer service performance, the thesis is adopted six items from Salanova et al.'s (2005) customer service performance scale. This scale emphasizes the customer service performance by asking the participants about the way they behave towards the customer during the service process. Sample items contain "I understand specific needs of customers", I am able to put myself in the customers' place, I am able to tune in to each specific customer, "I surprise customers with an excellent service", "I do more than usual for customers" and "I deliver an excellent service quality that is difficult to find in other hotels".

#### **6.4.2. Hotel-Level Variables**

The hotel – level variables consist of customer complexity.

##### **6.4.2.1. Customer Complexity**

In this research, four items from Menguc et al. (2017) and Schmitz and Ganesan (2014) customer complexity scale is used for measure the extent of the hotels' customer complexity. Items are "Our customers' needs and wants are diverse", "Our customers require customized services" and "Most of our customer service is routine and standardized", and "Each of our customers wants to be treated as a unique entity". Reception desk and guest relation employees individually responded to the items in customer complexity scale.

### **6.4.3. Control Variables**

In order to prevent the possibility of any alternative explanations for the thesis's proposed relationships, the research included additional variables to act as control variables on customer service performance and employee absorption at the employee and hotel level.

#### **6.4.3.1. Employee- Level Control Variables**

In this thesis, a number of control variables at the employee-level has been used to remove the alternative explanations for the hypothesis relationships. We checked the artifact control variables in our data. Although these variables' effects cannot be explicated by theoretical resources in the literature, they existed from empirical context specific to our data and reflect covariates of dependent variables. Following the recommendations of Carlson and Wu (2012) and Becker, Atinc, Breugh, Carlson, Edwards and Spector (2016), we adopted these variables to our data in order to check whether there is a correlation between any of these variables and our variables in our model. When we checked our data, we realized that service orientation significantly correlates both with employee absorption and customer service performance. As a result of this, we included service orientation as a control variable in our model for employee absorption and customer service performance at the employee level.

We use employee demographics like gender, age, education level, employee's overall work experience, employee's tenure in the tourism industry and employee's tenure in their current hotel. Additionally, following the recommendations of Bettencourt Gwinner and Meuter (2001), we specified service orientation as a control variable. We measured employee service orientation by using Bettencourt et al.'s (2001) 5-item scale. Sample items include "I enjoy helping customers", "The best job I can imagine would involve assisting customers in making satisfactory decisions", "I feel a sense of

fulfillment when I am able to offer excellent customer service”, “I pride myself in providing courteous customer service” and “It is natural for me to be considerate of customers' needs”.

#### **6.4.3.2. Hotel- Level Control Variables**

At the hotel level, we used the dominant customer profile in the hotel and the level of stars attributed to the hotel as control variables.



**Table 6.4. Used Scales and Factor Loadings**

Constructs	Factor Loadings
<b>Employee – Level</b>	
<b>Customer Empowering Behaviors</b>	
Our customers make decisions about the service that they receive from our hotel together with me	0,545
Our customers consult me on decisions about the service they receive from our hotel	0,711
Our customers believe that I can handle demanding tasks about their needs in our hotel	0,702
Our customers' express confidence in my ability to deliver service at a high level	0,654
Our customers allow me to provide service in my own way	0,565
<b>Absorption</b>	
I feel happy when I am working intensely	0,701
I am immersed in my work	0,775
I get carried away when I am working	0,768
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	0,746
<b>Customer Service Performance</b>	
I surprise customers with an excellent service	0,794
I do more than usual for customers	0,836
I deliver an excellent service quality that is difficult to find in other hotels	0,775
<b>Service Orientation</b>	
I enjoy helping customers	0,739
The best job I can imagine would involve assisting customers in making satisfactory decisions	0,599
I pride myself in providing courteous customer service	0,82
It is natural for me to be considerate of customers' needs	0,758
<b>Hotel – Level</b>	
<b>Customer Complexity</b>	
Our customers' needs and wants are diverse	0,75
Our customers require customized services	0,88
Each of our customers wants to be treated as a unique entity	0,63

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **STUDY RESULTS**

In this part of the thesis, it will be decided whether our conceptual model and sample data match the standards to implement hypothesis tests which are essential to assess our proposed relationships. We will continue with hypothesis tests after assessing and confirming all the crucial criteria for the adequacy of our conceptual model and the data we collected for more detailed tests. Following this information, the first part of this chapter is Measurement Model which contains two sub-titles a) Model Fit is related to revise our model against the essential criteria for an acceptable measurement model by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA hereafter); and b) Reliability and validity tests where the conceptual model is tested according to the reliability and validity requirements in the literature. After this part of the thesis, the collected data will be checked by against normality requirements. We will then introduce the results of our hypothesis tests. After we present the findings of our post-hoc tests, the summary findings will explain finally.

#### **7.1. Measurement Model**

##### **7.1.1. Model Fit**

A researcher cannot reach a latent variable by observing it directly. Due to the lack of latent or unobserved variables identification, they cannot be measured straightforward. In addition to this, latent variables are represented by at least three observed variables in a model (Dursun & Kocagöz, 2010). CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) is a statistical method that evaluates the measurement model (Byrne, 2001). CFA confirms the relationship between latent and observed variables. Furthermore, CFA is used to test whether some observed variables constitute a latent variable or to check whether there is a

relationship among latent constructs. CFA is often used for scale development and validity analysis and the method also aims to determine the correctness of predetermined structures (Karagöz, 2016).

The measurement model in our study incorporates 5 latent variables with a number of indicator items each. Our latent variables are customer empowering behaviors (5 items), absorption (4 items), customer service performance (3 items), customer complexity (3 items), and service orientation (4 items). In order to define how the adequacy of our hypothesized measurement model fits the collected data, we used confirmatory factor analysis.

The extant literature posits that, chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) is a crucial test for understanding a measurement model's goodness of fit (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014, p.324). According to Malhotra (2010)  $\chi^2$  test also checks whether observed variables are different from the hypothesized variables. As the value of observed variables approaches to hypothesized variables,  $\chi^2$  value gets closer to 0. A lower  $\chi^2$  value means that the hypothesized and observed variables build good fit between each other. However, a low  $\chi^2$  value with a highly fit between hypothesized and observed models, would create a nonsignificant p value (i.e., higher than .05). Therefore, although  $\chi^2$  test is considered as a necessary precaution measure for accepting the model fit, the literature claims that  $\chi^2$  value should not be used as a single measure for this purpose (Hair et al. 2014). In addition to this knowledge, due to the sensitiveness of  $\chi^2$  value to sample size, the result should be controlled with other conformity indices, because a larger sample size may increase the  $\chi^2$  value (Karagöz et al. 2016).

The first indices that we have to check is our model's goodness-of-fit index (GFI) which is measured based on how well the hypothesized measurement model is reproduced on the sample data. The literature indicates that Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is an alternative way to  $\chi^2$  test. However, GFI is less sensitive compare to  $\chi^2$  test, because GFI's formula does not include the sample size. Nonetheless, because of the probability of sample size's influence on sample

distributions, GFI may be indirectly affected by N. In line with aforementioned backdrop, Morrison, Morrison and McCutcheon (2017) suggest to check the model fit by using different conformity indices rather than trusting only one index. Based on this information, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) indices are used in order to measure and check our model's fit.

In the literature, CFI and TLI are determined as incremental fit indices and they are used for evaluating the fit between hypothesized model appropriate to an alternative model. RMSEA is a kind of statistical method that calculates the model's fit depending on the sample size instead of a smaller sample data which excludes the issues related to population. RMSEA, CFI and TLI indices are directly affected by the sample size in the model, so that the sample size should be more than 250 and number of observed variables should be higher than 30 in the study (Karagöz et al., 2016). Additionally, for a good model fit, the scores of CFI and TLI need .90 or above, and the value of RMSEA requires lower than .09. Another statistical rate of a model is GFI which ranges between 0 and 1, is also mentioned to be adequate around .90 or above (Hair et al. 2014). In the light of this information, as Table 7.1. displays us, our model indicates an acceptable fit. ( $\chi^2$  (349) = 2,464,  $p < .000$ , GFI = .91, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .059)

**Table 7.1 Model Fit Results**

<b>Model Fit Summary</b>	
Model CMIN	
CMIN	349,855
P	.000
CMIN/DF	2,464
Model RMR, GFI	
GFI	,919
Baseline Comparisons	
CFI	,936
TLI	,92
Parsimony- Adjusted Measures	
RMSEA	,059

### **7.1.2. Reliability and Validity Tests**

In this part of the thesis, information on further checks on our measurement model, namely reliability and validity has been measured. These tests are construct validity, convergent validity, average variance extract and discriminant validity. According to Malhotra (2010) construct validity is defined as observed items that we used and how well they reflect the purpose for the latent constructs. Construct validity can be measured by assessing with the model's convergent and discriminant validity. According to Morrison, Morrison and McCutcheon (2017) "Convergent validity examines whether scores on the measure that is being validated correlate with other variables which, for theoretical and/or empirical reasons, they should be correlated" (Morrison, Morrison & McCutcheon, 2017, pp. 1332). Additionally, convergent validity evaluated with factor loadings, average variance extracted

(AVE hereafter), and reliability results (both Cronbach alpha and composite reliability) in the model.

Reliability score is defined as if a study is repeated, whether it can achieve the same analysis results or not (Gegez, 2015). In the extant literature, confirmatory factor analysis combines reliability tests which are composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2014). According to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2014), the model's reliability score is calculated by using coefficient alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) to be able to evaluate to get more reliable and consistent results of the indicator items that represent a latent construct in the model. In our study, Table 7.2 indicates that Cronbach alpha values of our model's constructs are customer empowering behaviors  $\alpha = .77$ , absorption  $\alpha = .83$ , customer complexity  $\alpha = .79$ , customer service performance  $\alpha = .84$  and service orientation  $\alpha = .82$  respectively. Furthermore, when we compare the value of our constructs to minimum level of acceptance level for coefficient alpha which is .70 in the literature, it is clear to be seen that all of our constructs meet the requirements.

Also there is an alternative way to calculate coefficient alpha value which is called composite reliability (CR hereafter). In the literature, composite reliability defined as "the factor loadings are simply the correlation of each indicator with the composite (construct factor), and the factor correlations are obtained by correlating the composites" (Anderson & Gerbing 1988, p.417). In line with this purpose, to get CR value, the sum of squared standardized factor loadings is divided into the sum of squared standardized factor loadings and sum of squared error variance. In addition to this, considering that the minimum level of acceptance for composite reliability is .60, all of our constructs match the required level.

In the literature, AVE is defined as the average value of variance of the indicator constructs explained by latent factor in the model. In order to calculate the AVE, the sum of squared standardized factor loadings is divided into the number of indicator items (Morrison et al., 2017). As a final point, according

to Bagozzi and Yi (1988) AVE score of the model should be more than .50. In addition to this knowledge, we have to control our model's reliability score, due to understand consistency of our scales. As shown in Table 7.2 and Appendix C, according to Anderson and Gerbing (1988) the value of all indicators in the model should be more than .40. All of our constructs match the requirement except customer empowering behaviors construct which has the .41 AVE score. However, in the light of this information, our model displays evidence for convergent validity.

Discriminant validity demonstrates a construct's unique capability to evaluate a particular phenomenon, that cannot be found by other constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, discriminant validity is reached when the AVE values for each of the any two latent variables are bigger than their square intercorrelation values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Moreover, in line with the correlation values specified in Table 7.3 (see Appendix C), the AVE values of each construct in our model is higher than their square correlations with other latent factors. In other words, due to our model's significant discriminant validity scores, all items in our measurement model are able to explain their measures in best way (Hair et al., 2014).

Overall, our measurement models meet all the requirements for construct validity by providing adequate evidence for convergent and discriminant validity.

**Table 7.2 Factor Loadings, Cronbach Alpha, Composite Reliability and AVE Scores**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>
<b>Employee – Level</b>	
<b>Customer Empowering Behaviors (<math>\alpha = ,77</math>; CR= ,77; AVE=,41)</b>	
Our customers make decisions about the service that they receive from our hotel together with me	0,545
Our customers consult me on decisions about the service they receive from our hotel	0,711
Our customers believe that I can handle demanding tasks about their needs in our hotel	0,702
Our customers' express confidence in my ability to deliver service at a high level	0,654
Our customers allow me to provide service in my own way	0,565
<b>Absorption (<math>\alpha = ,83</math>; CR= ,84; AVE= ,56)</b>	
I feel happy when I am working intensely	0,701
I am immersed in my work	0,775
I get carried away when I am working	0,768
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	0,746
<b>Customer Service Performance (<math>\alpha = ,84</math>; CR= ,84; AVE= ,64)</b>	
I surprise customers with an excellent service	0,794
I do more than usual for customers	0,836
I deliver an excellent service quality that is difficult to find in other hotels	0,775
<b>Service Orientation (<math>\alpha = ,82</math>; CR= ,82; AVE= ,54)</b>	
I enjoy helping customers	0,739
The best job I can imagine would involve assisting customers in making satisfactory decisions	0,599
I pride myself in providing courteous customer service	0,82
It is natural for me to be considerate of customers' needs	0,758
<b>Hotel-Level</b>	
<b>Customer Complexity (<math>\alpha = ,79</math>; CR= ,80; AVE= ,58)</b>	
Our customers' needs and wants are diverse	0,75
Our customers require customized services	0,88
Each of our customers wants to be treated as a unique entity	0,63

**Table 7.3 – Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Customer Empowering Behaviors (level 1)													
2.Employee Absorption (level 1)	.226**												
3.Customer Complexity (level 2)	.194**	.202**											
4.Customer Service Performance (level 1)	.400**	.370**	.227**										
5.Male	.034	-.056	.048	.059									
6.Age	-.051	-.055	-.081	-.025	.105*								
7.Overall Work Experience (control)	-.022	-.011	-.065	.052	.140**	.780**							
8.Industry Experience (log) (control)	.017	-.033	-.009	.069	.096	.581**	.741**						
9.Hotel Experience	.008	-.005	.140**	.065	.029	.430**	.484**	.653**					
10.Education Level (control)	.109*	-.119*	-.180**	.081	-.128	.001	-.012	-.013	.019				
11.Service Orientation (control) (level1)	.375**	.390**	.317**	.491**	.046	-.006	.032	-.054	-.054	.152**			
12.Business Customers (control) (level 2)	.007	-.111*	-.479**	-.061	-.048	-.059	-.036	-.093	-.165**	.060	-.221**		
13.Stars Level (control) (level2)	-.186**	.044	.007	-.119*	-.070	-.037	-.007	-.043	-.042	.008	-.115*	.060	
Mean	3.61	3.41	4.44	3.96	.54	29.81	101.75	3.97	2.94	3.67	4.28	.14	1.84
Standard deviation	.82	.94	.32	.81	.50	6.95	75.06	1.23	1.28	.61	.72	.35	.37

Note: Employee-level n=421; hotel-level n=37; \* p<.05; \*\*p<.01 (two-tailed test).

## 7.2. Normality Tests

This section reports the findings of the multivariate normality tests, which we conducted in order to understand whether our data meets the normality requirements. The extant literature states that two measures to evaluate whether the data is normally distributed is kurtosis and skewness (Hair et al., 2014, p.69). Additionally, according to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2014) kurtosis is related to the height of the distribution and it also reflects the “peakedness” versus “flatness” of the data when compared to normal distribution. Skewness measures the balance or symmetry of the distribution. Curran, West and Finch (1996) claimed that if the univariate skewness score is 2.0 and the kurtosis score is 7.0, the distribution is defined as moderately non-normal. Furthermore, when the univariate skewness and kurtosis rates are between 3.0 and 21.0 range, the distribution is stated also as non-normal. However, for other resources in the literature, when the two thirds of the observed variables are above the range of  $\pm 1$  in the model, this refers to the normality of distribution is not matched by the data (Fan & Wang, 1998).

Table 7.4. demonstrates our model’s normality test results. When the table is checked, we see the distribution of the majority of our observed variables vary between  $\pm 1$  or does not exceed slightly the essential ranges for skewness and kurtosis. In line with these information, it can be considered that our skewness and kurtosis results show a normal distribution. However, due to skewness and kurtosis values of employees’ tenure at the hotel and, tenure in the tourism industry exceeding the required and customer rate coming with travel agency, we transformed these variables into log values.

**Table 7.4 – Results of the Normality Tests**

	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	St. Error
<b>Demographic variables</b>				
Age	.558	.119	-.180	.237
Gender	.177	.119	-1.978	.237
Education level	-.845	.119	1.920	.237
Overall work experience	1.170	.119	1.673	.237
Tenure in tourism industry	-1.284	.119	-1.375	.237
Tenure in this hotel	-.381	.119	-.586	.237
Dominant type of customer	-2.595	.119	4.755	.237
Hotel stars	-2.594	.119	4.543	.237
<b>Customer empowering behaviors</b>				
Item 1	-.051	.119	-.965	.237
Item 2	-.668	.119	-.496	.237
Item 3	-.895	.119	.432	.237
Item 4	-.909	.119	.594	.237
Item 5	-.651	.119	-.177	.237
<b>Absorption</b>				
Item 1	-.510	.119	-.383	.237
Item 2	-.646	.119	-.205	.237
Item 3	-.135	.119	-.859	.237
Item 4	.018	.119	-.917	.237
<b>Customer service performance</b>				
Item 1	-.516	.119	-.306	.237
Item 2	-.744	.119	.305	.237
Item 3	-.759	.119	.129	.237
<b>Customer complexity</b>				
Item 1	-2.255	.119	4.794	.237
Item 2	-1.994	.119	4.285	.237
Item 3	-1.483	.119	1.989	.237
<b>Service orientation</b>				
Item 1	-1.867	.119	3.546	.237
Item 2	-.819	.119	.339	.237
Item 3	-1.550	.119	2.361	.237
Item 4	-1.997	.119	5.019	.237

## **7.3. Results of the Hypothesis Tests**

### **7.3.1. Method of Analysis**

In this part of the thesis, the method we used to test our suggested hypotheses and the hypothesis results are explained. In order to test our hypotheses, we used multilevel modelling. We assume that the views of the hotel employees, which we rely on collecting our data would be highly embedded in and cannot be thought separately of the characteristics of the workplace that they take part of. The level of criterion variables we use in our model (i.e., employee absorption and customer service performance) would be highly affected from employee-level characteristics as much as the hotel-level characteristics. In fact, we tested this assumption: Table 7.5 demonstrates the results of the ANOVA test we conducted to see whether our criterion variables significantly differ from hotel to hotel. The findings show that both the employee absorption and customer service performance levels of the employees are significantly different between hotels. This provides an evidence that the views of the employees provided in the questionnaire of this study are nested in the hotels they work for, and the independence of the observations from the workplace should not be expected.

In order to use multilevel modeling for the hypothesis testing, we used HLM 7.0 (Raudenbusch, Bryk, Cheong Congdon, & du Toit, 2004).

**Table 7.5 - Mean Score Differences for Criterion Variables among Hotels in the Study**

		Sum of		Mean		
		Squares	df	Square	F	Sig.
Absorption	<u>Between hotels</u>	57.267	36	1.591	1.942	.001
	<u>Within hotels</u>	314.620	384	.819		
	Total	371.88	420			
Customer Service Performance	<u>Between hotels</u>	53.973	36	1.499	2.593	.000
	<u>Within hotels</u>	222.058	384	.578		
	Total	276.036	420			

### 7.3.2. Hypothesis tests

This section presents the results of the hypothesis tests. The first section reports the main effects in our model. The second part reports the interaction effects in our model.

#### 7.3.2.1. Main Effects

Table 7.6 reports the main effects in our model. H1 posits that customer empowering behaviors have a direct and positive effect on employee absorption. Our findings indicate that customer empowering behaviors relates significantly and positively to employee absorption ( $\gamma = .11, p < .05$ ).

H2 posits that employee absorption has a direct and positive effect on customer service performance. Our findings indicate that employee absorption relates

significantly and positively to customer service performance ( $\gamma = .18, p < .05$ ). These results lend support for H1 and H2.

### **7.3.2.2. Interaction Effects**

Table 7.6 reports the interaction effects in our model. H3 posits that customer complexity negatively moderates the effect of customer empowering behaviors on employee absorption such that the relationship between customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption will be weaker when there is a high level of customer complexity. Our findings do not report a statistically significant effect of customer complexity on the relationship between customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption ( $\gamma = .0264, p = ns$ ). Therefore, H3 is not supported.

H4 posits that customer complexity negatively moderates the effect of employee absorption on customer service performance such that the relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance is weaker when there is a high level of customer complexity. Our findings do not report a statistically significant moderating effect of customer complexity on the relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance. ( $\gamma = .0521, p = ns$ ). Therefore, H4 is not supported.

**Table 7.6 – Hypothesis Tests Main Effects and Interaction Effects**

	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b><math>\Gamma</math></b>	<b><math>p</math></b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>H1</b>	Customer empowering behaviors – employee absorption (+)	.11	.031	s	Confirmed
<b>H2</b>	Employee absorption – customer service performance (+)	.18	.000	s	Confirmed
<b>H3</b>	Customer empowering behaviors* customer complexity – absorption (-)	.0264	.400	ns	Not supported
<b>H4</b>	Absorption* customer complexity – customer service performance (-)	.0264	.264	ns	Not supported

*Note:* Robust standard errors (S.E.) are reported.

\*Two-tailed test for both hypothesized directional and interactional relationships

#### **7.4. Post hoc tests**

In this section, we presented our study’s post hoc test results in order to demonstrate whether employee absorption acts as a mediator between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance. In order to test the

mediating role of employee absorption between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance, we used Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step mediation analysis method.

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation analysis consists of a three-step procedure. In the first step the mediating variable (i.e. employee absorption) should be regressed on the independent variable (i.e. customer empowering behaviors). In the second step, the dependent variable (i.e. customer service performance) should be regressed on the independent variable. In the third step, the dependent variable(s) should be regressed on both the independent and mediating variables. For a full mediation, the independent variable (i.e. customer empowering behaviors) should have a significant effect on mediating variable (i.e. absorption) in step 1, and on dependent variable (i.e. customer service performance) in step 2. In the final step (step 3), the mediating variable (i.e. absorption) should markedly affect the dependent variable(s) and with the introduction of mediating variable, the effect of independent variable on dependent variable should now become non-significant.

If the effect of independent variable on dependent variable in the third step becomes weaker but remains significant, this would be a partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Table 7.7 presents the findings of mediation analysis. We used the same control variables (employees' work experience, tenure in tourism industry, tenure in current hotel, hotel star rate, gender, age, customer types, education level and service orientation) in the model. According to the findings of our mediation analysis customer empowering behaviors relate in Step 1, positively and significantly to employee absorption ( $\gamma = .107$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = .032$ ). In step 2, customer empowering behaviors relate positively and significantly to customer service performance ( $\gamma = .201$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = .056$ ). In Step 3, employee absorption relates positively and significantly to customer service performance ( $\gamma = .174$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = .057$ ). With the introduction of employee absorption as a mediator in the model, our findings report that customer empowering behaviors is still

related positively and significantly to customer service performance but a weaker effect ( $\gamma = .183$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = .061$ ). Therefore, the effect of customer empowering behaviors on customer service performance is partially mediated by employee absorption.

**Table 7.7 - Results of the Mediation Analysis**

Mediation			$\gamma$	$p$	$\beta$	Sig.
Step 1	Model 1	Customer empowering behaviors - employee absorption	.107	.039	.032	s
		Customer empowering behaviors - customer service performance	.201	.001	.056	s
Step 2	Model 2	Employee absorption – customer service performance	.174	.000	.057	s
		Customer empowering behaviors - customer service performance	.183	.005	.061	s

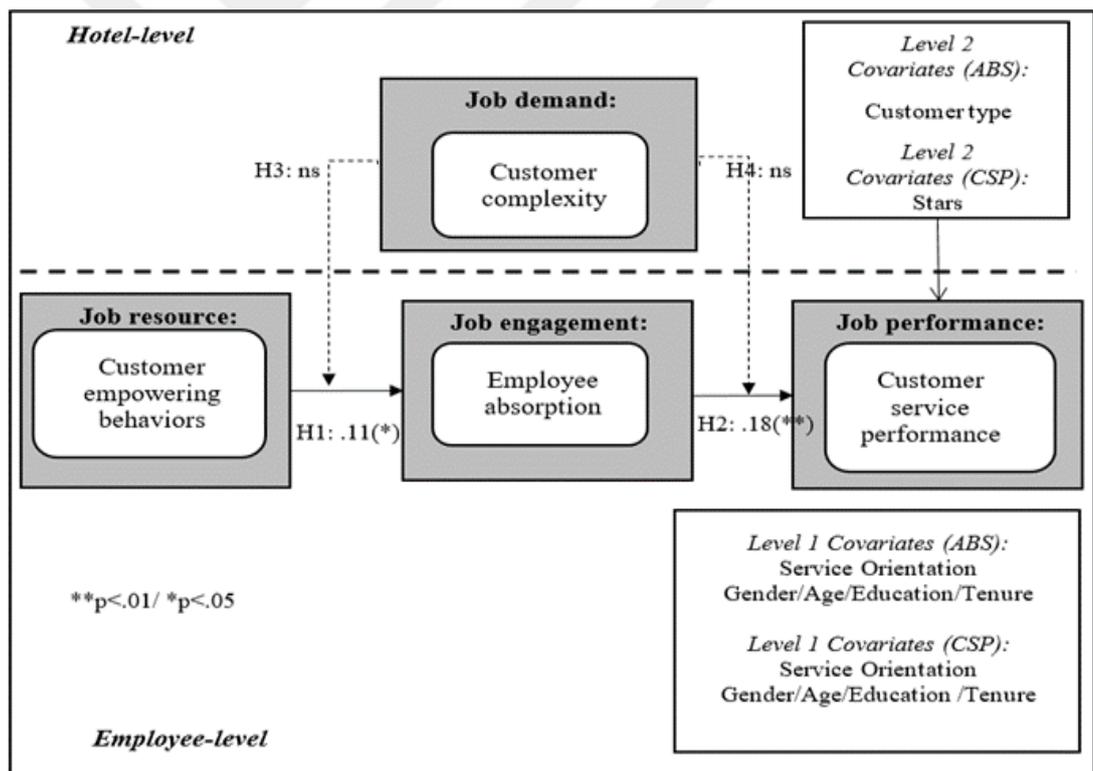
*Note:* Robust standard errors (S.E.) are reported.

\*Two-tailed test for both hypothesized directional and interactional relationship

## 7.5. Summary of Findings

The last part of this chapter is summary findings which presents a brief summary of our results. The main purpose of the study is to search whether customer empowering behaviors have a positive effect on customer service performance through enhancing a sense absorption in frontline employees (receptionists and guest relation employees) in the service context.

Figure 7.1 – The Final Conceptual Model



Our findings show that customer empowering behaviors have a significant direct effect on employee absorption. During the service context, involving customers' decision process, their beliefs about employees' ability to handle

difficult tasks, expressing to employees' confidence about their talent to serve, and allowing the employees to provide service on their way make employees to increase their absorption. In other words, toward customer empowering behaviors, employees feel motivated and happy, highly concentrated on their work, and they reveal a better performance in the hotel. Furthermore, it can be considered that time passes quickly during working in the hotel, they really like involving customers' decision-making process and keeping in contact with customers when they feel empowerment behaviors from customers. According to this result, it can be considered that customer empowering behaviors increase employee absorption in the hospitality industry.

When the Figure 7.1 is checked, it is obvious that employee absorption has a direct and very significant effect on customer service performance. If employees feel motivated, happy, and work intensely, they perform better than they do as usual. In addition to these results, these two direct hypothesis are also affected from service orientation which we added as covariance in our model. When employees feel satisfied in their job, they like helping customers, they are proud of themselves to give a polite customer service and try to meet customer needs during the service process, their service performance increases in the hotel as well. Employee absorption directly and positively affects customer service performance.

We claimed that customer complexity negatively moderates the effect of customer empowering behaviors on employee absorption likewise the relationship between customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption will be weaker when there is a high level of customer complexity. However, when we checked our results of this hypothesis, customer complexity has not any impact of the interaction of customer empowering behaviors and customer complexity on employee absorption. This means that high demanding customers, increased expectations, large number of customer communication, and diversification of customers' needs do not affect customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption relationship in the tourism industry. Even

though, tourism industry has increased customer complexity which has complex service content, required individualized and immediate solutions against the problems, we couldn't find any impact on customer empowering behaviors and employee absorption relationship.

The last finding of our study is related to the moderation of customer complexity on employee absorption and customer service performance relationship. We advocated that the relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance is weaker when there is a high level of customer complexity. We claimed that developing customized solutions against service problems, trying to make 1 customers to be felt as a unique entity, and setting a balance in large amount customers required to be able to handle stress during the service may cause to employees' over effort and spend long working hours in the hotel. Nevertheless, our results show us customer complexity does not moderate the relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance. When employees feel motivated, they enjoy helping customers and find these high demanded expectations as part of their job in service industry. Therefore, it can be concluded that customer complexity has not any effect on employee absorption and customer service performance in hospitality industry.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1. Discussion and Implications

The research problem of this thesis is to investigate the effects of customer empowering behaviors on service employee performance (i.e. hotels). Dong et al. (2015) defined customer empowering behaviors as customers' behaviors that make employees feel motivated and encourages as deciding on behalf of customer in order to achieve preferred service during the service context. Besides very limited number of studies that focus on customer empowering behaviors (Dong et al., 2005), our study has particularly searched whether customer empowering behavior can affect customer service performance through enhancing employee absorption.

In order to address the existing gaps in the literature, this study has drawn from Job Demand – Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) as a theoretical framework. The JD-R theory has allowed us to observe the role of underlying mechanisms (i.e., job engagement which we conceptualized as employee absorption) and hotel-level factors (i.e., customer complexity) on customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance relationship. In other words, our study has demonstrated how customer empowering behaviors affect employees' absorption at work, which in turn affects customer service performance. Our study also tested whether these relationships are moderated by hotel-level factors, namely, customer complexity.

Our findings confirm that customer empowering behaviors increase employee absorption, which, in turn, affects customer service performance. Our study further suggests that employee absorption acts as partial mediators for employee absorption –customer service performance. Moreover, our results indicated that any change in customer complexity does not affect the

relationship between customer empowering behavior and employee absorption or employee absorption and customer service performance.

In line with the aforementioned backdrop, this chapter presents implications of the findings of our study. Accordingly, this chapter will first discuss the theoretical and managerial implications. As a result, in the following part there will be discussion about the theoretical and managerial implications of this study, and will subsequently offer limitations and directions for future research.

## **8.2. Theoretical Implications and Contributions to Literature**

This study aims to explain the role of customer empowering behaviors on service employee performance. From a theoretical perspective, our study brings a variety of contributions to the literature.

First, our study is the first research in the literature that associates customer empowering behaviors to service employee performance. In line with Job Demand – Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), our study associates customer empowering behaviors with customer service performance through job engagement, namely employee absorption. Second, by using the Job Demand – Resources Theory, our study proposes the customer empowering behaviors as a resource exposed to employees, which would enhance employee performance through increasing employee absorption. Third, our study further introduces employee absorption as an agent factor between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance. From this point of view, our study claims that customer empowering behaviors encourage employees to provide service on their own way, which would help them feel more absorbed at work, which would help them with their performance.

Our confirmed relationships further show consistencies with the findings in extant literature. First, in line with the previous studies in marketing (Menguc, Auh, Yeniaras & Katsikeas, 2017; Menguc, Auh, Fisher & Haddad, 2013) have

found that job engagement (i.e. employee absorption) influence positively employee's job performance, which was confirmed in our study. Additionally, our results also indicated that there is a positive relationship between employee absorption and customer service performance which is another confirmation on previous studies in the literature. In addition to the above consistencies, the mediating role of employee absorption between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance introduces a previously unmentioned contribution in marketing literature.

Customer complexity, which our study conceptualizes as a job demand, is a rather new concept in marketing literature, which did not receive much attention other than Schmitz and Ganesan (2014). While our study combines this concept with customer empowering behaviors, contrary to our expectations, our findings indicate that there is no significant effect of hotel-level customer complexity on the employee-level relationships between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance. The reason for customer complexity having no effect on the employee-level relationships could be due to the possibility that customer empowering behaviors increases the employee motivation and creativity (Dong et al. 2015) so much that having different customers with unstandardized demands would not create a burden on employee that would hinder the employee absorption and performance.

### **8.3. Managerial Implications**

Due to service industry's inseparability feature, customer empowering behaviors can be a common phenomenon in the literature. Particularly in tourism industry, employee and customer have to be at the same place while service is created, so frontline employees interact with customers during their stay in the hotel. Each customer wants to be delivered unique service and

demand a smooth stay from their arrival until they check out. Getting consultancy about hospitality services is in the nature of service industry. Customers ask about hotel's services before they have decided to visit and generally trust employees' opinions. As a result, employees feel more comfortable during interaction with customers and more immersed in their work. Furthermore, empowered employees feel free and motivated to handle problematic issues and be capable of making significant decisions about their work (Dong et al., 2015). In case, employees do not hesitate to serve customers on their own way, they tend to develop stronger customer commitment in achieving positive service delivery in the hotel and they feel absorbed in their work.

In service industry, highly absorbed employees feel more energetic, more active and feel positive emotions about their jobs (Bakker et al., 2014). This may provide more productive and cheerful service delivery in the hotel. Service employees who feel immersed in their job are well organized and more creative, as a result of this, they are willing to serve unstandardized service to customers and feel high level of organizational commitment (Taştan, 2014). In addition to this, highly absorbed employees feel that time passes quickly on duty and find difficult to detach themselves from their work (Mauno et al., 2007). Service employees ignore everything else around them while they feel absorbed and naturally this commitment results having long working hours in every type of service industry.

Our study also provides that customer empowering behaviors are positively related to employees' job performance by encouraging employees' creativity which is a part of leadership empowering behaviors (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). While customer empowering behaviors are related to external influences (i.e. customers), empowerment or leadership empowering behaviors are about internal marketing strategies. In order to enhance employees' productivity and performance, internal strategies need to be provided by managers. In service industry, particularly in tourism industry, frontline employees are face to face

with customers every day. Therefore, employees should not worry about making mistakes when replying customer's special needs and wants. To be able to provide this self-confidence and comfortable work environment to employees, managers should benefit from empowerment which is related to internal structure of the organization (Dong et al, 2015). Empowerment refers to the flow of authority and delegating power between managers and subordinates (Biemann, Kearny & Margraff, 2015). In line with this information, managers should encourage employees to participate decision making process by making meetings, planning open communications weekly or attending forums together (Raub & Robert, 2010; Hill & Huq, 2004). Alongside sharing responsibility with employees, granting flexibility and latitude to employees help them build trust. As a result of this, employees think that they are important people for their current position (Hassi, 2018; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Managers also should provide feedback and training programs in order to improve employee's organizational commitment and creativity against service related problems. In service industry, service related issues need to be solved as soon as possible to create high level of customer satisfaction. Managers can provide customer learning programs to solve such problems in all service sectors. For example; when a customer faces a problem or needs an unexpected service, employee should break away his job and solve the problem immediately in both banking and hospitality industry (Auh, et al. 2013). In addition to this, hotels may develop their own database programs to follow these special needs easily. Employees can type customers' special demands to this program and every branches of the hotel can predict and meet customers' high demanded needs before they ask for that. Furthermore, developing customer data base programs is very beneficial for each kind of service industry such as hospitals, retail stores or any type of online services.

Another significant point is generalizability of our results to all kinds of service industries. Highly motivated employees in service industry are very beneficial

not only for hotels but also for different parts of service industry such as hospitals, retail stores, banks and even education sector because employees tend to work more than they normally do in these areas. (Taştan, 2014). Thus, we can generalize our results to other areas of service industry and managers should aim to enhance employees' motivation in the work place by sharing their authority and giving them responsibility to satisfy customers on their own way against problems. As a consequence of this, employees will feel free to respond to the incident and feel more comfortable during working hours.

Finally, our results showed that customer empowering behaviors increase employee absorption, which, in turn, affects customer service performance positively. Under highly competitive service industry, employees cannot detach themselves from their daily routine and they have to be dedicated to their work. Moreover, advanced technological devices such as smartphones, iPads or laptops make employees to be involved into their business even while they are at home which is another reason of employee absorption. In banking, health, retail sectors or online services, employees have to answer their e-mails or phone calls even they are off-duty. In service industry managers can regulate working conditions which may increase employees' job performance and creativity. Supervisors, coworkers and teammates have to interact and work in a harmony in different areas of service industry. Physical conditions, long working hours or work overload are also related to organization's internal features that managers may regulate and control in the service industry. Managers should also listen employees all kind of needs and try to understand their expectations to improve better creativity and service performance (Dong et al., 2015).

#### **8.4. Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Our first limitation lies in the use of third party (i.e., hotel chain's frontline department managers and contact persons in each hotel) to distribute the questionnaires to the employees at the hotel. Even though, the surveys were transmitted to front line employees who work as guest relation employees and receptionist in a closed envelope and later have been collected from them in the same way, employees could have felt psychological pressure and insecurity about returning their responses throughout their managers in the hotel (i.e., contact persons and frontline department manager). This pressure and insecurity may influence employees' answers to the survey since they think that their managers are likely see their answers. To be able to solve this problem, future studies could annihilate the third parties and contact the service employees directly.

The second limitation of this survey is related to thesis's language. Due to surveys which are conducted in Turkey, the survey items are translated into Turkish by using Brislin Back Translation method carefully (Brislin, 1970). During the translation process, two different bilingual translators translated the original items in English into target language in Turkish. After completing translation by each translator, Turkish versions have been compared to each other and a version of Turkish translation has been selected which is sent to a third bilingual translator. The third translator was responsible for translating the Turkish version back into English. After this process, the items in the original and translated versions were compared in terms of whether the items in the latter match the meaning of those in the former. Then, the Turkish version of questionnaire is finalized. During this translation process, we also adopted these scales to the hotel context. Although, our results provide feedback about items' clarity and relevance, there may be still semantic shift because of language difference.

Our third limitation comes from the generalizability of our findings to other context and regions. Put differently, we examined our hypothesized relationships by collecting data from employees who work in different branches of Turkish hotels. Furthermore, this study was conducted in hotels with frontline employees who work either at the reception desk or in guest relations in 4 or 5 star hotels in the South and South Western districts of Turkey (i.e. hotels located at the coast side of Turkey). For future studies, employees in business hotels could be observed, which may conceive different results.

The final limitation is related to cross cultural differences among countries. If customer empowering behaviors concept is applied in any Western country, the study's results may change. According to Hofstede (1993) due to decentralization of low power distance cultures (most of western countries and USA), employees expect to be consulted about all types of decision making process in the organization and they can explain their opinions clearly (Eylon & Au, 1999). However, in high distance cultures (most Eastern countries, Japan etc.) it has quite low possibility that an employee can express his opinion to the manager. Because (s)he afraid of any disagreement with his supervisor and thinks that this conflict may affect his work in the organization (Benlier & Yıldırım, 2017). In these premises, our study may display differences according to cross cultural varieties, therefore, we cannot generalize our findings to other cultures.

## **8.5. Summary of Conclusion**

We used the Job Demand and Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Our study suggests customer empowering behaviors as an antecedent of customer service performance through job engagement (i.e., employee absorption), in conjunction with hotel-level factors (i.e., customer complexity). We collected the data from frontline employees who work at either the

reception desk or in guest relations in 4 or 5 star hotels in the South and South Western districts of Turkey. The data has confirmed that at the employee-level customer empowering behaviors affect employees' absorption, which in turn impact employees' customer service performance in a positive way. Our further analyses also confirm that employee absorption partially mediate the relationship between customer empowering behaviors and customer service performance. Our findings also display that those relationships at employee-level are not affected by hotel-level customer complexity. We hope that our study contributes to customer empowering behaviors literature, and motivates further studies.

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**APPENDIX A- SCALES USED**

<b>Customer Service Performance (Salanova et al., 2005)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>				<b>Strongly Agree</b>
I understand specific needs of customers	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am able to put myself in the customers' place	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am able to tune in to each specific customer	①	②	③	④	⑤
I surprise customers with their excellent service	①	②	③	④	⑤
I do more than usual for customers	①	②	③	④	⑤
I deliver an excellent service quality that is difficult to find in other hotels	①	②	③	④	⑤

<b>Customer Empowering Behaviors (Adapted from Dong et al., 2014 and Ahearne et al., 2005)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>				<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Customers help me understand the meaning of my service to them	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers help me see the importance of my service to them	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers make their decisions about the service that they will get from our hotel together with me	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers consult me on decisions about the service that they will get from our hotel	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers believe that I can handle demanding tasks regarding their service needs prior to our hotel	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers express confidence in my ability to perform at a high level	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers allow me to provide service my way	①	②	③	④	⑤
Customers allow me to make important decisions to satisfy their service-related needs prior to our hotel	①	②	③	④	⑤

<b>Customer complexity (Menguc et al. 2017, Schmitz &amp; Ganesan 2014)</b>	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree			
Our customers' needs and wants are diverse	①	②	③	④	⑤
Our customers require customized services	①	②	③	④	⑤
Most of our customer service is routine and standardized (r)	①	②	③	④	⑤
Each of our customers wants to be treated as a unique entity	①	②	③	④	⑤

<b>Service Orientation (Bettencourt et al. 2001)</b>	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree			
I enjoy helping customers	①	②	③	④	⑤
The best job I can imagine would involve assisting customers in making satisfactory decisions	①	②	③	④	⑤
I feel a sense of fulfillment when I am able to offer excellent customer service	①	②	③	④	⑤
I pride myself in providing courteous customer service	①	②	③	④	⑤
It is natural for me to be considerate of customers' needs	①	②	③	④	⑤

<b>Job Engagement (Schaufeli &amp; Bakker, 2004)</b>	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree			
In my job, I feel strong and vigorous	①	②	③	④	⑤
At work, I feel full of energy	①	②	③	④	⑤
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	①	②	③	④	⑤
I can continue working for very long periods at a time	①	②	③	④	⑤
In my job, I am mentally very resilient	①	②	③	④	⑤
At work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well	①	②	③	④	⑤

I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am enthusiastic about my job	①	②	③	④	⑤
My job inspires me	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am proud of the work I do	①	②	③	④	⑤
I find my job challenging	①	②	③	④	⑤
Time flies when I am working	①	②	③	④	⑤
When I am working, I forget everything else around me	①	②	③	④	⑤
I feel happy when I am working intensely	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am immersed in my work	①	②	③	④	⑤
I get carried away when I am working	①	②	③	④	⑤
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	①	②	③	④	⑤

## APPENDIX B – RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Değerli katılımcı,

Anket çalışmamıza katıldığınız için teşekkür ederiz. Bu anket, farklı bireylerin tutum ve davranışlarını inceleyen bir doktora bitirme tezi kapsamında hazırlanmıştır. Anket sırasında isminiz **istenmeyecek**, ankete vereceğiniz yanıtlar kesinlikle **gizli kalacak**, çalıştığınız kurum da dâhil başka kişi veya kurumlarla **paylaşılmayacak** ve sadece yukarıda bahsi geçen doktora bitirme tezi kapsamında kullanılacaktır. Bu bakımdan anketteki her soruyu dikkatlice okuyup soruları yanıtlarken hiçbir soru için doğru ya da yanlış bir cevap olmadığını ve en iyi cevabın gerçek düşüncelerinizi en uygun şekilde yansıtan cevap olduğunu hatırlayınız. Şimdi lütfen ankete başlayınız.

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**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

<i>Bu otelde konaklayan müşterilerimiz ...</i>	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Sunduğum hizmetin onlar için ne ifade ettiğini anlamama yardımcı olurlar	①	②	③	④	⑤
Sunduğum hizmetin onlar için ne derece önemli olduğunu görmeme yardımcı olurlar	①	②	③	④	⑤
Otelimizden alacakları hizmetlere benimle birlikte karar verirler	①	②	③	④	⑤
Otelimizden alacakları hizmetlere dair bana danışır	①	②	③	④	⑤

Otelimizdeki ihtiyaçları ile ilgili zor talepleri yerine getirebileceğime inanırlar	①	②	③	④	⑤
Onlara üst düzey hizmet sağlayabileceğime dair duydukları güveni ifade ederler	①	②	③	④	⑤
Onlara kendi bildiğim şekilde hizmet sunmama müsaade ederler	①	②	③	④	⑤
Onların ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilmem için önemli kararlar almama müsaade ederler	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Bu işte çalışmayı seviyorum	①	②	③	④	⑤
Bu işten çok memnunum	①	②	③	④	⑤
Bu işte olabileceğim kadar mutlu olduğumu düşünüyorum	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Müşterilerimizin istek ve ihtiyaçları farklıdır	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimiz kendilerine özgü hizmet beklerler	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimize sunduğumuz hizmet çoğunlukla rutin ve standarttır (r)	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimizin her biri kendilerine benzersiz davranılmasını ister	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

<i>Bu otelde...</i>	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Üstün kalitede müşteri hizmeti sunabilmek için yeterli bilgi birikimi ve yeteneğe sahibiz	①	②	③	④	⑤
Üstün kalitede müşteri hizmeti sunduğumuzda takdir edilir ve ödüllendiriliriz	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilere sağladığımız genel hizmet kalitesi mükemmeldir	①	②	③	④	⑤
Kaliteli müşteri hizmeti sunabilmemiz için gerekli imkânlar sağlanmış durumdadır	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Yöneticim, çalışanlarının huzuruyla çok ilgilidir	①	②	③	④	⑤
Yöneticim, işle ilgili sorunlarımı dinlemeye açıktır	①	②	③	④	⑤
Oteldeki işler zorlaştığında yöneticime güvenebilirim	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Müşterilere yardımcı olmaktan keyif alırım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerin doğru kararlar almalarına yardımcı olmak hayalimdeki işin bir parçasıdır	①	②	③	④	⑤

Mükemmel müşteri hizmeti sunmak beni kişisel olarak tatmin eder	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilere nazik davrandığımda kendimle gurur duyarım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerin ihtiyaçlarını daima dikkate alırım	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

<i>Bu otelde...</i>	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Hizmet ile ilgili sorunlara derhal müdahale edebilmek için gerekli eğitimi alırız	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşteri hizmetiyle ilgili yaşanan sorunları çözebilecek adımları atmamız için bize gerekli yetki verilir	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimizin sorunlu bir hizmetle ilgili şikâyetlerini giderebilecek gerekli kaynaklara sahibiz	①	②	③	④	⑤
Hizmetle ilgili yaşanan sorunlara etkin bir biçimde müdahale edebilmemiz için standart kural ve ilkelerimiz vardır	①	②	③	④	⑤
Yaşanan sorunlarla hizmet kalitemizi geliştirecek şekilde ilgilendiğimizde ödüllendirilir ve takdir ediliriz	①	②	③	④	⑤
Hizmetle ilgili yaşanan bir sorunu müşteri güvenini sağlayacak şekilde çözmemiz beklenir	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Sık sık 2 ya da daha fazla marketin fiyatlarını karşılaştırırım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Her hafta marketlerin reklam ve broşürlerine göre nereden alışveriş yapacağıma karar veririm	①	②	③	④	⑤
Fiyat indirimlerinden yararlanmak amacıyla değişik ürünleri değişik marketlerden almaya özen gösteririm	①	②	③	④	⑤
Alışveriş yapmaya gitmeden önce değişik marketlerin gazete ilanlarını gözden geçiririm	①	②	③	④	⑤
En uygun fiyatlardan yararlanmak amacıyla 2 ya da 3 ayrı marketten alışveriş yaparım	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
İşimde güçlü ve dinamik hissederim	①	②	③	④	⑤
İşimde enerji doluyumdur	①	②	③	④	⑤
Sabahları kalkınca sevinçle işe giderim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Ara vermeden çok uzun süre çalışmaya devam edebilirim	①	②	③	④	⑤
İşimde zihinsel olarak çok dayanıklıyım	①	②	③	④	⑤
İşimde bir şeyler iyi gitmese bile azimle çalışmaya devam ederim	①	②	③	④	⑤

Yaptığım işin bir amaca hizmet ettiğini ve anlamlı olduğunu düşünürüm	①	②	③	④	⑤
İşimi hevesle yaparım	①	②	③	④	⑤
İşim bana ilham verir.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Yaptığım işle gurur duyarım	①	②	③	④	⑤
İşimi zorlayıcı bulurum	①	②	③	④	⑤
Çalışırken zaman uçup gider	①	②	③	④	⑤
Çalışırken etrafta olup biten her şeyi unuturum	①	②	③	④	⑤
Yoğun bir şekilde çalıştığımda mutlu hissederim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Kendimi işime kaptırırım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Çalışırken kendimden geçerim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Kendimi işimden ayırmak zordur	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Bazı müşterilere sanki insan değil de bir nesne gibi davrandığımı hissederim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Bazı müşterilere karşı kayıtsız hissederim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerin ihtiyaçlarını etkin bir biçimde karşıladığımı hissederim (r)	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerin sorunlarını etkin bir şekilde çözdüğümü hissederim (r)	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşteriler ile çalışmak beni gerer	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşteriler için çok fazla çalıştığımı hissederim	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Müşterilere iyi hizmet sunabileceğime güvenirim	①	②	③	④	⑤

İyi müşteri hizmeti sunma kabiliyetime güvenirim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilere yüksek kalite hizmet sunmak için gerekli vasıflarda uzmanlaşmışımdır	①	②	③	④	⑤

**Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne ölçüde katıldığınızı 1 ile 5 arasında 1=Kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 2=Katılmıyorum, 3=Ne katılıyorum ne de katılmıyorum, 4=Katılıyorum, 5=Kesinlikle katılıyorum olacak şekilde işaretleyiniz.**

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Farklı müşterilerimizin kendine özgü ihtiyaçlarını anlarım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Kendimi müşterilerimizin yerine koyabilirim	①	②	③	④	⑤
Her bir müşterimizin ihtiyacına uygun davranırım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimizi mükemmel hizmet sunarak şaşırtırım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimiz için beklenenden fazlasını yaparım	①	②	③	④	⑤
Müşterilerimize başka otellerde kolay bulamayacakları kalitede hizmet sağlarım	①	②	③	④	⑤

### DEMOGRAFİK BİLGİLER

<b>Cinsiyetiniz:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Erkek <input type="checkbox"/> Kadın
<b>Yaşınız (yıl olarak):</b> .....
<b>Eğitim seviyeniz:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> İlkokul <input type="checkbox"/> Ortaokul <input type="checkbox"/> Lise <input type="checkbox"/> Üniversite <input type="checkbox"/> Yüksek Lisans
<b>Medeni durumunuz:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Bekâr <input type="checkbox"/> Evlî
<b>Toplam çalışma süreniz (Örn: 1 yıl 4 ay – Çalışma deneyiminiz 1 yıldan az ise, sadece ay bilgisi giriniz):</b> ..... yıl ..... Ay
<b>Turizm sektöründe çalışma süreniz (Örn: 1 yıl 4 ay – Çalışma deneyiminiz 1 yıldan az ise, sadece ay):</b> ..... yıl ..... Ay
<b>Ne kadar süredir bu otelde çalışıyorsunuz? (Örn: 1 yıl 4 ay – Çalışma deneyiminiz 1 yıldan az ise, sadece ay):</b> ..... yıl ..... Ay
<b>Aylık net gelir seviyeniz:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1600 TL altı <input type="checkbox"/> 1600 – 1999 TL <input type="checkbox"/> 2000 – 2499 TL <input type="checkbox"/> 2500 – 2999 TL <input type="checkbox"/> 3000 – 4999 TL <input type="checkbox"/> 5000 TL ve üzeri

<b>Bu otelde bulunduğunuz pozisyon:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Misafir ilişkileri görevlisi <input type="checkbox"/> Resepsiyon görevlisi
<b>Bu otelde konaklayan ağırlıklı müşteri profili:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> İş <input type="checkbox"/> Tatil
<b>Bu otele seyahat acenteleri aracılığı ile gelen müşteri oranı:</b> %.....
<b>Bu otelin sahip olduğu yıldız sayısı:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 4 yıldız <input type="checkbox"/> 5 yıldız

**ANKETİMİZ SONA ERMIŞTİR. KATILIMINIZ İÇİN TEŞEKKÜR  
EDERİZ.**



## APPENDIX C- MEASURES

Constructs	Factor Loadings
<b>Employee – Level</b>	
<b>Customer Empowering Behaviors (<math>\alpha = ,77</math>; CR= ,77; AVE=,41)</b>	
Our customers make decisions about the service that they receive from our hotel together with me	0,545
Our customers consult me on decisions about the service they receive from our hotel	0,711
Our customers believe that I can handle demanding tasks about their needs in our hotel	0,702
Our customers express confidence in my ability to deliver service at a high level	0,654
Our customers allow me to provide service in my own way	0,565
<b>Absorbtion (<math>\alpha = ,83</math>; CR= ,84; AVE= ,56)</b>	
I feel happy when I am working intensely	0,701
I am immersed in my work	0,775
I get carried away when I am working	0,768
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	0,746
<b>Customer Service Performance (<math>\alpha = ,84</math>; CR= ,84; AVE= ,64)</b>	
Employees “surprise” customers with their excellent service (excellent performance)	0,794
Employees do more than usual for customers (excellent performance)	0,836
Employees deliver an excellent service quality that is difficult to find in other organizations (excellent performance).	0,775

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>
<b>Service Orientation (<math>\alpha = ,82</math>; CR= ,82; AVE= ,54)</b>	
I enjoy helping customers	0,739
The best job I can imagine would involve assisting customers in making satisfactory decisions	0,599
I pride myself in providing courteous customer service	0,82
It is natural for me to be considerate of customers' needs	0,758
<b>Hotel – Level</b>	
<b>Customer Complexity (<math>\alpha = ,79</math>; CR= ,80; AVE= ,58)</b>	
Our customers' needs and wants are diverse	0,75
Our customers require customized services	0,88
Each of our customers wants to be treated as a unique entity	0,63