

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEES' GESTURE OF
GOODWILL ON CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY-
A STUDY OF SELECT APPAREL RETAIL STORES IN PUNJAB**

Thesis submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Commerce

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PUNJAB

2025

DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled “Examining The Role Of Employees' Gesture Of Goodwill On Customers' Satisfaction And Loyalty - A Study Of Select Apparel Retail Stores In Punjab” in fulfillment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr Richa Bhatia** working as an Associate Professor in the General Marketing/Mittal School of Business of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



(Signature of Scholar)

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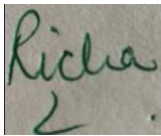
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “Examining The Role Of Employees' Gesture Of Goodwill On Customers' Satisfaction And Loyalty - A Study Of Select Apparel Retail Stores In Punjab” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the reward of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the General Marketing/ Mittal School of Business, is a research work carried out by Rohini Marwaha, 41900037, is bonafide record of her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

A square box containing a handwritten signature in green ink. The signature appears to be 'Richa' with a stylized flourish below it.

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ABSTRACT

Indian retail trade was by tradition dominated by small size, family-run stores. It has taken almost an era for retailing to evolve and diversify to its current state. These conventional retail establishments are establishing upscale showrooms and reputable retail chains like Shopper's Stop and Pantaloons, having embraced contemporary retail concepts. In addition to this, with the introduction of LPG, the global economy has witnessed the enormous changes ranging from entry of private players, increased supply of numerous goods and services, rising disposable income to demand for quality goods and services that has increased a huge competition in markets especially in digital markets. In such competitive markets, a particular firm can differentiate itself by providing the best possible services, so as to attract the customers. This attraction can be due to varied reasons including best quality products, better service facilities, good gestures in selling, discounts, offers etc.

Various studies highlighted that one of the major factors of customer attraction can be their demand of getting better customer services. In response to such attraction, many service companies are redirecting their strategies to provide satisfaction to their customers through improved service quality. However, any kind of service failure can result into customer dissatisfaction (Craighead et al., 2004). Even for the best service providers, service failures or mistakes cannot be ignored. Errors and mistakes in service delivery can even be produced by best service providers (Berry 1980). Thus, the effective relationship management becomes highly important, in highly competitive markets to remove or lessen the effect of service failures. Moreover, consumer behavior plays an eminent role in analyzing their satisfaction. Though it is impossible, with varied consumer behavior, to get perfect reviews regarding any service, yet it is imperative that organizations must have a proper follow up (Bilgihan et al., 2014). Company image is the most versatile asset of the firm, and it can serve as an indicator of how service failures will affect the company. Company trust, as opposed to its passive role in routine situations, acts like a safety net in service failures by enhancing the customer's value perception (Sajtos, Brodie and Whittome, 2010). On the other hand, the consumers prefer to shop from the sellers where they encounter a high-quality interaction with staff, rather than any dissatisfying experiences.

Clough and duff (2020) viewed that people use gestures when they speak, which are fundamental mechanism of words that add distinctive and significant information to spoken

words and reveal the speaker's underlying experiences and knowledge. Speech is composed of discrete components that develop gradually and progressively over time to build a cumulative meaning, whereas gestures transmit information holistically, geographically, and frequently concurrently in a single action. (McNeill, 1992). When dealing with customers gestures play an important role in effective communication by the employees. Clough and Duff (2020) Gesture is essential to communication because it is closely linked to speech in the production and interpretation of utterances. It also frequently conveys distinctive information that is absent from speech signals, particularly about the motor and spatial characteristics of referents. While gesture and speech have separate benefits, they complement one another to enhance the linguistic environment. There are advantages to gestures for both speakers and listeners. Thus, in any business dealings, gestures play an eminent role in effective communication between sellers and buyers.

The primary objective of the study is to examine the relationship of employees' goodwill gestures with the satisfaction and loyalty of the customer. The study specifically focused on investigating the impact of employees' goodwill gestures on consumers' satisfaction and loyalty. The proposed conceptual framework has been established by proposing the relationship between seven variables of goodwill gestures of employees (service efficiency, empathy, enjoyable interaction, responsiveness, active listener, friendly attitude, courtesy) and satisfaction of customers keeping in mind the demographic profile of the respondents. Further, the effect of satisfaction on consumers' loyalty was also analyzed.

A descriptive research design has been used for the present study. Customers from selected apparel retail stores of Punjab have been considered as target population for the study. Quota and convenience technique of sampling have been employed for the purpose of data collection. As Punjab has three regions; Majha, Malwa and Doaba, thus sample has been collected from these three regions. The districts have been selected on the basis of Punjab Economic Survey (2021-22). For the study, a 600 responder sample size has been used and 50% data has been collected from Malwa region and 50% from Majha and Doaba. The data was collected from February 2023 to August 2023 by using self-administered questionnaire which consists of the items of service efficiency, empathy, enjoyable interaction, responsiveness, active listener, friendly attitude, courtesy, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Participants were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on five point likert scale by selecting the appropriate option, ranging from "strongly disagree" (score of 1) to "strongly agree" (score of 5), with a neutral midpoint score of 3. Accordingly,

reliability of the constructs used in the questionnaire has been tested and the values of Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.60 to 0.90 for all the constructs. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SPSS software has been used to accomplish the objectives and for hypothesis testing for the present study.

Findings revealed that all the gestures taken in the study have favorable influence on satisfaction and loyalty of consumers. The literature review served as the basis for the conceptual model and the same is found to be satisfactory. The structural model assessment unveiled significant relationships between customer service attributes and customer satisfaction, with Active Listening, Courtesy, and Enjoyable Interaction emerging as key determinants. Additionally, the study demonstrated a positive link between customer satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing the importance of customer-centric service. From the viewpoint of academics, the present study contributes to the currently existing literature on goodwill gestures and buying decisions of consumers. The present study also provides a conceptual model to differentiate and recognize the antecedents and consequences of goodwill gestures. At last, the important idea of the proposed conceptual model is that marketers should understand in detail about the factors that are needed to improve the practices that will positively impact both the purchase intention as well as satisfaction level of the consumers.

The implications of this research are far-reaching, offering valuable insights for both managers in the apparel retail sector and scholars in the field of customer service. By investing in employee training programs that focus on these crucial dimensions, retailers can significantly enhance customer experiences and, consequently, drive customer loyalty and business success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is indispensable that every research work requires a lot of hard work, concentration and commitments. But it becomes easy, achievable and possible with the proper guidance, supervision and help to me by a number of people.

At the first, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Almighty for all His grace and light which gave strength as well as inspiration to me throughout this work. A successful completion of a project always depends on the guidance and assistance of your mentor. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my mentor and supervisor Dr. Richa Bhatia for her dedicated help, advice, motivation, encouragement, counseling inspiration and continuous support, throughout my Ph.D journey. I am also thankful to Dr. Priyanka Singh for introducing me in the field of research and encouraging me to go for the research work. I am also thankful and I appreciate to all the respondents who helped me in the completion of survey process by spending their valuable time.

Last but not least, the acknowledgement will get incomplete if I do not mention the moral and psychological support received from my husband, parents and other members of the family during the research work. I would like to extend the special thanks to my mother , and inspiration, Smt. Vinod Kumari , my father, my role model , Sh. Pawan Marwaha and my husband ,Mr. Saksham Setia for inspiring, motivating and supporting me in my research work and always standing with me in every situation.

Finally, a big thanks to my stress buster my son, Samjas Setia, who always vanishes all my worries and stress with his cute smile and adjusting so much during my hard days.

Rohini Marwaha

Date: 9th January 2025

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CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Indian retail industry is expanding swiftly in the country, contributing 3% of CAGR in 2020 and expected to reach US\$ 190 billion by the end of 2025-26, out of which by 2025, the Indian clothing market is projected to have grown from its 2020 valuation of US\$40 billion to US\$135 billion. With government-led policies of liberalized retail, E-Commerce, and investment, the retail industry accounts for over approximately 15% of country's Gross Domestic Product (<https://www.kearney.com>) and of the thirty developing nations, India is the fifth-largest worldwide destination for retail(www.ibef.org). Moreover, the Indian retail industry is ranked as second largest trade next to agriculture; with a turnover of around \$180 billion. Since the 1970s, India has experienced a rapid transformation in retailing. The retail sector in India is one of the sectors with the quickest rate of economic growth because of the country's expanding disposable income and increasing demand for high-quality goods. Because of its great potential, minimal economic risk, and moderate political risk, Indian retail holds a noteworthy place in the worldwide retail rankings. By 2025, India will have 400 billion dollars in consumption, making it the third largest consumer economy in the world, according to a Boston Consulting Group report. Favourable demographic data, a young and growing population, rising consumer confidence, psychographic shifts related to India's shopper group, introduction to the global market, the availability of higher-quality retail space, a wider range of products, and trade name communication are some of the factors that have propelled the Indian retail sector in recent years.

The global economy has changed, consumers' demands have shifted, supermarkets have increased the variety of products they offer, operating systems for retailers are heavily reliant on technology, and shoppers are seeking convenience, novelty, and stimulation as their incomes rise. The contemporary Indian customer demands greater value in the form of better quality and availability, a welcoming retail space, financing alternatives, clothes sample rooms, exchange and return policies, and affordable rates. This has made it possible for organized, contemporary retail forms to arise and expand quickly in recent years.

1.1 The Evolution of Retailing in India

The word "retail" comes from the French word "retailleur," which meaning "to cut off a piece of" or "to get to the business of breaking objects up" (Brown ,1987). Retailing" is all activities

related to selling goods or services to ultimate customers whether it be by a manufacturer, wholesaler or retailer for personal, family or household use is retailing, regardless of how the merchandise or services are sold (by mail, telephone, vending machines, or the internet) or where they are sold (in a store, on the street, or at home)' (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) describes the retail sector as comprising of “establishments primarily engaged in retailing merchandise, generally without transformation and rendering services incidental to the sale of merchandise.”

Retail has taken a long time to reach its current form of diversity and development. Historically, retail has been rooted in the barter system, when items were traded for one another. Mandis, Melas, and Hats were the part of Indian retail culture. The history of the Indian apparel sector extends back to the Indus Valley Civilization. The Indian apparel sector witnessed an enormous change with the advent of globalization and liberalization in the 1990s, and it has since evolved to become a major player in the global marketplace. The business-to-consumer role has evolved from producer-to-consumer with the advancement of civilization. The British rationing system during World War II served as the model for India's Public Distribution System (PDS). Eventually, the government began to support rural retail and several franchises in the country were opened with the help of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. Since the 1980s, there has been a significant change in the retailing industry. The textile sector has seen the entry of companies like Bombay Dyeing, S Kumar's and Raymond's, which came with retail chains. Soon after, Titan began setting up retail showrooms. But, there was significant portion of Indian retail that was unorganized, with most retailers occupying spaces less than 500 square feet. Total retail market size was estimated to be 9, 00,000 crores, with organized sector representing only 9% of this market. But, in the previous few years, the Indian retail market has witnessed the remarkable development. Currently, Retailers in India are exploring the potential market opportunity in almost all retail categories, and the market is experiencing a significant transformation as development is taking place not only in major cities and metros, but also in Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

Till 2003, India's retail industry was mainly occupied by small shops but it shows massive growth with the introduction of format supermarkets and convenience stores which accounted for about 4% of the industry and were basically established in urban areas.

Prior to 2011, the Indian government opposed foreign groups owning convenience stores, supermarkets, and other retail establishments and also prohibited foreign direct investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail. 51 percent ownership was also mandatory for single brand retail.

In November 2011, Government officials in India announced major reforms to both multi-brand stores and single-brand stores that introduced innovation and competition in retailing. A report from FICCI (2011) indicated that the retail sector in India was showing an upward trend, driven by a surge in the middle Income segment and domestic consumption. Furthermore, studies have shown that owing to changes in consumer buying preferences and demographics, and the increase in mall culture in the country, there has been a transition from traditionally organized retail formats to a more organized form, translating to an optimistic outlook for the Indian retail market.

On 7 December 2012, the major step in this direction was taken by the Federal Government of India authorizing 51% foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail that paved the way for international brands like Apple and Nike and supermarkets like Tesco and Wall mart to start retail chains in close association with big Indian companies (<http://info.shine.com>).

With 2.3% of India's GDP, 13% of industrial output, and 12% of exports, the textile and apparel sector makes a substantial economic contribution to the nation (Ministry of Textiles, 2024). It is anticipated that the sector's GDP contribution will almost quadruple by the end of this decade, from 2.3% to over 5%. About 45 million people are employed in the sector, of whom 3.5 million use handlooms (<https://www.ibef.org/industry/textiles>). Europe, the Middle East, and the United States are the primary export destinations for the Indian garment industry, which exports half of its total output (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, 2024).

India ranks third in the world for exports and has a 4.6% market share in textiles and clothing worldwide. India ranked among the top five global exporters in a number of textile-related sectors with textile exports totalling US\$20.01 billion between April and October of FY24. By the fiscal year 2026, the industry is expected to export US\$65 billion (<https://www.ibef.org/industry/textiles>).

It is anticipated that the government's Production Linked Incentive (PLI) program, which is worth Rs. 10,683 crore (US\$ 1.44 billion), will greatly expand the clothing industry. To further expand the textile sector, the government authorised research and development projects in June 2023 totalling US\$ 7.4 million (Rs. 61.09 crore) (Ministry of Textiles, 2024). One significant event demonstrating India's aspiration to become a major force in the world

textile industry was the Bharat Tex 2024 Expo, which took place in New Delhi from February 26 to 29 (Press Information Bureau). Plans to reach a target of US\$ 250 billion in textile output and US\$ 100 billion in exports by 2030 were highlighted by Union Minister Mr. Piyush Goyal (Ministry of Textiles, 2024).

Recent Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreements between Australia and the United Arab Emirates have the potential to greatly help India's textile industry by opening up new markets for handlooms and textiles. Furthermore, the government expects Indian textiles to soon have zero-duty access to markets in the GCC, Canada, the UK, and Europe (<https://www.texmin.nic.in/>).

1.2 Current Scenario

The idea of marketing has evolved significantly since the industrial revolution, and with it have the market forms and marketing philosophies. In this era of technological progress and market place alienation, due to rapid progress of online marketers, raising level of aspiration, frequent changing buying behavior of consumers, changed modus operandi, introduction of new format, shopping platforms etc, the competition level has been hiked manifold. Retailers are facing not only the dwindling sales from past few years but also the increased pressure from stakeholders to recoup the performance among customers and store financial performance. With the advent of LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization), changed demographics, entry of online players, increasing urbanization where marketing orbits around customer's happiness, there's a tremendous change in retailing, which in turn leads to changed lifestyle, consumption pattern and psychology of the consumers. So, the marketers are required to understand the changing pulse of the new age shoppers and should attempt to focus on understanding the dynamic behaviour of the consumer, to search out innovative and creative methods and techniques to fascinate the customers, so as to retain them for a longer period of time. Modern consumers are growing more educated, multifaceted, and demanding (Forward, 2003) as they are becoming more conscious of the products and designs they invest in, have easy access to information about them, are following changing trends, and have greater diversity of preferences.

The idea of selling is based on assumptions that if left alone, the customer would not purchase or would purchase less. Salesmanship, therefore, involves both persuasion and persuasive skills. Thus, if the customer displays buying inertia, the salesman may have the ability to

persuade them. In contrast, if the same concept was practiced more aggressively, the retailer might not only lose sales but he might also lose customers who have been with him a long time, or damage the loyalty of such customers. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to develop new tools to make the point of sale more attractive, to satisfy customers and to maintain their loyalty. These tools include improving interaction at the point of sale, job efficiency of the employees, consumer facilities, and customer care services and much more. Making the customer to buy for the first time may be simple, but making the customer to buy again is a challenge that every marketer faces. Mall visitors are not always prospective customers, as the most of them come just to hang around and indulge in free window shopping in an air-conditioned environment. Additionally, customers are also more inclined to select retail outlets whose benefits include a focus on their needs, and are attentive to their concerns and issues when choosing a retailer. Therefore, the marketer should concentrate on all those efforts with which they attract the customer, persuade them to make a purchase and can maintain the long term healthy relationship so as to gain their loyalty.

In a cutthroat competition where organizations battle for clients, customer satisfaction is seen as a basic differentiator. Customer satisfaction basically extents how perfectly the needs and beliefs of the customers are fulfilled. The success rate of any retail company depends upon how well it is able to surpass the customer's expectations. Academic research has shown that store-level employee attitudes can foster a "climate for customer service" that will raise customer satisfaction and expand economic system of measurement (Liao & Chuang, 2004; Salraggio, 2007; Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz & Niles-Jolly, 2005). In today's competitive retail landscape, customer retention is vital since it is the main link to achieve profitability. Customer retention strategy has become a central aspect of modern marketing that directly and significantly contributes to the growth and profitability of the retail market as retaining a customer is much less costly than obtaining a new one. This quality of customer retention can be attributed to customer satisfaction and loyalty as the research studies indicate that Customers are most likely to remain loyal if they are satisfied.

Customer loyalty and happiness are essential for long-term success in the fiercely competitive retail clothing sector. In a time when consumers are becoming more picky, they choose stores that provide more than just goods because they value the whole experience, including the way staff members treat them. This study fills a knowledge gap about how retail employees' goodwill actions can affect customer pleasure and, in turn, customer loyalty. The softer

elements, including goodwill gestures during consumer interactions, have not received as much attention as traditional marketing strategies like pricing and product variety (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Examining how these gestures help to foster consumer happiness, loyalty, and trust is crucial given the emotional and relational character of retail interactions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006).

Consumers frequently evaluate their shopping experiences based on how the employees treat them as well as the calibre of the merchandise (Bitner, 1990). Customers' opinions of the retail brand can be influenced by the conduct of employees, whether they are little gestures of politeness, empathy, or responsive behaviour (Mattila & Enz, 2002). There is no empirical data on the precise effects of such goodwill gestures on long-term consumer happiness and loyalty in the garment industry, despite the interactions' seeming significance (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Furthermore, this research objects to close the knowledge gap about whether the impact of these goodwill actions varies depending on sociodemographic characteristics.

This issue is especially pertinent to clothing retailers in Punjab, an area with a flourishing retail industry. Clothing companies must find ways to gain a competitive edge and cultivate enduring relationships with consumers as competition grows. The goal of the study is to ascertain how well different staff goodwill actions increase customer pleasure and how this satisfaction fosters customer loyalty. It will also investigate if customers' perceptions of these gestures and the resulting levels of satisfaction are influenced by their sociodemographic profiles.

1.3.1. Significance of the Study

There are various reasons why this study is important. First off, by emphasising the more intangible elements of customer service—especially the goodwill gestures of employees—which have frequently been disregarded in favour of more measurable elements like price, product variety, and store atmosphere, it adds to the corpus of knowledge in retail management (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). This study gives merchants practical insights to improve their service delivery by examining the effects of goodwill gestures, such as empathy, responsiveness, civility, and active listening, on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bitner et al., 1990).

Second, it is anticipated that the results of this study will be extremely important in developing marketing and customer service plans for Punjabi clothing businesses. Retailers require creative approaches to stand out from the competition and keep consumers given the highly competitive nature of the sector. In order to create a great brand image and cultivate

enduring customer connections, this study emphasises how crucial it is to train staff members to demonstrate goodwill gestures during customer interactions (Mattila, 1999).

Furthermore, this study provides a comprehensive view of how various customer segments interpret employee gestures by looking at sociodemographic aspects like age, gender, income, and education (Zeithaml et al., 2002). Retailers can use this information to customise their customer care strategies and satisfy the varied needs of their clientele, increasing customer satisfaction across a range of demographic groups (Price & Arnould, 1999).

Finally, the study emphasises how crucial client loyalty is to the success of any firm. Customer retention and lifetime value can be greatly increased by happy customers, who are also more inclined to suggest the store to others and return (Oliver, 1999). Thus, businesses can lower customer attrition, boost word-of-mouth recommendations, and improve their competitive position in the market by comprehending how goodwill gestures foster loyalty (Reichheld & Scheffer, 2000).

To sum up, this study offers theoretical and practical insights into the significance of goodwill gestures in raising customer happiness and loyalty, giving Punjabi clothing businesses a chance to improve their customer engagement tactics for sustained success.

1.4 Research Gap & Rationale for the Study

Although a lot of study has been done on customer happiness and loyalty in the retail industry, little is known about how workers' goodwill actions influence these results. There is a knowledge gap about the softer, interpersonal aspects of the service encounter because the majority of current research in the retail sector concentrates on concrete service characteristics such product quality, pricing, and store environment (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). For example, studies on service quality have focused a lot on aspects like certainty, dependability, and tangibles, but they have mostly ignored the impact of human interaction components like friendliness, empathy, and civility (Bitner, 1990). Additionally, although SERVQUAL and other service quality models have shed light on consumer perceptions, they fall short in addressing the precise effects of goodwill acts on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1991).

In the context of the clothing retail business, the relational and emotional aspects of service encounters—such as the capacity of staff to make clients feel valued and appreciated—have not received enough attention (Mattila & Enz, 2002). A few studies have mentioned the value of pleasant interactions and empathy, but they frequently apply these findings to other service

industries without considering the retail setting, where in-person interactions are essential to customer satisfaction (Dabholkar, 1996; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002). Furthermore, the majority of research has looked at loyalty and customer satisfaction independently, with little focus on how goodwill actions can work as a link between the two (Oliver, 1997).

Understanding how sociodemographic characteristics, including age, gender, income, and education, influence the association between goodwill acts and customer happiness is another knowledge gap (Zeithaml et al., 2002). Research on consumer behaviour has examined demographic factors, but not enough has been done to examine how these factors interact with goodwill gestures to influence customer views and loyalty (Price & Arnould, 1999). In culturally varied areas like Punjab, where sociodemographic origins can cause large differences in customer expectations, this gap is especially crucial.

Last but not least, the majority of previous research on customer loyalty has concentrated on elements like product quality and service effectiveness, frequently ignoring the small but significant influence that employee behaviours have in increasing customer loyalty and satisfaction (Reichheld & Schefer, 2000). By investigating the effects of goodwill gestures, including as empathy, responsiveness, and active listening, on customer happiness and loyalty, particularly in Punjab's textile retail sector, this study seeks to close these gaps.

1.4.1 Rationale for the Study

The study's justification is the increasing demand for clothing shops to set themselves apart in a fiercely competitive industry by emphasising superior customer service. Retailers must understand that customer happiness is influenced by both the quality of interactions customers have with their employees and the things they sell, as consumers grow increasingly discriminating. Employee compassion, consideration, and empathy are examples of goodwill gestures that can greatly improve the buying experience and encourage enduring loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). This is specifically pertinent in the clothing business, where in-person encounters between staff and consumers are common and customers frequently depend on staff help for general assistance, sizing guidance, and product suggestions.

Given the region's expanding retail market and rising consumer demands, the study's focus on Punjab's retail apparel industry is especially pertinent. Punjab's apparel merchants must contend with fierce rivalry from both inland and overseas concerns. Retailers can get a competitive edge in such a setting by comprehending how workers' goodwill actions

contribute to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2002). Additionally, by providing empirical insights into how sociodemographic characteristics impact customers' impressions of goodwill gestures, this study will add to the larger body of literature on customer service and assist businesses in customising their service methods to various consumer categories.

This study intends to give Punjabi clothing shops useful information to improve their customer service tactics by investigating the effects of staff' goodwill actions on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Retailers who recognise the importance of goodwill gestures should train their employees to be courteous, empathetic, and responsive when interacting with customers. This can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bitner, 1990; Mattila & Enz, 2002). Additionally, this study will help shops better grasp the varied expectations of their clientele and modify their service tactics by examining the moderating influence of sociodemographic characteristics (Price & Arnould, 1999).

In conclusion, by examining the function of goodwill gestures in the retail clothing industry and their effects on consumer happiness and loyalty, this study closes a significant gap in the literature. It is anticipated that the results will advance the subject of retail management both theoretically and practically, with particular ramifications for Punjabi shopkeepers.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The major intent of the study is to understand the relationship of employees' goodwill gestures with the satisfaction and loyalty of the customers. In order to accomplish the broad objective, the following objectives have been identified:

- To examine the various employees' goodwill gestures that can attract the customers.
- To understand the impact of gesture of goodwill in influencing customer satisfaction.
- To understand the relation, if any, with socio demographic profile and their level of satisfaction.
- To explain the effectiveness of gesture of goodwill on the loyalty of the customer.

This study's main goal is to explore the connection between customer happiness and loyalty in retail clothing businesses and the goodwill gestures made by staff. Finding different goodwill actions taken by staff members that can draw clients is the main goal of the first goal. Courtesy, empathy, active listening, and a welcoming demeanour are examples of voluntary

and considerate actions that give clients a sense of worth and respect. Employees may greatly improve client perceptions and encourage repeat business by establishing a pleasant service environment through attentiveness, personalisation, and friendly greetings (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Evaluating the effect of these acts of kindness on general consumer satisfaction is the second goal. The customer's purchasing experience is greatly influenced by elements such as responsiveness, empathy, pleasant encounters, and efficient service. According to research, customers are more likely to be satisfied when staff members promptly attend to their needs and have cordial, meaningful interactions with them. This, in turn, leads to a positive emotional response and a positive opinion of the service (Bitner, 1990; Zeithaml et al., 2002). The third goal explores how sociodemographic characteristics like age, gender, income, and education affect how satisfied people are with goodwill acts. For example, older clients may place a higher emphasis on empathy and individualised attention, whilst younger customers may prioritise service efficiency. Retailers can further improve customer satisfaction by adjusting employee behaviour to match the varied expectations of their customers by taking into account these sociodemographic variances (Mattila & Enz, 2002). The fourth goal, which comes last, looks at how well these acts of kindness foster client loyalty. Positive service experiences and emotional bonds made during encounters have an impact on customer loyalty, which is a major factor in repeat business and word-of-mouth recommendations. Research indicates that happy customers are more likely to return and refer the store to others, demonstrating the importance of constructs like contentment, empathy, pleasant encounters, and friendliness in building long-term loyalty (Oliver, 1999; Reichheld & Schefer, 2000). Essentially, the goal of this research is to give merchants a thorough grasp of how employees' acts of kindness may draw in clients and foster enduring loyalty, enabling them to create more successful customer engagement plans.

1.6 Introduction to Gestures of Goodwill

With the advent of digital marketing, there is considerably more rivalry and an abundance of comparable items on the market. Because of this, businesses are now compelled to make an effort to keep their current clientele in order to prevent them from switching to another provider. Modern marketing requires more than just creating a product, setting a price, and advertising it; it also entails establishing a price that is binding, fostering client trust, and handling them in a way that should encourage them to make more purchase (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984).

The interactions between customers and front-line staff have a considerable influence on how customers perceive their shopping and consumption experiences in retail and other service venues. Customers tend to favour businesses where they have positive interactions with frontline workers; on the other hand, negative experiences with staff members have the power to damage the company's reputation among customers. Employees must thus make a lasting impression on clients in order to encourage repeat business, which will ultimately result in increased financial success (Scharmer and Bowen, 1995; Magi, 2003).

Although the word "business" is inherently materialistic, business leaders must ensure that their staff members make every effort to satisfy clients by showing goodwill gestures as much as they can, particularly in such a complex atmosphere. In order to make it clear that the act's goal is to foster or strengthen goodwill between the parties. Thus, companies should seek out employees who are strong communicators and listeners, who show empathy, attentiveness, and patience, who can solve problems for clients more swiftly, ingeniously, and successfully. In the minds of current and potential clients, the way that staff members welcome and assist clients in resolving their issues subtly portrays the company as affluent and kind (Markus and Ozioma, 2020).

1.7 Importance of Goodwill Gestures

Various research evidences shows the positive relation of employees behavior with the satisfaction level of the customers. Service quality has a greater effect on customer satisfaction. High the quality, higher will be the satisfaction which not only adds to long run reputation of the firm but also aids in retaining customers and positively leading to repurchase intentions (Anderson and Sullivan (1993). Another research to study the relationship of friendly employees behavior to customer satisfaction was the one conducted by Lemmink and Mattson (1998). They verified the impact of warmth shown by employees and revealed that salespersons exhibiting warmth during service encounters with the customers results in positive and long term impact on the customers. Customers' loyalty, satisfaction and service quality perceptions are strongly and favorably connected to the degree of care, attention, friendly behavior, helping attitude, understanding, responsiveness and warmth delineated by the employees (Sparks, 1994).

Consequently, salespeople are crucial to the retail industry. Indeed, repurchase intention and store mood were positively correlated with the salesperson's dedication. Therefore, it is crucial that workers be in a good health, feel content, and looks forward to going to work

every day. When customers discover that personnel at a certain company are just dissatisfied with their jobs, they will take on the same attitude as the staff, which will hinder their capacity to satisfy customers, sell items, resolve issues, and even damage the company's brand. Customer satisfaction and employee attitudes directly affect the company's development and, eventually, profitability. The more the companies care for the customers, the more positive relations will it be able to cultivate with them leading to the sustainable growth of the firm .Research findings indicate that the satisfaction of the customer is not only determined by the product evaluation ,rather a smart salesperson coupled with a good knowledge about the product together with the ability to assist the customers with their purchase process acts as an antecedent of improving overall customer's satisfaction (Spiro & Weitz , 1990).

The manager should try to incorporate such policies in training of employees that provide guidelines on how the customers are to be treated when they enter a store. Showing a courtesy, listening customers, showing socially desirable behavior, handling their problems well, makes a huge difference (Lytle et al.,1998). The firm may spends a huge amount of money on product development and promotion, but if it does not have an effective sales force who are able to flaunt the customer may destroy the whole picture.

So, Retail managers should incorporate essential parameters such as prompt service, courteous behavior, friendly attitude, problem solving approach as a crucial element in the training course of the employees. Therefore, employees' gesture of goodwill towards the customers is critical, because it costs significantly more to acquire new consumers than to keep old ones, as every company is very well aware of the fact that it costs far less to preserve the timeworn customer than to acquire a new one, consequently long-term profitability growth has been viewed as dependent on maintaining current customer base (Sasser & Schlesinger, 1997; Heskett, 2002; Dick & Basu, 1994). Furthermore, as online marketing grows and competition becomes more fierce, this becomes more important. However, internet buying lacks these features, which physical retailers may exploit.

1.8 Constructs of Goodwill Gestures Used in the Study

The voluntary, frequently impromptu acts performed by staff members that improve client experiences, create favorable feelings, and create enduring bonds with a business are referred to in this study as goodwill gestures. Simple courtesy to more considerate acts that give clients a sense of worth and appreciation are examples of these gestures. Service effectiveness, pleasurable engagement, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, civility, and

a positive attitude are the main components of goodwill gestures that this study analyses. Every one of these components adds to the total customer experience and can have a big influence on client loyalty and satisfaction.

1. Service Efficiency:

The ability of employees to accurately and rapidly attend to the needs of customers, guaranteeing timely delivery of services, is referred to as service efficiency. It has a significant impact on how consumers see their shopping experiences. Customers who receive efficient service feel that their time and needs are valued, which lowers perceived wait times and improves the entire customer experience (Bitner et al., 1990). Employees that operate efficiently are certain to meet client requirements accurately and promptly. Service efficiency, as suggested by Zeithaml et al. (2002), is essential to delivering faultless customer experiences and guaranteeing that interactions with employees live up to the standards for prompt, smooth, and expert service. Service efficiency is especially beneficial in retail settings where customers demand prompt assistance and seamless transactions because it is directly linked to customer satisfaction and repeat business.

2. Enjoyable Interaction

Creating constructive, interesting, and meaningful conversations between staff and consumers that enhance the overall shopping experience is the key to enjoyable encounters. Customers feel appreciated and welcomed as a result of these interactions, which also aid in creating an emotional bond with the business. When staff members treat clients with kindness, warmth, and attention, they create a memorable experience that makes them want to come back, claims Dabholkar (1996). Customers' spirits are lifted by this positive encounter, which also raises the service's perceived value (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Enjoyable interactions are a differentiator that can influence a customer's decision to choose one store over another in a competitive retail setting, ultimately increasing loyalty.

3. Empathy

Empathy is the capacity of staff members to comprehend and experience the emotions of clients, resulting in a more individualised and considerate customer care encounter. It is essential to client happiness and one of the fundamental aspects of service quality. Employees can develop stronger emotional ties with clients when they demonstrate empathy by genuinely caring about them (Parasuraman et al., 1988). According to Mattila and Enz (2002), empathy also permits flexibility in service delivery, allowing staff to customise the experience to each customer's unique needs or concerns. Empathy makes sure that consumers feel heard

and appreciated, which increases customer happiness in retail contexts where demands and expectations might differ greatly.

4. Responsiveness

The readiness of staff members to assist clients and convey timely service when required is referred to as responsiveness. It is essential to provide excellent customer service and guaranteeing a positive client experience, particularly in circumstances that call for prompt attention (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Employees that are responsive not only promptly satisfy client requests but also foresee future need. Customer satisfaction can be greatly increased by this proactive strategy, in which staff members volunteer to help without being asked (Liao & Chuang, 2004). In retail settings, responsiveness is especially crucial during periods of high client traffic when they anticipate prompt service. Employees that can react quickly to questions or concerns from clients build loyalty and trust.

5. Active Listening

Giving clients your undivided attention, comprehending their wants, and thoughtfully resolving their issues are all components of active listening. When customers believe that staff members are genuinely listening to them and appreciating their opinions, they are more likely to be satisfied (Ford, 2001). Active listening enhances communication and enables staff to better address the demands of customers, resulting in a more individualised service experience (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). Active listening is essential in the retail industry because it shows that staff members are not just paying attention but also dedicated to offering solutions that suit the needs of the client, which increases client loyalty and trust.

6. Courtesy

The courteous and respectful treatment of customers by staff members is referred to as courtesy, and it has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Since they encourage favourable emotional reactions from clients, politeness and respect are crucial components of excellent customer service. According to Parasuraman et al. (1991), polite staff conduct improves the general impression of the service and fosters a friendly atmosphere. According to Mattila (1999), civility and politeness are consistently associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction across a range of service contacts. Courteous behaviour can make a lasting impression on customers and boost the likelihood of repeat business in retail, where personal encounter is frequently brief but frequent.

7. Friendly Attitude

A pleasant attitude includes the warmth and approachability that staff members show to clients, establishing a welcoming environment that encourages fruitful exchanges. A welcoming staff may help consumers feel appreciated and at ease, which enhances the feeling of community in the store. Customer happiness and loyalty are strongly correlated with employee friendliness, according to research by Bitner (1990). The shopping experience is improved and any annoyances are lessened when staff members exhibit a sincere, upbeat attitude (Price & Arnould, 1999). Since they help a store establish a reputation for providing exceptional customer service and leave a favourable, enduring impression, friendly attitudes are especially crucial for establishing long-term relationships with customers.

The study intends to offer a comprehensive knowledge of how different aspects of employee-customer interactions, including as efficiency, empathy, and friendliness, influence customer satisfaction and loyalty by taking these goodwill gesture models into account. Together, these components serve as the cornerstone for successful relationship-building in retail settings, and each one significantly influences the overall experience of the client.

1.9 Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are key concepts in comprehending the dynamics of retail experiences, especially when it comes to staff acts of kindness in clothing stores. These two ideas are closely related since loyal clients are more likely to stick with a business and make additional purchases, and loyalty is frequently a sign of continued customer happiness.

1.9.1 Customer Satisfaction

The extent to which a customer's expectations are fulfilled or surpassed during service interactions is known as customer satisfaction. Customers make this assessment after using a brand or service, and it affects whether they decide to use it again or refer others to it. Customer satisfaction is examined in this study from the perspective of several acts of kindness performed by staff members, including responsiveness, empathy, service effectiveness, and active listening.

Prior research has demonstrated that employee conduct significantly influences customer satisfaction. For instance, Parasuraman et al. (1988) highlighted that responsive and sympathetic service increases customer satisfaction since it makes them feel appreciated and understood. Furthermore, it has been discovered that effective service greatly lowers perceived wait times, increasing client satisfaction in the process (Bitner et al., 1990). Customers are more satisfied when they believe that staff members are polite, attentive, and

eager to help them since these actions elicit a favourable emotional reaction (Zeithaml et al., 2002).

Employee gestures have an even more significant role in retail settings, especially clothing stores, because providing client service entails both direct engagement and decision-making support. Friendly and courteous staff members improve the shopping experience and increase the likelihood that consumers will depart with a favourable impression, which raises customer satisfaction (Mattila, 1999).

In this study, the degree to which employees fulfil these acts of kindness directly affects customer happiness. A happy customer base is mostly a result of staff members' capacity to foster pleasant encounters, react promptly, and demonstrate sincere concern for the interests of the clientele.

1.9.2 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is the word used to illustrate a customer's sustained devotion to a brand or service, which is frequently shown by advocacy for the brand, repeat business, and reluctance to convert to competitors. Since keeping current customers is frequently more cost-effective than finding new ones, loyalty is a crucial metric for firms (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). The quality of service interactions has a major impression on consumer loyalty in the retail apparel industry, with employee kindness being a key factor.

Customer loyalty and customer happiness are strongly correlated, according to several research. Customers that are happy with a brand are more prone to become emotionally invested in it, which will increase their loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Employee friendliness and professionalism are important components in fostering client loyalty, according to Bitner (1990). Employee loyalty and trust are increased when they perform considerate acts of kindness, such as offering individualised service or attending to particular client needs. Furthermore, Dabholkar (1996) proposed that positive interactions with staff members increase consumers' emotional attachment to the brand, which in turn increases the possibility that they will visit the business again and refer others to it.

According to this study, customer happiness leads to customer loyalty, and goodwill actions serve as a link between the two. Positive word-of-mouth, repeat business, and customer loyalty are all increased when clients receive actions like active listening and personalised attention. Beyond just making repeat purchases, devoted customers frequently serve as brand

ambassadors, boosting the store's reputation through suggestions and referrals (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

Retailers must understand how consumer loyalty and happiness interact, especially in cutthroat industries like clothing. Employees' goodwill actions, whether they take the form of prompt service, amiable demeanours, or empathy, are crucial touchpoints that have the power to improve or worsen a customer's experience. The emotional bond created by these exchanges is crucial in promoting loyalty and satisfaction, as noted by Parasuraman et al. (1991). In order to provide insights into how retailers may enhance their long-term profitability and customer connections, this study objects to explore the degree to which workers' goodwill gestures can influence these two crucial outcomes in the apparel retail sector.

1.10 Structure of the Study

In order to give a thorough grasp of the connection between staff goodwill gestures and customers' happiness and loyalty at certain apparel retail businesses in Punjab, this study is divided into five chapters, each of which focuses on a different component of the research. The following is an outline of the study's structure:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The research challenge, goals, and importance of the study are presented in the first chapter. It starts by outlining the research's history, going over the significance of client loyalty and happiness in the retail clothing industry, and emphasising how employee kindness can improve these results. Key concepts are defined, the study's applicability to the retail sector is established, and research needs are identified in this chapter. Examining the connection between goodwill gestures, customer happiness, and loyalty is the main goal of the well-defined research questions and objectives. The study's possible implications for retail tactics and customer relationship management are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter examines the body of research on the study's main concepts, such as customer happiness, customer loyalty, and staff benevolence behaviours like responsiveness, empathy, service effectiveness, and active listening. In addition to critically analysing earlier research on employee behaviour, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, the literature review offers pertinent theories, models, and frameworks, including the SERVQUAL model. The

chapter points out gaps in the literature and makes the case for more study on goodwill gestures in the retail clothing sector. Additionally, by connecting important factors to create the conceptual framework, the review offers a theoretical basis for the investigation.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research strategy, methodology, and techniques used to accomplish the study's goals are described in this chapter. It describes the sample strategies, research methodology, and data collection procedures used to get information from consumers who frequently visit clothing retail establishments. The study uses a quantitative research methodology, gathering primary data through a standardised questionnaire. The operationalization of variables, measuring scales for concepts like customer loyalty and service efficiency, and statistical techniques for data analysis are all covered in detail in this chapter. There is also discussion of the research's limits and ethical issues.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The gathered data is examined in this chapter so as to achieve the goals of the study. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in this chapter, and statistical methods are used to investigate the connections among loyalty, customer satisfaction, and goodwill gestures. Discussion of the hypothesis testing results is followed by a thorough examination of the ways in which various acts of goodwill (such as empathy, civility, and pleasant interactions) affect customer satisfaction, which in turn affects loyalty. To graphically depict the main patterns and trends in the data, the results are displayed in tables, charts, and graphs.

Chapter 5: Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion

In order to achieve the study's objectives, the collected data is analysed in this chapter. This chapter presents the demographic profile of the respondents and examines the relationships between goodwill gestures, customer happiness, and loyalty using statistical methodologies. A detailed analysis of the ways in which different acts of goodwill (including empathy, civility, and pleasant interactions) impact customer satisfaction, which in turn affects loyalty, follows a discussion of the hypothesis testing outcomes. The results are shown in tables, charts, and graphs to visually represent the primary patterns and trends in the data. This methodical technique guarantees a methodical examination of the study problem and offers a clear road map for comprehending how employees' goodwill actions affect patron loyalty and happiness in retail environments.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF

LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In the field of retail marketing, employees' acts of kindness are acknowledged as a major factor in fostering client loyalty and happiness. Goodwill gestures are a variety of behaviors that show compassion, promptness, and superior customer service, which improves customer satisfaction and a store's reputation. In accordance with the goals of the study, the literature review is divided into theoretical and empirical components. The empirical review is further structured to examine several aspects of goodwill gestures, such as their capacity to draw in clients, affect client satisfaction, relate to sociodemographic characteristics, and eventually foster client loyalty. Effective marketing techniques for clothing retail businesses are informed by this division's thorough examination of how goodwill gestures impact the customer-retailer relationship.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

Key models and ideas that examine the relationships between customer happiness, loyalty, and service encounters form the theoretical basis of this investigation. Employees' acts of kindness are crucial in influencing the experiences, opinions, and enduring loyalty of customers in the retail setting. Numerous well-established theories shed light on the psychological and relational dynamics underlying consumer behavior in order to better comprehend these phenomena. The significance of relational interactions, service quality, and matching consumer expectations with real experiences are all emphasized by these theories. The theoretical foundations pertinent to this study are covered in the parts that follow. Every one of these frameworks provides insightful viewpoints on the ways in which goodwill actions affect client happiness.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is one of the most prominent frameworks for explaining interpersonal interactions. According to SET, which has its roots in behavioral and economic psychology, people enter into relationships with the hope of obtaining rewards like recognition, acceptance, or money gains while also taking into account the possible costs, such time, effort, or emotional investment (Blau, 1964). According to the idea, which places a strong emphasis on reciprocity, partnerships are sustained as long as the perceived advantages of a partnership outweigh the disadvantages (Homans, 1958).

The notion of reciprocal exchange, in which encounters generate obligations, is the

foundation of SET. Positive interactions that are repeated over time help to build trust and loyalty between the parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This idea is especially pertinent to customer-employee relations since customers frequently assess their experiences by weighing the perceived value of the services they receive against the time and money they spend and the effort they put in.

SET is very relevant to this study since it clarifies how employees' goodwill actions affect client loyalty and happiness. Employees are essentially participating in constructive social interactions that improve the customer's impression of the encounter when they give individualized attention, demonstrate empathy, or provide unanticipated rewards. In the framework of social exchange, these actions serve as rewards, raising the possibility that clients would feel appreciated and content with their encounter (Molm, 1994).

For instance, clients view it as a sign of goodwill when staff members go above and beyond what is expected of them by offering additional help or quickly addressing problems. Customers feel obligated to repay the favor by exhibiting loyalty, such as by making repeat purchases or spreading good word of mouth, as a result of this, which fosters a sense of reciprocal behavior (Gefen & Ridings, 2002). In addition to improving customer pleasure, the goodwill actions develop enduring relationships between the consumer and the retail establishment, which increases customer loyalty.

Therefore, SET offers a theoretical framework for comprehending how employees' goodwill actions generate an exchange dynamic in which consumers are more satisfied because of the gestures' perceived worth. Since these interactions are reciprocal, they eventually lead to increased loyalty and repeat business, which is consistent with the goals of this study, which examines the effects of employees' goodwill actions on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the retail industry (Emerson, 1976).

2.2.2 SERVQUAL MODEL

A well-known method for evaluating the discrepancy between customer expectations and their opinions on the actual service received is the SERVQUAL Model, by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1988. The approach is based on the notion that consumers' expectations and perceptions of the service, which might result in either satisfaction or discontent, can be compared to know the quality of the service. According to SERVQUAL, there are five main factors that affect how customers view the quality of a service: tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability. The term "tangibles" describes the

outward manifestations of the service environment, including the staff, equipment, and facilities. The capacity to provide the promised service precisely and consistently is known as reliability. Employee readiness and eagerness to assist clients and deliver timely service are reflected in responsiveness. Assurance includes the staff's expertise and politeness, which contributes to the development of client confidence. Lastly, empathy entails giving each client personalized attention and consideration. Customer satisfaction is significantly influenced by the service quality gap. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), a smaller gap denotes greater contentment while a wider gap results in discontent. Therefore, the SERVQUAL model is a crucial instrument for pinpointing areas in which companies may enhance consumer perceptions of quality by filling in gaps in these five dimensions (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006).

The SERVQUAL model provides a fundamental framework for evaluating how employees' goodwill gestures affect perceived service quality in this study, which looks at how these gestures affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. Personalized attention, unanticipated help, and friendly, genuine encounters are examples of goodwill gestures that can have a big impact on several important SERVQUAL model aspects, especially responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Customer perceptions of service quality and satisfaction are significantly influenced by each of these factors..

Responsiveness:- The ability and willingness of staff members to offer timely and beneficial assistance is referred to as the responsiveness dimension. Employees are seen as extremely responsive when they go above and above to help clients, promptly address problems, or provide extra services without being asked. Proactively helping customers or anticipating their requirements are examples of goodwill gestures that show a firm is aware of their issues and improve customer satisfaction in general. For instance, a 2009 study by Ladhari shows that responsiveness is a major factor in determining customer satisfaction in a variety of service sectors. Employees in retail provide a pleasant customer experience by being responsive through goodwill gestures, including assisting customers in finding products or giving tailored recommendations, which makes consumers feel appreciated and cared for.

Assurance:- Employees' capacity to communicate trust and confidence through their expertise, competence, and polite demeanor is reflected in the Assurance dimension. When it comes to goodwill gestures, staff members who give informed counsel, give concise explanations, or reassure clients about the caliber of their products are seen as more capable and reliable. This increases consumer trust in the product or service, which raises satisfaction levels. Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2006) assert that confidence is essential for lowering

consumer apprehension and boosting their faith in the company. Employees contribute to a more secure and satisfying client experience when they show assurance through acts of kindness, such as providing knowledgeable advice or professionally and patiently handling problems.

Empathy:- is the SERVQUAL component that entails giving each customer personalized attention and demonstrating sincere concern for their requirements. Acts of empathy like remembering a customer's preferences, addressing their concerns, or going above and beyond to make sure they are comfortable are examples of goodwill gestures. Personalized attention like this shows that staff members actually care about their clients, which strengthens the emotional bond and increases client happiness. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1991), empathy is essential for improving client connections and fostering enduring loyalty. Empathic actions, like lending a hand during tense shopping scenarios or adding kind, personalized touches, can set a company apart from its rivals and promote repeat business in a cutthroat retail setting.

The SERVQUAL model's Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy dimensions are all directly impacted by the goodwill actions taken by employees in the context of this study. These actions aid in bridging the gap between perceived service quality and consumer expectations. Employees may create memorable customer service experiences that boost customer satisfaction and foster loyalty by providing individualized, competent, and responsive service. Goodwill actions, including offering unanticipated help or demonstrating sincere concern for the welfare of the client, raise the perceived level of service quality, which encourages client loyalty and goodwill. According to Kang and James (2004), service quality is a crucial differentiator in competitive retail environments, and companies who are excellent at providing high levels of responsiveness, assurance, and empathy through goodwill gestures have a higher chance of keeping clients and fostering enduring loyalty.

2.2.3 Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT) emphasizes building enduring connections between companies and their clients as opposed to only pursuing transactional exchanges (Berry, 1983). The foundation of this approach is the knowledge that sustaining a solid, continuous relationship with clients increases their advocacy, satisfaction, and loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the context of this study, "Examining the Role of Employees' Gesture of Goodwill on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty - A Study of Select Apparel Retail Stores in Punjab,"

Relationship Marketing Theory is highly applicable as it aligns with the objectives of understanding how goodwill gestures from employees can foster customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study emphasizes how personal interactions, empathy, and customer-focused behaviors from employees can act as catalysts for building long-term relationships between customers and the store, which is a key principle in RMT.

2.2.3.1 Key Components of Relationship Marketing Theory in this Study:

1. **Trust and Commitment:** Goodwill actions by staff members, such offering individualized service, keeping track of client preferences, or making an extra effort to meet client demands, can promote trust. Repeat business depends on consumers having faith in a brand or establishment, and when they feel appreciated, their dedication is frequently bolstered. Berry (1983) asserts that establishing enduring client relationships requires dedication and trust..
2. **Customer Satisfaction:** A fundamental principle of RMT is that happy customers are more likely to stick with a business, and employee kindness directly contributes to this pleasure. Customers are more likely to be pleased with their whole shopping experience if they believe that staff members are sincerely concerned about their requirements (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Goodwill actions have a direct impact on a consumer's emotional bond with a brand, which results in satisfaction..
3. **Customer Loyalty and Advocacy:** According to relationship marketing, a lasting emotional connection with a consumer leads to their loyalty in addition to their level of happiness (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This study intends to ascertain how staff' attempts to provide a positive emotional experience impact customer loyalty by concentrating on goodwill gestures. Customers' readiness to participate in constructive word-of-mouth (WOM), a crucial aspect of relationship marketing, is one example of this. The store's client base grows as a result of loyal consumers' propensity to refer others to the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Social Exchange Theory:

The reciprocation of goodwill gestures is explained by social exchange theory, which is a key component of RMT (Blau, 1964). Positive actions or gestures from staff members are frequently returned by patrons in the form of loyalty, repeat business, or word-of-mouth recommendations. According to this hypothesis, the effort put into fostering constructive connections will ultimately pay off in the form of a more robust and lucrative partnership.

This study investigates the effects of employees' goodwill actions on customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is closely related to the relationship marketing idea. Key activities that can improve the customer experience include gestures like attentiveness, emotional engagement, and tailored support. This idea offers the basis for comprehending how these actions are calculated attempts to establish enduring relationships with clients rather than merely being acts of service.

Employee goodwill actions foster loyalty, contentment, and trust—three crucial elements of effective relationship marketing (Berry, 1983). This study supports RMT by examining how these behaviors impact customer satisfaction and loyalty, showing that pleasant interactions with employees build interpersonal dynamics that contribute to customer loyalty in addition to the product or service itself. As a result, patrons who consistently receive acts of kindness from staff members are more likely to stick with the business, spread the word favorably, and eventually help it succeed.

To sum up, Relationship Marketing Theory offers a strong basis for comprehending how goodwill actions affect client loyalty and satisfaction. Retailers may improve client experiences and lead to customer advocacy and retention by implementing a relationship-based approach to customer care.

2.2.4 Disconfirmation Expectation Model (DEM)

By analyzing the relationship between expectations and perceived performance, the Disconfirmation Expectation Model (DEM) offers a solid framework for comprehending consumer happiness. The primary mechanism that shapes customer happiness is disconfirmation, which also explains why consumers may feel either content or dissatisfied with a product or service. Higher levels of consumer satisfaction and loyalty result from exceeding expectations rather than merely meeting them, according to this paradigm (Oliver, 1980).

A number of things, such as past experiences, commercials, word-of-mouth, and individual opinions about the service or product, influence expectations. These expectations serve as a benchmark for the client, establishing a benchmark by which they will assess the product or service's real performance. Customers will be more sensitive to whether the service meets or surpasses their high expectations if they have them based on prior experiences or marketing materials. On the other hand, if the service performs better than expected, having low expectations might occasionally result in positive disconfirmation.

Contrarily, perceived performance describes the real experience a consumer gets when using a good or service. Following their connection, the customer assesses this concrete result. A neutral result is achieved if the service meets their expectations precisely. A feeling of contentment is produced if the service exceeds expectations (positive disconfirmation). On the other hand, the client is likely to be unhappy if the service falls short of expectations (negative disconfirmation). These encounters have a direct impact on the customer's future actions, including whether or not they will return, refer others to the service, or provide feedback—both favorable and bad.

The foundation of disconfirmation is the idea that exceeding rather than merely meeting client expectations leads to satisfaction. When a customer's expectations are exceeded, positive disconfirmation takes place, resulting in their satisfaction and loyalty growing. Positive behaviors like word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business are more likely to be displayed by a happy consumer. Negative disconfirmation, on the other hand, occurs when the product or service does not live up to expectations, resulting in discontent and possibly negative word-of-mouth or customer attrition (Tse & Wilton, 1988). Customers are neither exceptionally satisfied nor disappointed when there is zero disconfirmation, which occurs when the service performance precisely fits the expectations.

According to this paradigm, the level of disconfirmation a client experiences determines their emotional reaction, whether it be one of contentment or discontent. Customers experience pleasant emotions and are more likely to act in ways that benefit the company, such advocacy or loyalty, when their expectations are fulfilled or surpassed. However, if consumers are dissatisfied with their purchase, they might stop using it and might even tell others about their bad experiences, which could harm the brand's reputation. Therefore, in order to cultivate long-term happiness and loyalty, firms must always strive to surpass client expectations (Oliver, 1999).

In the end, the Disconfirmation Expectation Model emphasizes how critical it is to control client expectations and make sure that performance meets or exceeds them. Businesses can guarantee positive disconfirmation and so boost customer happiness, loyalty, and long-term profitability by concentrating on improving service quality and providing exceptional client experiences.

The Disconfirmation Expectation Model (DEM) offers a strong foundation for comprehending how customers' expectations and experiences with employee behavior in retail environments impact customer happiness and loyalty in this study. Because of their past experiences, word-of-mouth, advertising, and general opinions about the kind of service they should receive, customers bring certain expectations with them when they enter a store. These expectations are especially influenced by the behavior they expect from the staff, such as helpfulness, friendliness, and attentiveness. Employee conduct expectations are important because they establish a benchmark for what guests can expect when they arrive.. If customers expect employees to provide excellent service, including behaviors like personalized attention and empathy, these expectations will serve as a benchmark for evaluating the actual service they receive (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Customer perceptions are ultimately shaped by the actions that employees display when interacting with consumers, or by their actual performance. Employees that smile when they meet customers, listen intently, and genuinely want to help them, for example, are likely to perform better than the consumer expects, which leads to positive disconfirmation. This results in a feeling of delight and satisfaction when the clients' expectations are not only fulfilled but also exceeded. However, the service will fall short of expectations if staff members come across as unhelpful, disinterested, or uninterested. This will result in negative disconfirmation, where the encounter is perceived as disappointing or even frustrating. A consumer may become dissatisfied and decide not to return or spread unfavorable word of mouth as a result of negative disconfirmation. which harms the store's reputation.

The DEM's main idea is that the difference—or lack thereof—between perceived performance and expectations determines customer satisfaction. While negative disconfirmation results in discontent when expectations are not met, positive disconfirmation, which happens when real performance surpasses expectations, creates satisfaction. Customers' emotional reactions are brought to light by this process, which then affects how they behave. Employees' goodwill actions that go above and above for customers increase satisfaction, which is likely to result in loyalty. Satisfied customers are more likely to come back, make more purchases, and refer the store to others, all of which support the long-term viability of the enterprise. The DEM emphasizes how closely a customer's emotional pleasure is related to the service they receive and how it can have a long-lasting effect

Through the lens of disconfirmation, the DEM's application to this study reveals that employee behavior has a direct impact on customer happiness and loyalty. The way a consumer feels about the store is greatly influenced by goodwill actions like attentiveness, empathy, and individualized treatment. These actions will probably lead to positive disconfirmation and a high degree of customer satisfaction if they go above and beyond what the customer expects. Consequently, as happy consumers are more likely to come back and tell others about their positive experiences, this happiness can raise the possibility of loyalty. Conversely, if staff members fall short of the expectations of the client, this could lead to negative disconfirmation, which would make the client unhappy and possibly less likely to suggest or return the business.

According to the DEM's theoretical foundations, companies can increase customer loyalty by concentrating on continuously fulfilling and surpassing consumer expectations. Businesses can create a customer experience that creates positive disconfirmation, fostering satisfaction and long-term loyalty, by teaching workers to participate in positive behaviors that correspond with consumer expectations. The study's conclusions will probably emphasize how important employee kindness gestures are in influencing customers' opinions and improving their overall experience, and has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Businesses can customize their strategy for fostering closer ties with customers by using this lens to know behavioral and emotional outcomes linked to customer satisfaction.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

The study's goals and theoretical framework are informed by the empirical literature review, which offers a summary of earlier studies. This section aims to review the literature on how staff goodwill gestures impact customer experiences and results, emphasizing the ways in which these actions affect customer loyalty and satisfaction. The literature is categorized into multiple key areas in light of the study's main goals: first, studies that examine different employee goodwill gestures and their capacity to draw in clients; second, studies that examine how these gestures affect customer satisfaction; third, studies that examine how the sociodemographic characteristics of clients affect their satisfaction levels; and finally, studies that look into the connection between employee goodwill gestures and customer loyalty.. By reviewing these areas, this section aims to highlight the gaps in the current understanding and offer insights that contribute to the development of the research model. Keeping in view the objectives of the studies, the review of literature is divided into following parts:

2.3.1 Studies examining the various employees' goodwill gestures that can attract the customers.

2.3.2 Studies examining the impact of gesture of goodwill in influencing customer satisfaction.

2.3.3. Studies understanding the relation between socio demographic profile of customers and their level of satisfaction.

2.3.4 Studies explaining the effectiveness of gesture of goodwill on the loyalty of the customer.

2.3.1 Studies examining the various employees' goodwill gestures that can attract the customers

Chien et al. (2021) investigated the relationships between frontline service workers' (FSEs) customer-oriented boundary spanning behaviours (COBSBs), proactive personality, creative thinking, and role stress. Information gathered from 382 FSEs at Taiwan's international hotels in order to validate the study model. The research results showed that proactive behaviour did, in fact, boost employee creativity, but that job ambiguity and conflict had the opposite effect. The creative thinking of FSEs has a favourable impact on COBSBs, such as service delivery, internal stimulation, and outward representation. The relationship between FSEs' creativity and service delivery is facilitated by internal stimulation, which also has a favourable effect on service delivery. The study's findings support the detrimental effects of role conflict and role ambiguity on worker creativity when it comes to role stress. FSEs with more proactive personality qualities are more likely to be the ones to come up with new ideas since they actively search for opportunities to enlighten their existing environment. These decisions also reveal that through extra-role performances (internal influence), employee inventiveness promotes role-prescribed performances (service delivery).

Mortimer et al. (2021) examined how an employee's COD behaviours affect how they view their own service dependability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy, all of which increase their level of commitment to the company. For study the conceptual model was examined on a sample of 390 frontline service employees. The outcomes of the research revealed that an employee's gender regulates several of these relationships. COD enhances positive organizational outcomes as a result of perceived service quality and organizational commitment. Frontline service employees, related to COD, utilize innovative service

behaviours consist of flexibly, voluntarily and social intelligence that led to boost positive and surprising customer outcomes demonstrating customer delight and loyalty. The study also revealed that perception of frontline service employees about their own service quality was positively influenced by all four dimensions of COD that led to commitment to the organization. Additionally, findings indicate the greatest relationship between the empathy and organizational commitment which showed positive impact of deep structure identity among employees and customers. An employee engaged in COD behaviours, provide a better customer experience by making their own choices. Such positive deviant behaviour may build a less routine, more personally satisfying and dynamic environment for the service employee and frequently results in positive feedback from customers about the customer, thus strengthening a sense of accomplishment.

Jiang & Zhang (2016) discussed customer loyalty as a source of intangible asset and an important competitive edge to any organization, contrarily as per the data from the Chinese airline industry there is hardly any evidence related to customer satisfaction and loyalty in the airline market. The research study tries to investigate the quality of service of four prominent airlines of Chinese airline market and tries to find out any interdependence among service quality and satisfaction of customers and also about the conducive conditions to retain existing customers of the airline. The study affirms the previous studies on the context of service quality are a major factor in influencing satisfaction levels of customers. It was also found that the frequent flyer programs were majorly a failure on account of all the airlines and we're not been able to increase customer loyalty towards the airlines. The study emphasized that distinct efforts should be made to understand the outcomes of customer loyalty and customer satisfaction among business travellers and leisure travellers. The study revealed that the price of the ticket had a significantly positive impact on the overall satisfaction of the leisure travel customer and enhanced customer loyalty whereas it had no significant effect on the overall satisfaction and customer loyalty in the case of business travellers. The outcomes of the research suggested that in order to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty of varied market segments, different marketing, and promotional strategies should be employed.

Kageyama (2016) examined the connections between customer satisfaction, employee behavior, and subsequent customer actions. After a thorough literature analysis and an application of the theories of positive emotions and intellectual appraisal, 10 hypotheses and a broad framework of positive service interactions were identified. The poll was designed using the magnitudes from earlier research, and Amazon Mechanical Turk was used to construct the

data. 299 individuals who had a favorable interaction with a hotel staff during the previous six months made up the target sample. The Structural Equation Modeling outcomes endorsed that employees' mutual understanding affects patron appreciation and employees' unwanted behaviours and aptitude impact customer happiness. Afterward, customer gratitude has a positive connection with customers repurchase intents and word-of-mouth. While not all of the relationships proposed have been supported, the overall outcomes established that different types of employee performances have detailed impact on customers' gratitude and pleasure, and customer's gratitude and happiness subsequently affect customers' feedbacks to the positive service encounter correspondingly.

Stock (2016) looked at how each front-line worker handles bore out during customer interactions. A total of 147 FLEs provided data. The findings shows that bore out are a significant factor of customer-oriented behaviour. FLEs who are bored out of their minds lack vitality, making it difficult for them to behave in a customer-focused manner during the service interaction. This caution is supported by the data for each of the three bore out dimensions. In particular, it was discovered that the relationship between customer orientation and bore out is affected differently by firm- and customer-induced work autonomy types. Bored FLEs may become even more aware of their uninteresting workplace condition when the firm gives them greater flexibility to act, which may mitigate the negative consequences of the crisis of meaning at work and crisis of progress, but it may also enhance the negative effects of boredom. The negative consequences of both job boredom and a growth crisis are tempered by customer-induced job autonomy, but a crisis of meaning at work is unaffected by either mastery or social interactions with customers. Customers simply don't seem to be able to assist customer service representatives in replenishing their depleted resources as a result of crises of meaning.

Madan (2015) conducted a review study of relationship marketing strategies predominant in Banking Sector. The researchers opined that presently customers had become more sophisticated, knowledgeable and assertive, with a growing requirement for innovative and customized products and services. Nowadays customers are more interested remedies that appropriate to their business plans and models rather than purchasing the shelf solutions. The study revealed that relationship marketing needed to be managed properly so as to sustain, develop and enhance a long-term relationship among businesses and customers. Additionally, it was believed that commitment, trust and bonds assisted in building up a sound relationship that generates both economic and social benefits for both bank and customers. Therefore, it is

vital for banks to maintain strong relationships with their growing customers, to ensure them that they are at the correct place at the correct time.

Bagdare (2013) showed an empirical study on 676 shoppers of four different malls in Indore city. The study looks at four key factors that influence the shopping experience: retail atmospherics: (which includes aspects of store ambiance and visual display) retail convenience: (which includes items related to products, after-sales services, and transactions) retail staff (which includes aspects of personality, customer orientation, and competency) and relationship orientation (related to personalization and commitment with customers). The outcomes of the correlation study demonstrate a favourable association between retail experience and its antecedents, with store convenience having the greatest impact on customers' shopping experiences. According to the study's findings, customer experience (mood, pleasure, relaxation) has a considerable impact on consumer satisfaction and behaviour intention (such as disposition to spend more time and money, retail investment, faithfulness and productivity). The result of the study likewise illustrates that gender has moderating role between retail experience and its determinants.

Shanka (2012) tried to look into the association between service excellence, customer contentment and devotion. To assess the level of service provided by private banks, the SERVPERF model's five components—reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness—were employed. The study used data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered by administering a questionnaire. In order to collect 260 responses from customers of banking services in Hawassa city, a convenient sampling technique was used. The link between the independent and dependent variables was examined using multiple regression analysis. The study discovered a favorable correlation between customer happiness and every facet of service quality. Regression analysis results revealed that providing high-quality service has a favourable impact on overall customer satisfaction. According to the research, responsiveness and empathy are more crucial to consumer satisfaction than tangibility, assurance, and bank dependability. Moreover, the findings revealed that providing high-quality services boosts customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters strong customer loyalty and commitment.

Drollinger & Comer (2012) proposed that relationship quality, communication skill and trust all mediated the association between active empathetic listening (AEL) and sales performance. Survey research was conducted on 175 salespersons. Structural equation modelling was employed for data analysis. In general, the outcomess of the study exhibited that salespeople having higher levels of AEL lead to higher quality relationships, and also be

viewed as more trustworthy. When salespeople use AEL, they give themselves the opportunity to better comprehend the requirements and priorities of their customers by taking into account both the literal and emotional messages, and in the process, they build a sense of sincerity and real interest in the relationship between the salesperson and the buyer. Further, all this leads to higher sales performance of service employees. Moreover, trustworthiness of the salesperson resulted in a healthier connection amongst the buyer and seller.

Kang & Hyun (2012) recognized the best communication strategies for service professionals that prioritize serving customers and investigate the mechanisms through which COSEs encourage devoted behaviour among customers of upscale restaurants. A conceptual model was put out by incorporating the deduced theoretical hypotheses, and it was then put to the test using information gathered from 527 luxury restaurant consumers. The outcome of data analysis discovered that the five different communications styles—attentive, friendly, impression-leaving, open, and relaxed—have a good impact on COSE, according to the data analysis, but one communication style—contentious—has a negative effect. Additionally, it was shown that the customer-focused service professional is crucial in motivating three different sorts of dedication in customers: improvement, cooperation, and advocacy. In conclusion, this study's findings identified the most successful communication modalities as crucial elements of a service provider's successful customer-orientedness. It can be interpreted that consumers are more likely to spread encouraging word-of-mouth and support a restaurant when they are served by a COSE.

Beneke et al. (2012) studied the effect of retail service quality on satisfaction of supermarket purchaser. The results of the study from the PLS analysis into path model demonstrated a statistically most significant relationship between two out of five Store Service Quality factors such as physical look and personalized conversation and Satisfaction. Apparently, customers value a store where the staff members are pleasant, proficient and prepared assist whereas, reliability showed a weak relation with customers' satisfaction. Besides, the study revealed a strong relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, problem handling and policy were also found as significant factors having influence on customer satisfaction. The evidences of the study witnessed that many customers select to recycle undesired market piece in contrast to again spend time on this. Lastly, the study presented policy as a major issue of concern related to customer satisfaction as it involved issues of parking facility at the supermarkets and formations for occurrence toilets and payphones.

Goussinsky (2011) investigated the relationship between customer verbal aggression and emotion-focused coping methods such behavioural disengagement, expressing negative feelings, and seeking emotional support, as well as the direct and intermediary effects of negative affectivity and self-efficacy. Data was collected from 516 service workers of northern Israel using self-reported questionnaires. Regression examination was applied as a data assessment tool. The results showed that among the three strategies, most common coping strategy was the seeking of emotional support. Because of social status, respondents underreported how frequently they take use of behavioural disengagement and venting. Both strategies were less frequently employed since they were probably to reveal the employee to organizational sanctions as compared to support seeking. Furthermore, support seeking was found significantly associated with customer aggression in case of negative affectivity and self-efficacy. On the other hand, venting was shown to be adversely linked with customer aggressiveness in cases of negative affectivity alone, while behavioural disengagement was found to be positively connected with customer aggression only in cases of self-efficacy. In general, it was discovered that the three emotion-focused coping techniques under investigation had a adverse connection with self-efficacy and a positive correlation with negative affectivity. Moreover, it was shown that self-efficacy lessened the detrimental effect that customer aggressiveness had on emotional tiredness.

Taleghani et al. (2011) empirically examined the effects of relationship marketing's underlying principles—specifically, on client loyalty in the banking industry—namely, trust, dedication, communication, handling of dispute, bonding, shared values, empathy, and reciprocity. Data has been collected from 384 randomly chosen bank customers through a questionnaire with 34 items. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings showed that every relationship marketing principle was closely related to and had a considerable impact on customer loyalty. Therefore, the study concluded that customer loyalty can be formed, strengthened and retained by various marketing plans endeavored to build trust, representing service commitment, interacting with customers in a timely, proactive and reliable manner, handling customers grievances efficiently, focused to shared values, refining the empathetic and common abilities of the salespeople, and fostering strong bonds between buyers and sellers.

Zimmermann et al. (2011) examined the psychological tools available to customer care representatives and staff, which improve client experiences during service interactions. Data was gathered twice, i.e., before to and following the interaction, from 421 consumers and 82 vehicle dealership workers. Multi-level analyses of the study showed that customer behaviour

had positive effect on employees' PA and in turn employees' PA also had positive impact on customers' PA. The findings are integrated into a comprehensive process model that illustrates how customer-initiated help led to increased customer satisfaction, which in turn stimulated employee satisfaction, which raised customer satisfaction even further. The study's findings showed both direct and indirect crossover effects. The outcomes presented that organizations should actively include customers in their service process with the purpose of promoting their positive behaviour about employees.

Yuen & Chan (2010) explored the effects of the retail service quality component, which encompasses human contact, policy, physical factors, dependability, and issue solving; and the product quality dimension, which covers features, aesthetics, and consumer impression of quality. In particular, the retail curtain business is covered, with a focus on retail interactions at the store and staff levels. A survey of 200 frequent patrons of a window fashion gallery was utilised to collect data, which was subsequently further coded using SPSS. According to findings, Customer loyalty and retail service quality are positively correlated, but product quality, in a surprising finding, has no positive effect on customer loyalty. Only three of the retail service quality dimensions—physical aspects, reliability, and problem solving—are favorably related to consumer loyalty to the store, and only one, personal interaction, is positively related to customer loyalty to staff, according to the study. When customers ask for assistance, it signals that they are unable to resolve their issues on their own and require the assistance of qualified personnel. When knowledgeable employees can assist customers in resolving a problem, they are happy and more likely to recommend the company to others looking for such advice in the future. When staff members perform better or pay customers more attention on a personal level, there is a greater likelihood that the customer will make another purchase, introduce or promote the company to others, and establish public praise.

Gremler & Gwinner (2008) affirmed that retail personnel apply the four kinds of rapport-building acts that have been explored and addressed in academic literature in retail workplaces. Using the critical incident approach, the authors find rapport-building acts often used by store workers in 388 service encounters. Eighty-four rapport-building behaviours that were mentioned in these encounters were analysed. The results revealed two new categories: connecting and information sharing behaviour, which has not been linked to rapport in retail settings, and three previously proposed categories: uncommonly attentive, common grounding, and courteous behaviour. Customers who receive special treatment or favours from retail staff members, who recognize them right away or who show a genuine interest in them beyond what is often expected, are associated with attentive interactions. Customers

also consistently identify uncommonly attentive behaviour as the rapport-building activity, indicating the importance of this behaviour for application in commercial settings. The research also shows that in order to build rapport with clients, employees make an effort to establish common interests or other traits. They distinguish three categories of polite behaviour: unexpected honesty, politeness, and empathy.

Rowley (2007) conducted a case study on the strategic role of loyalty programs of Tesco club card for investigating the use of loyalty programmes to increase brand value. The holistic single case design has been adopted. For data analysis a content analysis technique was used. The study highlighted that Tesco had recognized the role and worth of employees in gaining a little additional goodwill among its stakeholders from the launch of the loyalty program in 1995. The top management committed for mainly emphasizing on internal marketing which trained the staff about the importance of the Club card. The analysis of Tesco Club card case study has found the 7 main characteristics that seems to be essential for the accomplishment of loyalty scheme namely dedication and support, creativity and development, congruence with brand strategy and values, multifaceted incentive design, and customer-centered information system design and usage, integral to business processes and customer contract and value.

Lather & Kaur (2006) conducted a study with the goals of delving into the purchasing patterns of consumers, gaining insight into how they perceive the most important store characteristics in shopping malls, examining the impact of consumers' educational attainment and age group on their mall experiences, and identifying their preferred mall promotional tactics. The study found that these elements influence how customers perceive a store indirectly. Customers' purchasing habits have changed as a result of these characteristics, which is one of the main reasons people choose to purchase at a location where they may take advantage of convenient shopping. The results of the study proposed that disparities in their shopping behaviour, due to individual differences, help the retailers for designing better location plan. Free gifts were discovered to be an efficient means of boosting sales and market share when reductions were likely to have a negative impact on quality. When a free gift was offered, buyers judged the quality of the product based on the entire price of the item without taking into consideration the value of the gift, which raised concerns about perceived quality and raised expectations for store indicators.

Roman (2003) examined how bank consumers regarded ethical sales practices in terms of how they developed and maintained relationships with clients. The 630 customer questionnaires were combined and averaged to provide 210 salesperson final observations

that were sorted by regional distribution. The research found that a salesperson's ethical behaviour increases customer loyalty and faith in the bank they work for. More particular, our results demonstrate that moral sales conduct directly impacted client satisfaction with the company's core service (H1), but not with organization (H2). Nonetheless, a robust and positive association was seen between moral sales conduct and patron contentment with the establishment. Additionally, the former had an impact on customer satisfaction with the business via the primary service. This statistic emphasizes how important contact personnel' behaviour is for boosting client happiness. Another important finding is that customers trusted the service provider more as a result of ethical sales behaviour (H3). Salespeople's actions, such as those that are ethical, have an impact on both the firm and the customer while selling services as opposed to tangible goods because the customer frequently cannot tell the difference between the salesperson and the company.

Bendapudi & Leone (2002) examined the concerns that customers have when a favourite key contact employee is no longer available to assist them, as well as the importance that business-to-business consumers have on their contacts with key contact workers. The foundation of both research is a discovery-oriented methodology. Data was gathered from 72 individuals, of which 28 were women and 44 were males. Six transcripts were created from comprehensive field notes and audio recordings, which each researcher then reviewed separately. They compiled lists of the many elements that clients valued in their interactions with staff. Customers who were worried about losing their preferred key contact staff were also included in the list they created.

Dolen et al. (2002) concluded that the employees who are able to exhibit both task as well as social competence (care for customers) while interacting with customers have more influence on customers and their satisfaction level. In this article, the researchers studied the determinants of customer satisfaction. To identify the characteristics that affect how satisfied customers and employees are with their encounters, the authors created and tested a multilevel model. Customers and contact staff of the retail locations of a major furniture brand participated in a survey.. Encounter satisfaction and contact employee performance was measured on 7 point Likert scale. To measure the properties of the scale CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) using LISREL was utilized. A total 754 questionnaires were completed by randomly selected employees and by 59 employees. A multi variate model, along with ANOVA and multiple regression technique was used for data analysis. They also suggested that the management should incorporate training policies, focusing on enhancing social

skills of employees, as it adds not only to the satisfaction of customers but employees also , ultimately contributing to increased sales.

Hayer and Mac Innis (2001), conducted a study and concluded that apart from providing quality goods and services, organization should also thrive upon creating a friendly and healthy atmosphere in the organization through the dealing of frontline employees, that means employees should exhibit courtesy, empathy, personal attention etc while dealing with customers, so as to satisfy them from all corners, thereby developing long term relationships with them.

Dwayne et al., (2000), in their research study discussed the importance of rapport as a specific element in cultivating lasting relationships with the customers. They studied rapport in context of enjoyable interaction i.e. clients' impression of their positive interactions with the service provider and personal connection i.e. ability to create the feeling of personalized service delivery. Information was gathered from 41 respondents using in-depth interview technique and assessed the same by performing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the CALIS procedure in SAS. The study concluded that both the rapport components under study are significantly associated with customer satisfaction, loyalty intent and positive word of communication about the organization. So, the researchers were of the view that the firms should focus on establishing relationships with customers for the long term survival in the market.

Reynolds & Arnold (2000) examined the effects of both salesperson and store loyalty on customer behaviours. Data has been collected from 388 respondents using structured questionnaire. The research evidenced that in upscale retail setting, creating salesperson-customer relationships develops in real value of the retail firm. It has been found that perceived service quality, satisfaction, and purchase intentions were positively affected by the personalization of service encounters and relational selling behaviours. Additionally, the study revealed that buyers and sellers who personal maintain relationships were found to be more committed than associates who are less "socially bonded". Finally, a social relationship with seller makes a customer to be more understanding in case any service failure occurs. Apart from this the research has identified numerous important benefits that customers obtain from a service relationship, comprising of social benefits, special treatment and confidence. Specifically, special treatment benefits involve economic advantage to a customer by a salesperson, such as greater savings, lower costs, and speedier service; conversely, social advantages include the impressions of friendliness and familiarity. Customer satisfaction with

the service provider, good word-of-mouth, loyalty attitudes, and inclinations to return are all completely correlated with customers' views of these advantages.

Goff et al. (1997) revealed that companies whose employees follow a customer oriented selling approach by understanding the perceptions and expectations of the customers, are more successful in creating a satisfying customer base, it not only increases the company's worth but also helps to reach good word of mouth regarding the business. The study focuses on factors that might positively impact total customer satisfaction other than product performance. The information was collected through a mail survey of 2000 purchases using a stratified random sampling technique. To get hold of the buyer's viewpoint on the salespersons was reported by applying SOCO scale (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). The data was analyzed with cronbach's alphas and standardized regression coefficients using LISREL. Therefore, while imparting sales training to employees, management should emphasize on customer orientation in order to fulfil client expectations.

Ramsey (1997) developed a rating system for salespeople's listening habits. The researchers also investigated the impact of perceived salespeople's listening behaviour on customers' trust, satisfaction, and expectation of future interaction. The study was conducted on the 173 car buyers of automobile industry by using structured questionnaires. For data analysis various statistical tools were used such as MANOVA, univariate F-tests, Wilks's lambda, Pillai trace, Hotelling- Lawley trace, T-tests and structural equations model. The study's findings clearly validate the idea that perceptions of customers about listening behaviour of salesperson play an essential role in improving relational outcomes. The study revealed that customers' high level of perceived listening behaviour of service providers led to increase their trust towards the sales provider, which further leads to better expectation of future interaction. The study's findings demonstrated that listening is a higher-order paradigm made up of three components, including perceiving, assessing, and reacting. It makes intuitive sense that in order to be seen as an excellent listener, a salesman would need to engage in all three of these behaviours. Furthermore, the positive relation between listening perceptions and trust in the service provider implied that the trust between customer and salespersons increased when they believe that salespersons are carefully listening to them. Apart from this, the study revealed a favourable link between listening perceptions and customer's expectation of prospect dealings with that retailer.

Hartline & Ferrell (1996) affirmed that there exists a strong correlation between a sales person morale and favourable customer responses. In order to win customers contentment and reliability, managers must pay particular attention to improve employees' job contentment in

addition to attempts to decrease their job disagreement and uncertainty by imparting them proper training to perform their job in a socially desirable behaviour.

Ford (1995) ascertained if polite service interactions might have an indirect effect on the discretionary behaviour of customers (CDB). Two grocery businesses provided 238 cashier-customers with observational and survey data. Data research using structural equation modelling revealed that customer commitment behaviours were indirectly impacted by polite service. The results witnessed that as the cashiers showed more courtesy to customers, in turn the customers gave more positive response to their service and were mostly suggest the store to relatives and links, furthermore also prefer to visit the shop even if the other stores are closer. On the other hand, it was also discovered that the politeness of cashiers had no result on the customers' mood. The consequences of the study should encourage those who advocate for polite service. Courtesy has a favourable impact on customers' propensity to act in ways that demonstrate confidence in the business. On the other hand, loyalties and cooperative efforts may be necessary for an organization to be stable over the long run.

2.3.2 Studies examining the impact of gesture of goodwill in influencing customer satisfaction

Nam et al. (2015) in their study “Impact of relations between employees and customers to the customers’ positive word of mouth in real estate industry” examine and quantify how employee-customer relationships affect the favourable word-of-mouth of clients who purchased homes from Ho Chi Minh City real estate developers. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and multivariate regression were used to test the hypotheses based on data collected from 300 customers who purchased homes from real estate developers. The results showed that, when considering each factor separately, the customer is most satisfied with the familiarity of the employee, followed by the personal connection and, lastly, the caring of the employee.

Omar et al. (2015) examined the connections between customers' relationship quality (RQ) with their banks and salespeople's empathy and listening abilities, accounting for the moderating effect of the salesperson's perceived stress (PS). The findings indicate that there is a positive correlation between salespeople's listening behavior and empathy, and that the salesperson's PS reduces the positive association between the salesperson's listening and the customer's RQ with the bank.

Itani & Inyang (2015) in their paper titled “The effects of empathy and listening of salespeople on relationship quality in the retail banking industry .The moderating role of felt stress” examined the associations between salespeople’s understanding and listening behaviour and the relationship quality (RQ) that customers have with their banks, by considering the moderating effect of felt stress (FS) experienced by salespeople. The dissertation examine detailed effect of FS on factors connected to a salesperson’s functioning. The data was collected from 147 customers and 25 salespersons using Simple Random sampling method. The hypotheses were tested using Structural equation modeling (SEM) and Hierarchal linear modeling technique. The findings indicate that the association between customers' views of salespeople's empathy and their level of satisfaction with the bank is mediated by their opinions of the salespeople's listening style. Furthermore, the salesperson's FS attenuates the positive association between the salesperson's listening behaviour and the customer's RQ with the bank as well as the good relationship between the salesperson's empathy and listening behaviour.

Kattara et al. (2015) examined the connection between consumer perceptions of service quality, employee behaviour, and total customer happiness. The data of the study were collected from five-star hotel customers (330) in Egypt through questionnaires. Results of the study discovered that the employees' behaviours (negative or positive), are extremely correlated to the overall satisfaction of customers regardless of gender and nationality customers, their purpose of visit, number of visits and length of stay in hotel. In addition to this human contact is also a critical factor of customers’ satisfaction. If the customers are satisfied with their interaction with the employees about any problem, they faced then they may be pardoning for other problems. Moreover, In the hotel sector, hotel management depended on employees to provide superior services to the customers which gave competitive advantages to the hotels. So it can be concluded from the study that, service quality and customer satisfaction are affected significantly by the values and actions of hotel employees.

Cambra-fierro et al. (2014) examined the role of front-line employees, who are often viewed as company representatives while interacting with clients and who influence client engagement and satisfaction levels. This interaction is essential for handling complaints or in the event of a service interruption. It also looks at whether a customer's complaint affects the proposed causal relationships in any way. The function of employees is pertinent in this context, as we suggested in our model. Data indicate that although customer pleasure is important, interactions between employees and customers are enough to create customer engagement. In order to achieve connected customers, satisfaction is essential. More

specifically, compared to other sorts of situations, such as those (i) characterized by a certain degree of initial satisfaction or (ii) when no complaint was lodged, these employees have a bigger influence when a complaint has been made. This makes sense because there are more interactions between staff and customers during the complaint and service recovery process, and the employees' actions may even be used to replace the suggested solution and the actual level of service. The corporation can make more money if its employees are better prepared and more motivated.

Das (2014) examined the elements that influence Indian customers' attitudes towards merchants and their intentions to make purchases from them. A assessment instrument was used to collect data by systematic sampling from department store patrons in Kolkata, India, who were at least eighteen years of age. The method employed was structural equation modeling (355). The results indicated that consumers' attitudes towards merchants are significantly positively impacted by the following factors: self-congruity, retailer awareness, retailer associations, and retailer stated quality. The results also showed that customers' attitudes about shops had a complete bearing on their propensity to buy. This study may have been the first to identify links of this kind between the variables influencing customers' attitudes towards shops and their intention to buy in the Indian environment.

Hanna et al. (2014) considered the connection between typical human behaviour in workplace settings and the overall level of external customer satisfaction. The idea is that by relating typical behaviour to customer satisfaction levels, a path can be found to improve performance by altering behaviour. It uses a modified version of the quality function deployment (QFD) technique to link internal behavioural patterns to attributes that are valuable to external consumers. A case study based on small engineering company illustrates how the application of QFD can direct managers on the introduction of the most suitable initiatives to enhance performance. The behaviour of individuals and groups in the workplace is influenced by a wide range of factors. A company may occasionally discover that unanticipated OJBs have arisen that have a negative impact on customer service, especially in challenging circumstances. Businesses can recognize and alter circumstances to get rid of triggers for bad habits while simultaneously promoting good behaviour. The SBFD chart is an effective tool for determining how the various corporate policy domains affect customer satisfaction. It also helps in the identification of steps that may be taken to enhance the behavioural support provided by employees in the firm. The act of company managers coming together and using the tool itself frequently generates the most insight by removing divergent viewpoints, as is the case with all consensus-generating management tools.

Sergeant & Frenkel (2014) studied how supportive supervisors, other departments, teams, and technology related to capacity of employees to satisfy customers. Data has been collected from 403 respondents through questionnaire. Structural equation modelling methodology has been used for data analysis. The results of the study found that some variables such as other department support has much more direct effects on employees' capacity to satisfy customers, than the other variables like technology. Apart from this some variable namely supervisors' support had moderate effect on the employees' capacity to satisfy customers. Additionally, the employees' capacity to satisfy customers is intensely dependent on a group of conjointly supportive variables. Moreover, employee evaluations showed that technology used in the organization had a positive association with job satisfaction. The study also revealed that job satisfaction exercised a strong influence on organizational commitment but ensured no direct influence on employees' capacity to satisfy customers.

Sony & Mekoth (2014) suggested a theoretical framework emphasising the flexibility of frontline staff. A variety of FLE adaptability backgrounds were described, including individual, customer, team, and organisational characteristics. According to the study, FLE flexibility has an impact on job satisfaction and performance. In a variety of sectors, FLE flexibility plays a crucial role in providing high-contact and customised services. Furthermore, the study separated interpersonal adaptation into three categories: emotional, nonverbal, and vocal. In a similar vein, the service offering dimension is divided into learning new tasks, applying prior knowledge to the work, solving creative challenges, technologies and procedures, and random and undefined elements because of customer-persuaded unpredictability. Furthermore, this model also examines the physical components of employee adaptability. other study clarifies a number of other elements that affect FLE adaptability, such as team or group related aspects, person related factors, customer related factors, and organisational related factors.

Sousa & Coelho (2014) examined influence of individual values on customer orientation of front-line service employees. The sample size of the study was 182 respondents. For data analysis CFA model, as well as the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were used. The findings of the study indicated that both resultant self-enhancement and resultant conservation affected the customer orientation of front-line service employees, and that these effects were mediated by autonomy and job satisfaction. Specifically, the study showed that resultant self-enhancement had negative relation with employee CO. These indicated that employees who are driven by inspiration and power and got low scores on universalism and

benevolence are less prefers to accept CO behaviours. The researchers also believed that the jobs which give more satisfaction to the employees should eventually lead to fostered customer satisfaction. Though autonomy did not have a direct impact on customer satisfaction, but its mediating effect highlighted that employees having different values respond to autonomy differently. The resultant self-enhancement showed a positive relationship with job satisfaction and indicated that the later weakens the influences of former on employee CO. However, it was believed that high levels of job satisfaction probably urge employees to perform their duties of serving customer needs to a higher standard. Moreover, employees might be capable to tackle their purposes for competence, prestige, and power by representing their product information to customers and by creating extremely satisfied customers.

Srivastava & Kaul (2014) investigated how consumer pleasure and the arbitrating aspect of the customer experience are affected by convenience and social interaction. Data (840) was gathered through systematic sampling from department store customers in India who were at least 18 years old using a standardized questionnaire. Multivariate data analysis methods, such as structural equation modeling and exploratory factor analysis, were employed to examine the data. A study on 840 shoppers of departmental store (Pantaloon, Lifestyle, Shoppers Stop and Westside) has been conducted. The finding also suggests that customer experience mediates the relationship between convenience and customer satisfaction. According to the study's findings, social interaction, including proactivity, a positive outlook, concern, and courtesy, has an impact on how customers think, feel, behave, sense, and relate to products and services, as well as how satisfied they are with their purchase (emotional and evaluative). However, convenience and social contact have a greater impact on the consumer experience than on customer satisfaction. The result also implies that the relationship between convenience and customer satisfaction is mediated by the customer experience.

Wang et al. (2014) carried out a research to get a better understanding of the impact of two levels of positive emotional displays by employees, namely authenticity and intensity, in service situations. To test their theoretical framework, researchers carried out one laboratory experiment and one field investigation. The study's findings consistently confirmed that while authenticity mostly influences customer outcomes through cognitive evaluations, emotional display intensity primarily influences customer outcomes throughout affective reactions. The study also showed that the degree to which employees' honest and intense emotional displays impact customer outcomes varies depending on the consumers' epistemic motive. It was

suggested that consumers' emotional responses to staff' displays of intensity boost their intentions to be loyal, especially when those customers had low epistemic motivation. consumers' evaluations of employees' service performance are influenced by their authenticity, and this is more convincing to consumers who are highly epistemic motivated.

Ecnchakovi (2015) advocated the importance of the sales force in the value creation process of the organizations. A data was collected from 229 customers by filling up the questionnaires. To analyze the conceptual model, structured equation modelling techniques was applied. The researcher advocated that the sales force behaviour is an intangible assist which the firm can use to establish the long term relationship with the customer and gain an advantage to win the customers loyalty and satisfaction thereby adding the value to the firm.

Barnes et al. (2014) opined that the frontline employee's effect on the customer, and came to the conclusion that employees can have a significant influence. The extent to which this link holds in the other direction is still unknown. A non-probability snowball sampling technique was used to gather this cross-section of service workers, and skilled recruiters were required to ask for survey responses. The overall sample size was 431, with 183 responses coming from Bowen's taxonomy Group 1, 138 from Group 2, and 110 from Group 3. According to this study, frontline employees' impressions of a certain consumer emotion (delight) are affected. According to the results of a structural equations model, in particular, employee perceptions of customer delight have a positive impact on employees, which in turn affects their commitment and job satisfaction and fortifies their service delivery, internal influence, and external representation behaviours. These findings expand our understanding beyond emotional contagion to explain how good customer feelings materialize in staff. They also provide additional evidence to the discussion of whether offering customer happiness is viable. By demonstrating how employee positive affect contributes to the development and expansion of frontline employees' attitudes and skills, they confirm the fundamental assumptions of this theory in the current study.

Chitra (2013) revealed that changing life style and shopping habits of the consumer, compel retailers to understand the psychology of the customer and should attempt to maintain and nurture good relations with the customers. In this study the researcher collected the primary data through stratified random sampling method using questionnaires. Based on the four strata's, a total of 1096 customers were given the questionnaires. The data was analyzed using tools such as chi square, ANOVA, correlation & regression analysis and structural equation modeling and affirmed that firms with sales person having attributes such as convince ability is more likely to sustain in the competitive environment. It is mandatory for the salespersons

to have the ability to understand the customer heterogeneity, so as better manage the customer –salespersons interactions.

Khare (2013) recognized how Indian customers define the level of retail services they anticipate from small businesses and the role that hedonic and utilitarian purchasing values play in forming these expectations. Data were collected through a small retail store-intercept technique in four cities of Northern India. 386 Randomly selected respondents were approached in small retail locations while they were there to perform their shopping. The results show that ambience, layout, and service/relationship dimensions form small retail service excellence for Indian customers. Consumers' assessments of service quality are influenced by their hedonistic and utilitarian shopping values. According to the study, Indian consumers place the highest value on services, employee conduct, credit policies, and social ties when evaluating the quality of retail services. As a result, local retailers value their long-standing relationships with customers as a key factor in determining the level of customer satisfaction. Due to the customers' regular visits to their neighborhood stores, a personal relationship has developed between them, leading to the customer's desire to visit the store despite the retailer's inadequate product selection. On the other hand, the retailer tries to keep all of the promises he has made to his customers at any point in the shopping process. Small retailers cater to their loyal customers with individualized services including credit options, simple returns and refunds, telephone order taking, home delivery, etc. According to the research, Indian consumers found local shopping to be a pleasant experience because it gave them a chance to interact socially with store employees and other customers.

Selvalakshmi & Ravi Chandran (2012) revealed that in order to survive in the ever increasing competitive environment, the retailers should need to emphasize on factors that can create their distinctive image in the marketplace. Out of various factors, employees behaviour with customers is one of the most important mechanism that the retailers can use to enhance and maintain high level of customer satisfaction. The authors recommended that in order to increase the retention level and to gain the loyalty of the customers, the employees need to be extremely courteous and polite while dealing with customers as it results in happy shopping experience and repeat purchase. Therefore, retailers should train the front line staff in a manner that it will leave a long lasting impression on the customers.

Jan et. al (2012) undergoes a study entitled “On the Role of Empathy in Customer-Employee Interactions”. The influence of staff and customer empathy on customer satisfaction and loyalty is experimentally investigated, and the notion and definition of these constructs as multidimensional is presented. The sample comprised 752 clients (response rate: 36.9%) and

214 staff members from 93 travel firms. They decided to use the following method to check for non-response bias in the customer sample. In addition to participating in the interviews, all clients who visited on the days of the interviews were given the opportunity to enter a lottery. Customers had to enter the lottery by giving their address and phone number. After that, information was gathered by calling 70 non-respondents to get more information. Structural equation modelling, was used to test the theories. In order to establish seamless and fulfilling service interactions, "interaction routing" strategies—which connect consumers and personnel based on psychological profiles—benefit greatly from the current study.

Jawavardhena & Farrell (2011) conducted a study titled “Effects of Retail Employees' Behaviours on Customers' Service Evaluation” and examined the impact of retail personnel' customer and service orientation (SO) behaviours on the views of individual customers regarding the quality of their service encounters (SEQ), value, satisfaction, SQ, and behavioural intentions (BI). A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 271 consumers of a grocery located in central India using Random sampling method.. Structural equation modeling with LISREL 8.7 was used for data analysis. The study found a favourable correlation between the quality of service encounters and service quality and behaviours related to customer orientation (CO). Furthermore, there is a favourable correlation between service quality, customer satisfaction, and the quality of the service interaction. Moreover, service quality showed a positive relation to customer satisfaction and value perceptions. The study also showed that customer satisfaction is positively related to behavioural intentions of retail customers. Nevertheless, customer satisfaction has no relation with value as witnessed in the study. The findings demonstrated that retail personnel' focus on providing excellent customer service had an impact on consumers' assessments of that service. Thus, the researchers suggested that training, hiring, and selection processes for store managers and staff should take into account both of these characteristics.

Ekinci & Dawes (2008) investigated how customer happiness and interaction quality were affected by the personality attributes of frontline service employees. 317 English customers who had used hotel, airline, or hair salon services provided the data. The results of the study showed that the three personality traits—extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness—had a significant impact on the quality of interactions. The results also shows that include interaction quality in the model improves the description of customer satisfaction and validate the applicability of the hierarchical model of employee personality traits.

Giardini & Frese (2008) conducted a study on “Linking service employees’ emotional competence to customer satisfaction: a multilevel approach” aiming to put to the check a two-level demonstration that connects customer happiness and service personnel's emotional competency to the latter. Researchers looked at how the notion of emotional competence from positive organizational behaviour (POB) may be used to effectively manage participant influence on service encounter and clients evaluations of the experience. Study has created and tested a two-level model that links service employees' and customers' state positive affect to their emotional competency. Customers' particular and overall evaluations of the service provided are linked to customers' favourable effects.⁵³ financial consultants from a bank participated in a total of 394 service interactions that were evaluated. Path analysis and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) were used to evaluate the data, and the results show that the model is largely supported by the data. This study might imply that one crucial step in controlling the employees' own affect, which then "spills over" to the client, is to first control their own affect. An unanticipated connection linking emotional aptitude and the assessment of the service meet served as the second path. This association demonstrates that, despite the fact that certain of the service work force behaviours were not reflected positively in the clients ratings, these behaviours did manipulate the customers' evaluation via various processes. Customer satisfaction and employee happiness have also been demonstrated to have a clear correlation. The consumer may consider an employee's good attitude as a sign that everything is going well, which could ultimately result in higher customer satisfaction.

Suwannapirom, & Lertputtarak (2008) argued that there is a positive relationship between excellent customer service and customer pleasure. Because happy clients are more inclined to stick with a business and spread the word about it. As a result, businesses should concentrate on leveraging better service quality as a means of boosting consumer value.

Brown & Lam (2008) affirmed that there is a favourable correlation between employees’ satisfaction and customers’ satisfaction. Authors suggests that salespersons serve as a connection between the retail brand and the customers, because salespersons are having the most interaction with customers, so it is essential for the enterprises to focus the special attention and care in fostering job satisfaction among frontline employees, as the encounter of the customers with salespersons will leave a strong imprint on customers perception and satisfaction. The primary goal of the enterprise should be to provide the environment, where the employers should considered themselves as a part of it, and work whole heartedly.

Kong & Jogaratnam (2007) explored and compared customer insights of service encounter behaviour in the USA and the Republic of Korea and identified the relationship of the

behavioural dimensions to customer satisfaction. Various statistical tools were used for data analysis like exploratory, factor analysis, correlations and regression analysis. The study found some significant distinctions between US and Korean restaurant patrons' opinions about the conduct of wait staff and how it affects their performance.. The most important predictors of wait-staff behaviour were civility and courtesy dimensions for both country samples. Furthermore, in the US sample, the personalization component was a strong predictor of satisfaction; in the Korean group, on the other hand, the concern dimension was a strong predictor. While the civility and concern dimensions have a substantial influence on Korean customer happiness, the politeness component had a greater proportional impact on service satisfaction for Koreans. For Korean diners, the personalization factor that was shown to be significant for American diner pleasure was not as significant. As a result, it is clear that national differences exist in customer service standards.

Hennig-thurau (2004) discussed on a four-dimensional framework of the customer orientation, which includes the technical proficiency, social competence, drive, and decision-making authority of workers. The model is then empirically verified contrary on a sample of 989 consumers for two service contexts, with the outcomes providing support for most hypotheses.. The findings' implications for services management and retail management are examined. The research presented in this paper shows that customers' emotional attachment to a company, their level of happiness with that company, and most crucially, their degree of retention are all significantly influenced by the degree of customer orientation of service firm. Therefore, while it cannot ensure economic success, hiring customer-focused service personnel does constitute an essential step in that direction. The findings offer some crucial points of starting for managing client orientation among service professionals. The results show that employees' social skills and drive to satisfy customers in particular have a big impact on commitment and satisfaction, which in turn affects the growth of long-lasting connections with consumers. According to the findings, training has a considerable impact on employees' knowledge, which in turn has a great influence on customer satisfaction and other service-related variables. Thus, through frequent training sessions, service staff members should be equipped with the necessary abilities to meet consumers' expectations.

Smith et al. (2004) outlined the role of loyalty schemes from the perspective of the providers and examined at the effects of these programmes on customer behaviour and retail employees. The breadth of "loyalty" and branding choices available has been investigated through the examination of five different loyalty programmes. These programmes include a co-branded credit card scheme for a shopping mall and a regular national corporate retailer

programme. At the level of the scheme architect, depth interviews were selected as the method of examination. According to the survey, management's perception of client loyalty was not adequately communicated to its staff. Additionally, the study has shown that, despite the fact that such a loyalty programme gives an opportunity for staff to get more consumer data through their extended contact with cardholders, this opportunity is not exploited. Moreover, it was stated that staff need to be inspired to contribute to customer relationship management in addition to receiving pertinent training on new or existing schemes.

Grandey et al. (2005) analyzed whether the employees' expression (Duchenne Smile) impacts an impression formed about that warmth of the staff and general contentment with the interaction. Data has been collected through videotaped simulations and analyzed using ANCOVA (Study-1). Further hierarchical linear modeling was used for getting reactions of 255 customers of 64 restaurant servers. Customer satisfaction was directly affected by display authenticity. Results of study-1 revealed that authenticity of the employee boosted insights of friendliness, but it only affected customer satisfaction when duties were executed well. Perceiving an employee as authentic formed positive impression of friendliness about the employees however perceiving them as inauthentic build less positive impression about their friendliness. On the other hand, research 2's findings showed that while the store was less crowded, customers' perceptions of the service provider's friendliness improved due to perceived display authenticity, but these perceptions reduced during busy times. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that this impact was less significant if the observer attributed the fake emotion to outside pressures (busyness) rather than internal employee traits. The study found that, in comparison to other known predictors, authenticity had a greater impact on ratings of the entire service experience as well as perceptions of the personnel as nice individuals.

Koo (2003) investigated the connections between shop happiness, loyalty, and imagery in Korean bargain trade. A sample of 517 discount store consumers in Daegu, Korea, provided the information. The results demonstrated that a cheap retail store's environment, personnel service, after-sale support, and merchandising are more strongly linked to determining customers' opinions about it. Both loyalty and contentment are significantly impacted by a bargain retailer's general attitude, with loyalty being affected far more so than satisfaction. It suggests that a customer's mindset has a big impact on predicting their loyalty. Moreover, store atmosphere and value are important ambient aspects that influence store satisfaction. Additionally, location directly influences store loyalty the most, followed by merchandising and after sales service. The study also revealed that the most important variable influencing customer loyalty is overall attitude. Customer loyalty to returning to a store is unrelated to

satisfaction. It means that in order to communicate their satisfaction clearly, customers must accumulate experiences from multiple stores. These findings offer numerous crucial management lessons for discount retail stores in Korea. It is claimed that in order for customers to develop good and favourable attitudes toward a discount retail store, the store's atmosphere, employee services, diverse merchandises and after sale services of products must all be improved. By hiring friendly, knowledgeable staff members and adopting proper refunding and exchange policies, in-store services will be improved.

Zeithaml et al. (1996) provided a conceptual model that illustrates how service quality affects specific client behaviours that indicate whether or not they will stick with the business. For study the data has been collected from 3069 respondents by using structured questionnaires. Results of the study showed that that customers' behavioural intentions were strongly affected by the service quality of the company. Additionally, the findings revealed diverse quality intentions linked to different dimensions of behavioural intentions differently. In addition, a portion of the model—the quality-intentions link—was examined analytically in a multi-company framework at the individual consumer level. The results showed that individual customer behaviour is affected by the service excellence of the various companies. If the client is pleased with the level of service delivered to it then he/she may choose to remain with the company otherwise he/she may defect it.

Keaveney (1995) found that Cost, annoyance, inadequate core services, ineffective staff reactions to service breakdowns, moral dilemmas, unavoidable circumstances, rivalry concerns, and poor service encounters were the main causes of switching behaviour in the service industries. 226 additional responses were gathered. The study found that the service provider has control over six of the eight reasons why customers switch services. The research gave businesses a chance to create hurdles to stop customers from switching. The domain of customer service switching behaviour is defined here "through the eyes of the participants" within the service industry's exploratory model of consumer switching behaviour (Deshpande 1983). The categories (1) are mutually exclusive, (2) are inter subjectively clear-cut (evidenced by high inter judge reliability), (3) are collectively exhaustive (less than 5% of behaviours were sorted as "other"), and (4) adequately capture the domain (no new categories emerged after the addition of either of the two confirmation samples). The idea of customer switching states that these factors have an impact on behaviour in addition to cognitive and emotive evaluations. Customers may decide to transfer service providers in addition to feeling unsatisfied. The idea that customers move services due to pricing, competition, ethics, and involuntary causes suggests the necessity to look at variables

in addition to the previously listed, more usually examined variables. The subject of services literature typically centers on customer satisfaction, service encounters, and service design as drivers of client loyalty. The model suggests that in order to completely comprehend customer churn from service organizations, these characteristics, as well as price, competition, ethical concerns, and other considerations, should be taken into account.

Schmit & Allscheid (1995) tried to establish relations between attitudes of employee and customer satisfaction by using Bagozzi's (1992) model of attitudes, intentions and behaviours. The researchers used data collected from 160 offices of service-oriented sector for measuring the usefulness of the proposed model. Additionally, they have tested the suggested model both with and without common method variance by cross-validation. The study revealed that in both of the analyses, the variables were most strongly related to management support and service support. Additionally, these variables seem to be more warmly related to fulfillment of organizational goal as compared to monetary support and supervisor support. Actually, the results witnessed that the employees' experiences of pleasantness have more of a direct impact of supervisor support. It implied that it is necessary for the service organizations to start providing satisfaction to employees by giving them top management support to create and maintain relations with customers to gain the customer loyalty through their satisfaction.

Hokanson (1995) states that if the organization wants to achieve a customer loyalty, it must strive upon customer's satisfaction, which in turn is associated with several factors including employees behaviour with the customers. Hokanson is of the opinion that along with meeting the requirements and desires of the clients in terms of product and service, factors like friendly behaviour of employees, their courtesy, service quality, professional knowledge, after Sales services etc will definitely contribute towards achieving overall customers' satisfaction.

2.3.3. Studies understanding the relation between socio demographic profile of customers and their level of satisfaction

Tao et al. (2016) examined the effect of placing responsibility for a service failure on the intensity of salespeople's emotional response to irate client complaints. They also look at how staff's willingness and capacity to give customer support are affected by the tone of voice used by customers when they complain. Responses collected from 178 sales representatives working at various retailers in a sizable U.S. This study demonstrates, using an experimental

design with salespeople as subjects, that salespeople become angrier when they attribute the failure of the service to someone other than themselves. Additionally, salespeople experience greater anger, perceive more emotional labour, develop stronger intentions for retribution, and express less commitment to providing excellent customer service when customers complain in irate manner and salespeople believe that others are to blame for the service failure. Although businesses may view customer complaints as a positive, the current study demonstrates that when customers complain angrily, salespeople frequently feel compelled to give that client and other customers worse service.

Alhelalat et al. (2017) highlighted the impact of service behaviour of restaurant employee on customer satisfaction. Data has been collected from 212 tourists who had an eating experience in Jordan by using survey approach. The results showed that both the functional and personal attributes of service behaviour significantly and positively influence customer satisfaction, but personal attributes showed with higher contribution than the functional attributes in customer satisfaction. More specifically, the study showed that overall customer satisfaction levels recorded higher when they had higher insight of personal service attributes of restaurant employees, this implied that customers were highly grateful for the personal attitude, appearance, politeness, and cordiality of restaurant employees. The researcher suggested that organization related to food service industry should give higher attention to personal attributes of employees in their marketing activities.

Gaur et al. (2017) investigated the effects of four types of acculturation behaviours of frontline service staff on customer commitment and satisfaction (assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalisation). In this study, 377 diversely ethnic customers of a retail bank in New Zealand took part. All of the hypotheses were tested with SmartPLS3. The findings support the hypothesis that the four different service personnel types' acculturation behaviours have an impact on client loyalty and satisfaction. In particular, marginalisation has a detrimental impact on both consumer happiness and commitment, whereas assimilation and integration have a beneficial impact. Separation, however, only significantly harms consumer commitment; it has no positive impact on customer satisfaction. The study supports the idea that it's crucial for service personnel to blend their own culture with that of their clients. The proper blending of service staff behaviour with that of the customers' culture promotes closer ties, respect, and satisfaction of the needs of ethnic consumers. Contrarily, there is a strong negative correlation between marginalisation of service workers and customer satisfaction.

This finding emphasises the need for service workers to avoid marginalising behaviour as it may limit their ability to build relationships and comprehend customer needs and requirements. This result basically says that marginalisation conduct is hazardous.

Kasiri et al. (2017) tried to find out the indirect as well as direct impact put by offering customized service and generalized service on the satisfaction of customers through the quality of the service and their loyalty towards the entity. It was found that the quality of the service comprises of two dimensions, the first being the technical quality of the product and the second being the functional quality of the product. The study resulted in the development of a framework by extending the existing service quality model of Gronroos' and included the background of quality of service. The study had 315 respondents from three service areas of healthcare, education, and hospitality. This study contributed to developing an incorporated framework for analyzing the impact and of customization and generalization on quality of service. The results of the study revealed that in order to improve the quality of service, it is imperative to integrate the customization and generalization of the service offerings; standardization as compared to generalization has more impact on quality of service; the technical quality of the product is less important as compared to functional quality in terms of customer satisfaction; and satisfaction of customers significantly affects the loyalty of a customer.

Sharma et al. (2017) examined the impact of cultural diversity on marketing strategies of organizations. The researchers suggested that salespersons while interacting with the customers should understand and adapt their cultures in order to attract them, and to win their commitment. As relationships become more sensitive, the salespersons should understand cultural diversity to establish closer and healthier relationship with customers and reducing their switching behaviour, which in turn will improve firm's long term revenues and profitability.

Terziev et al. (2017) pointed that the organization which are collateral in concept of product categories, quality of goods, pricing policies etc, can differentiate itself from their competitors by strengthen their services quality. The organization should focus on adequate motivation and training to the employee so as to ensure that quality services standards should be observed and followed, to target the customers and their satisfaction as well as loyalty.

Samantaray & Alaka (2018) in their study impact of service quality attributes on customer satisfaction and loyalty in organized retail sector ,2018, analyzed that organized retail outlets should concentrate on providing high service quality embracing individual attention on their customers too so as to persuade new customers and retail old ones. The researchers took into

consideration five dimensions of service quality namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and found that except empathy, rest all the dimensions have no direct connection with customer loyalty. So, the organized retail outlets should employ such strategies and formulate promotional tactics that can build value for the customers and their loyalty can be achieved.

Bahadur et al. (2018) discussed the indirect impact of employee empathy (EE) on customer loyalty (CL) and loyalty outcomes through significant variables, i.e. customer affective commitment, perceived service quality, and customer satisfaction (CS). In the context of interactions between employees and customers, associations between the proposed model's constructs are investigated. This study employed a method of systematic random sampling. The information was obtained by means of an online poll that collected 360 valid answers from active telecom consumers in the Chinese province of Anhui. The model was tested using structural equation modelling using AMOS 21. The findings corroborate the advantageous and indirect impacts of EE on CL and loyalty outcomes, such as favourable word-of-mouth and plans to repurchase. The findings of this study offer suggestions for the service industry, particularly the telecommunications industry, on how to boost customer satisfaction and loyalty. The proposed model also examined how CAC and PSQ affected CS in between. The study's literature-proposed intervening impact of SQ and AC was supported by a mediation analysis. This study has confirmed that service employees are crucial to customer satisfaction (CS) and brand loyalty. Additionally, pleased and devoted clients adopt loyalty intentions and actions, such as PWOM and RI, toward the service brand. As in the case of the telecommunication service brands examined in the current study, service brands that take into account the empathetic behaviour of employees could boost CS and loyalty with the service brand.

Briggs et al. (2018) in their study “Linking organizational service orientation to retailer profitability: Insights from the service-profit chain” established that as electronic retailers continuously focus on enhancing their technological and operational competency, brick and motor retailers can use excellent service orientation as a sword to gain the competitive advantage over their online combatants. The Researchers used modified version of service profit chain model given by Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1994 incorporating service orientation in retail context. To collect the data, researchers developed 2 questionnaires, one directed at retail managers and second at frontline retail employees. The sample size was 144 retailers using Snowball sampling. 5 point Likert scale is used to measure employee responses and to measure retailer service orientation SERV*OR scale was

applied. The study tested the relationship between variables using CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) method. The research findings reflect that retailer service orientation was found to be positively associated with employee satisfaction and customer relationship performance and customer relationship performance was positively associated with retailer profitability. Therefore, retailers should incorporate the marketing tactics like engaging a salesperson with a behaviour that can allure the customers and create a climate that leads to gain overall customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately improving retailer's profitability.

Gong & Yi (2018) investigated that whether or not a service quality model can be conceptualized in the same way across Asian countries and their scores on the items can be expressively compared amongst the Asian countries. Data were collected through a survey from respondent among China (175), Hong Kong (178), Japan (172), South Korea (180), and Singapore (174), selected through quota sampling techniques. The findings showed that customer satisfaction was positively influenced by overall service quality, which further led to customer happiness and customer loyalty. It also witnessed that the universal outline of structural paths is effective in the five countries. These paths were not significantly different from each other in the five countries. The study further found that customer happiness and customer loyalty were determined by service quality across the five Asian countries, representing that the monetary values of service quality could be joined to Asian countries like in European countries and North America. Moreover, in China, Hong Kong, and South Korea, customer income amplified the influence of service quality on customer happiness through customer satisfaction. Additionally, the study revealed that performance, delivery, and environment discovered to effect overall service quality generally for five Asian countries.

Malik (2018) in his study "Employee behaviour and customer satisfaction: a relationship" aims at investigating the relationship between employees behaviour and customer satisfaction. The research collected the primary data from guests visiting five star hotels in NCR by using 525 complete structured questionnaires using Purposive sampling method to collect the responses. The regression analyses is applied to analyze and test the variables and concluded that customer satisfaction is highly affected by the behaviour of the employees; thereby indicating the positive relationship between the employee behaviour and customer satisfaction. So, the companies while imparting the training to the employees should concentrate on variables such as friendly attitude, grounded and humble behaviour, active listener, attentive, persuasive and discipline so as to create a personal connection with customers and increase the bottom line.

Prakash et al. (2018) examined the different dimension of retail service quality like personal aspects, reliability, personal interaction and problem solving and validate that these factors have the positive relationship with the satisfaction of the customer but no link with customer's loyalty. Therefore , they recommends that management of apparel stores should focus on other aspects like upgrading their product variety , try to conduct market research to identify customer's needs and wants and should adopt a effective relationship marketing approach to retain their customers and convert them into the loyal customers.

Shoshan & Sonnentag (2018) explored the diverse influences of employee burnout dimensions consist of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion on perceptions of customer service. All the 156 participants studied 12 vignettes displaying depersonalization and emotional exhaustion symptoms by university employees. Multilevel analysis of the study showed that customer perceptions about employee service and organisation service were negatively affected by employee depersonalization. However, the effect of employee emotional exhaustion on customer service perceptions was moderated by customer anger and hostility.

Yeboah, & Boso (2018) advocated that the dealing and the tone of the salespersons is directly associated with customers satisfaction. When salespersons practice improvisation i.e. putting extra efforts on their part to listen and solve customers' problems, it strengthens the relationship between the parties as the customers value improvisation and thereby stimulate the positives feeling towards the salespersons.

Badjie et al. (2019) introduced recently created concepts for employee empowerment in place of the current policies that serve both the organisation and the employees. The strategy used in the study to gather, examine, and address the research question was systematic literature review (SLR) or systematic research synthesis (SRS). The results showed that there is a misunderstanding of what employee empowerment really looks like in firms. Based on the idea that integrating the internal and external factors that collectively shape employees' attitudes and behaviours will result in real, discernible empowerment, the integrative approach to employee empowerment was established. Employee empowerment will practically fit into the organization's strategic goals, beginning with the hiring and selection process and the difficulties that come with competing for talent and keeping employees. Employees who feel accepted and included demonstrate a sense of belonging and empowerment. They had a sense of self-determination and identity thanks to the acceptance, which enabled them to exert themselves with vigour. Genuine organizational communication and true employee empowerment have the potential to produce positive HR outcomes like

"high employee satisfaction," "high employee commitment," "high organizational citizenship behaviour," "high employee involvement," "high employee engagement," "strong perception of organizational support," and "strong sense of belonging and loyalty." All of these HR outcomes are strongly correlated with organizational performance.

Bahadur et al. (2019) conducted a study on “Investigating the Effect of Employee Empathy on Service Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Trust in and Satisfaction with a Service Employee” to examine how customers feel about service professionals' empathetic behaviour during contacts with them and how it affects their level of satisfaction and self-confidence. The data was collected from 410 Chinese University students using Simple Random sampling. The study employed CFA and SEM methodologies to evaluate the hypotheses. The findings indicate that employee empathy has a noteworthy impact on customer satisfaction and confidence in service employees during employee-employee interactions. Additionally, throughout service contacts, customer satisfaction with an employee had a substantial impact on customer loyalty. The study deepens our understanding of empathy in the context of customer-service interactions within banking services. Additionally, it offers managers and front-line staff insights on how empathy fosters customer trust and employee happiness.

Gaucher & Chebat (2019) examined the influences of uncivil treatments by customers on emotions of frontline retail employees, their deviant behaviours and connection with the retail organization. 415 frontline retailing American employees were selected as sample of the study. The study revealed that employees who were treated uncivilly by customers undergo through anger but they cannot show their negative emotions, which made them emotionally exhausted and increase their deviant behaviours. Unexpectedly, strong commitment of employees towards their retailing organization generates more deviant behaviours. The study witnessed that higher fake emotions led to emotional exhaustion of employees. Conversely the study revealed that customers are able to notice fake smiles.

Hultman et al. (2019) looked at how salesperson improvisation is affected by the tone of the customer-salesperson connection and what it means for customer satisfaction. Using dyadic salesperson-customer data from business-to-business (B2B) markets in Ghana, the study evaluates the suggested model. The number of salesperson-customer pairs that made up the study's effective sample was 170. Utilizing the structural equation modelling technique, the correlations are examined. According to the study, salesperson improvisation and customer happiness are linked. This research highlights the value of improvisation for salespeople confronted with unforeseen and pressing customer needs. Additionally, it is discovered that

the degree of comradery between salespeople and their clients predicts, but does not increase, the value of improvisation for client happiness. The opposite is true when a customer uses coercive power against them; while this is not a large driver of improvisation, it can significantly reduce its positive effects.

Nguyen et al. (2019) in their study “Relation between Employees and Customers Affects to the Positive Word of Mouth through Customer Satisfaction” explored what aspects of the employee-customer relationship influence the good word-of-mouth (WOM) generated by satisfied consumers. The data was collected randomly from 250 respondents and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Model (SEM). The findings indicate that three elements—personal connection, care, and service quality—have a favourable impact on client satisfaction. Additionally, there is a comparable correlation between favourable word-of-mouth and consumer satisfaction.

Itani et al. (2019) created a meta-analytical approach based on marketing and psychological literature to establish listening theory and further listening research. This study presents compelling evidence that listening boosts adaptive selling, enhances customer perceptions of and trust in the salesperson, and eventually results in improved sales performance. The results of this study show that listening, along with adaptive selling, is a crucial mechanism that explains why CO has an impact on performance. Additionally, customer-focused salespeople listen to clients as a means to respect them and demonstrate an interest in meeting their requirements. Additionally, listening aids salespeople in better comprehending the variations among clients so they can adjust their sales techniques according to the circumstance. Due to high levels of customer commitment, satisfaction, and trust, this results in an increase in the positive perceptions of salespeople. The results show that salespeople are more likely to forge deeper connections based on fulfillment, trust, and commitment when they engage in effective listening behaviours and adapt their selling strategies to match clients' requirements.

Liang et al. (2019) focused on clarifying and defining service engagement behaviours (SEBs), and also design a model to examine the associations between these behaviours. Dyadic survey data has been collected from 293 customer employee pairs, which was examined by using structural equation modelling. The Results showed that employee SEBs such as service role involvement, customer empowerment behaviour and customer orientation behaviour, positively affect interaction cohesion and relational energy, which sequentially affect customer SEBs namely, service coordination behaviour and service

exploration behaviour. The study highlighted the actual engagement behaviours of employees regarding service delivery and customers as stated in service role involvement, customer empowerment behaviour and customer orientation behaviour. Similarly, it also highlighted the on-site proactive engaged behaviour of customers through displaying how they obtain information about more service possibilities that ensure better service experiences (i.e. service exploration behaviour). The results of the study demonstrated that engaged employees boost customers' engagement behaviours via the mediation of interaction cohesion and relational energy.

Wei Bhaar & Huber (2016) in their study "Empathic Relationships in Professional Services and the Moderating Role of Relationship Age" examines how perspective-taking, emotional contagion and emotional worry affect commitment and trust. This study supports the value of empathy in services marketing and offers a more thorough method for taking empathy into consideration as a strategy for fostering relationships. The data was collected from 215 business clients of a large consulting firm. Using Structural Equation Model hypotheses were tested and according to the findings, perspective taking has the most impact on trust in business-to-business partnerships, while emotional worry is the biggest motivator for commitment. The findings also support the notion that adopting a new viewpoint improves real sales success and that relationship age plays a moderating influence.

Kim & Kim (2012) demonstrated a thorough analysis of the research on human aspects in retail settings and how they affect customers. In order to provide a thorough analysis of 45 studies on human variables in retail contexts, the study used qualitative methodologies. Two primary areas form the basis of the analysis: the impact of other customers and the influence of sales representatives on the perceptions and actions of customers. As per the study, the shopping behaviour of a customer is influenced by presence of other customers including the number of customers. Along with it, the characteristics of sales associates such as their physical attributes and behaviour with customers, as well as the number of sales associates in the store influence customer's perception and behaviour. The researchers have suggested that it is needed to efficiently manage, control and manipulate human related environmental cues for creating favourable experience.

Gruber et al. (2009) examined the characteristics of complaint satisfaction, concentrating on the behaviours and attributes that both male and female customers value during in-person service interactions for resolving complaints. The cognitive frameworks of both male and female clients who had complained were exposed using the semi-standardized qualitative laddering technique. 40 laddering interviews with a total of 21 female and 19 male

respondents who had experience complaining were done. According to the research, it is critical that the employee's knowledge, kindness, and capacity for active listening make both male and female complainants feel heard throughout the complaint experience. Female respondents did better than male respondents when it came to relating desired employee behaviours to different values and creating strong relationships at the highest degree of abstraction. Compared to male consumers, female customers tended to be more emotionally invested because they wanted personnel to apologize for the issue and occasionally required some downtime to unwind. Male complainants, on the other hand, were mostly focused on getting their complaints resolved quickly. Front-line staff members should be knowledgeable about the good or service they are providing, as well as what needs to be done to address the current issue. "Competence" is closely related to the employee's management of complaints, which should lead to the solution of the problem.

Kattara et al. (2008) in their paper titled "The impact of employee behaviour on customers' service quality perceptions and overall satisfaction" aimed at investigating the connection linking customers' perception of the quality of the services received, good and negative employee behaviours, and overall customer happiness. With the help of more than 330 distributed questionnaires, the information was gathered from guests of 5-star hotels throughout Egypt using simple random sampling technique. The hypotheses were tested using PLS-SEM technique and study's findings showed a strong correlation between all employee behaviours—positive or negative—and overall customer satisfaction. These factors' association with the ensuing and reciprocal impacts was supported by the findings in this context. Additionally, it was shown that regardless of the gender, nationality, reason for the visit, frequency of visits, and length of stay of the client, employee behaviour had a significant impact on total customer satisfaction. Customer happiness and service quality are significantly impacted by the attitudes and behaviours of hotel employees.

Gee et al. (2008) conducted a literature study on customer satisfaction, successful CRM, and lucrative loyalty management. The papers enable managers to take into account a variety of information in the context of their company. According to the research, retaining customers is a crucial issue for firms in the current, global marketplace. A company needs to develop long-lasting, devoted relationships with its consumers if it intends to retain its customers. Organizations need to know what motivates their consumers' satisfaction and value. A company can better understand its consumers, satisfy them, and encourage loyalty by adopting a customer-centric perspective. To increase the possibility of customer retention, positive switching obstacles should be implemented. Additionally, researchers

proposed to adopt a win-back strategy because retaining existing consumers is less expensive than finding new ones. Managers can be better equipped to manage loyalty in their organization profitably by taking into account the suggestions and ideas described above.

Mckechnie et al. (2007) observed the impact of listening actions of service providers while communicating with the customers in retail sector on customers' behaviour. Data has been collected from 50 retail stores (personal items and specialty) in Dubai. Personal items consisted of clothing, perfume/cosmetics, shoes, and ladies' accessories and specialty items included electronics, watches, and jewellery. The paper finds that frequency of occurrence of listening behaviour was inconsistent amongst encounters. Moreover, results varied according to the gender of the customer and service provider. Furthermore, among the 21 clothing stores, it was found that the service providers of the medium-priced stores seemed to be more determined on listening to their customers. This opposed the regular assumption that front-line employees of high-priced outlets exhibit better listening skills.

Andaleeb & Conway (2006) ascertained the factors that describe customer satisfaction in the full-service restaurant industry. Both the primary as well as secondary data has been used in the study. For construct the model of customer satisfaction secondary research and qualitative interviews were used. Primary data has been collected from 119 respondents, selected through judgement sampling technique, by using a structured questionnaire. Multiple regression and component analysis were employed to test the model. The findings showed that customer satisfaction was primarily influenced by frontline staff attentiveness, with pricing and meal quality following closely after. Customer satisfaction was not significantly affected by physical design and appearance of the restaurant. All the personal contact attributes of the employees such as courtesy, knowledge, promptness, neat in appearance, attentive, helpful and understanding customer needs leads to customer satisfaction.

Bell & Luddington (2006) explored the connection between customer complaints and the dedication of service staff to provide excellent customer service. Potential moderators of this association are thought to be positive and negative affectivity. The study finds that customer complaints are significantly and negatively associated with service personnel dedication to customer service using data from a survey of 432 retail service employees in a national retail chain with 124 stores. This adverse association was greatly minimized by employees' positive affectivity. Contrary to predictions, strong negative affectivity levels actually decreased the negative correlation between customer service dedication and complaints. However, because doing so could result in sanctions or termination, these employees do not permit negative affectivity to lessen their dedication to providing excellent customer care. This is regarded

as a significant source of the depressing effect of role conflict. It has been discovered that biases cause customers to exaggerate the contribution of staff while employees minimize their part in service failures. As a result, if an employee thinks a complaint is unjust, he or she may be more inclined to dismiss it and grow resentful of the customer, which would reduce their commitment to provide excellent customer service.

Cronin et al. (2000) aimed to clarify the relationships connecting quality, value, satisfaction, and behavioural intention. They also looked into how service value and quality indirectly affected a person's behaviour intentions. They incorporated five characteristics into the model, including sacrifice, customer happiness, service significance, service excellence, and behavioural intention. The information has been collected from six service industry and Confirmatory factor analysis was utilized to analyze the data. According to empirical results, the study model is more effective than competitor models and matches the data effectively. The findings demonstrated that service value is significantly influenced by service quality while service value is not significantly influenced by sacrifice. Both service value and quality were discovered to be highly significant determinants of customer satisfaction. Additionally, the study discovered evidence of a direct relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions as well as a relationship between service value and behavioural intentions. Through service value and customer satisfaction, authors discovered an indirect impact of service quality on behavioural intentions. Findings confirmed the customer satisfaction-mediated indirect effect of service value on behavioural intentions. The findings also imply that the dimensions of service quality and value had stronger effects on behavioural intentions due to their collateral consequences.

Mittal et al. (1998) investigated the connection between overall satisfactions, repurchase intentions, and attribute level performances. They investigated at asymmetrical and non-linear relationships among these constructs. Both good and service contexts were included. Field surveys were used to gather primary data in the automotive and health care industries. The study's findings showed that attribute-level performance and disconfirmation have an uneven impact on both on the whole fulfillment and repurchase intention. In other words, poor presentation on a quality has a bigger consequence than good performance. When all qualities perform well, the researchers discovered outcomes that are consistent with declining returns. Empirical results show that a poor performance on an attribute has a bigger effect on overall satisfaction and repurchase intention than a good performance on the same characteristic.

Additionally, overall satisfaction showed a declining feeling in response to the performance of the attribute. Finally, findings demonstrate that attribute-level performance directly

influences repurchase intentions in addition to the effect that satisfaction mediates. The outcomes at the attribute level and overall evaluations have a complicated relationship, as demonstrated by these results.

Adsit et al. (1996) examine the association among productivity, purchaser contentment, administrative effectiveness, and employee attitudes over time. The outcome indicate that if a department perform better in one dimension at a given point of time it did not mean that the same department will perform the same in other time horizon. Departments with high customer satisfaction inclined to emphasis on improving internal performance measures such as productivity and these may not focus on administrative effectiveness. The study also showed that the managers who fulfilled customers' needs may have failed to focus on internal requirements to be administratively efficient though they highlighted productivity. However, the departments and managers which were able to maintain high customer satisfaction also witnessed high administrative effectiveness. Further the study revealed that relatively minor changes in employee's attitudes reported significant changes in performance. Additionally, the results exhibited that when customer satisfaction was higher, the attitudes about courtesy to performance outcomes were also higher.

Dabholkar et al. (1996) employed a triangulation of research methods to identify the service quality factor structure. It consisted of six customers who took part in exploratory in-depth interviews, three retail customers who engaged in phenomenological interviews, and a qualitative study that tracked three customers' thoughts as they actually made purchases at a store. When these results are combined, the study discovers a hierarchical component structure for trade service value that includes five dimensions: objective elements, dependability, interpersonal contact, exploratory, and process. Due to the fact that they are made up of numerous sub-dimensions, these are also known as the second- order components. The suggested extent device is appropriate for researching retail establishments that sell both goods and services, like department or specialty stores, in order to compile yardstick statistics on existing level of service value and to carry out recurring "checks" to gauge service enhancement. Retailers may be able to identify service locations that are weak and require attention using the mechanism as a problem-solving means. One mode to do this is by trying the three form of the generalized hierarchical model. Retailer may only utilize the model with the five primary dimensions if they are really worried about parsimony. Finally, retailers can measure the degree of common variance or the degree to which the fundamental dimensions accurately reflect in general service eminence by proposing retail service worth as a second-order feature. It is not necessary to employ structural models in order to employ the

mechanism as a analytical means at various stages of investigation. Analysis of service quality can be done at three different levels: overall (using the complete scale in an additive manner), factor (using items within a specific dimension in an additive manner), and sub-dimension (using items within a given sub-dimension in an additive fashion). Examination of statistics at these many levels would enable managers to pinpoint difficulty area surrounded by their shops (at the dimension or sub-dimension level) and focus resources on enhancing specific aspects of service quality. Evaluations of overall quality and dimension quality would also be possible.

2.3.4 Studies explaining the effectiveness of gesture of goodwill on the loyalty of the customer

Nguyen et al. (2021) investigated the relationships between employees' job satisfaction, customer orientation, customer happiness, and customer loyalty in international hospitals in Vietnam. Structural equation modelling was used to gather data from 408 patients and 204 doctors at worldwide hospitals. The study discovered that client orientation and satisfaction in foreign hospitals were significantly impacted by workers' job satisfaction. consumer satisfaction may rise with a significant focus on the needs of the consumer. A strong customer orientation may increase customer satisfaction. Due to the positive effects of spreading emotions, customers' contentment and loyalty toward foreign hospitals in Vietnam are enhanced by the employees' effective customer orientation and job satisfaction. Patrons in foreign hospitals are more likely to be gratified with their medical care if employees are happy in their works. The study has recognized the critical importance of a customer-oriented method and the pleasure of employees' professions in nurturing customer satisfaction and hospital trustworthiness abroad. Operative customer orientation also increases customer devotion to the hospital by assisting in enhancing client serenity.

Gong et al. (2020) created and tested a moderated mediation model that examines the mechanisms underlying the influence of employees' emotional labour on customer loyalty by simultaneously taking into account affective reactions and cognitive appraisals and illuminating moderating factors that affect their efficacy. On Amazon's Mechanical Turk, a sample of 259 Americans over 20 years from across the country was recruited to take part in the survey. The various roles of consumers' detection of employees' deep acting and surface acting in affecting customers' affective reactions and cognitive assessments are made clear by our emotions as social information-based model. In accordance with the employees'

nonverbal communication, the current research also demonstrates that the impact of consumers' ability to perceive employees' emotional labour on customer results differs. In accordance with the employees' nonverbal communication, the current research also demonstrates that the impact of consumers' ability to perceive employees' emotional labour on customer results differs. The EASI-based model clarifies the different contributions that customers' perceptions of employees' deep acting and surface acting make to their affective responses and cognitive assessments, as well as its contribution to the body of knowledge regarding the efficiency of customers' perceptions of employees' emotional labour. More specifically, customers' positive (negative) emotions are influenced by staff' deep acting in a positive (negative) way, which in turn results in a rise (reduction) in customer loyalty. The results also demonstrate that the relationship between employees' emotional labour and client loyalty was successively mediated by perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

Aburayya et al. (2020) established a conceptual framework that incorporates the relationships between customer pleasure, customer loyalty, service quality, and customer orientation. Primary healthcare facilities in Dubai and other parts of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) provided the data. The study used 205 employee surveys and 3,070 customer questionnaires. Hypotheses in this work were assessed using structural equation modelling (SEM) with LISREL 9.30. The suggested model shows that customer pleasure completely mediated the relationship between employees' client orientation and loyalty. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that customer orientation was positively correlated with both customer satisfaction and service quality, with customer satisfaction having a stronger impact on customers' decisions to stick with a business than service quality.

Results specifically reveal that customer- oriented contact staff, particularly registration workers and receptionists, favourably affect customers' perceptions of the quality of service provided by clinics and ultimately lead to customer loyalty and satisfaction. The study's findings are significant because they highlight the value of hiring personnel who priorities serving customers in healthcare facilities. Notably, despite organizations' best efforts to select candidates with the right personality attributes, they may discover that individuals hired have varying degrees of customer focus. Such an instance demonstrates the significance of additional factors, such as environmental or situational factors, in the service orientation equation. In essence, interactions between employees and customers become crucial for figuring out how customers perceive SQ. The results of this investigation also demonstrated a strong connection between CO and CS.

Hui. &Yee (2015) carried out an empirical study to look into how interpersonal relationships affect brand loyalty and customer satisfaction in the casual clothing sector. Quantitative research of the fashion retail sector in Hong Kong has been carried out to examine the hypothesis. Generation Y consumers who were between 20 to 30 years old, they randomly participated in study. There were only 202 useable questionnaires. Regression method has been used. Results exhibited that trust that is rooted in an interpersonal relationship has substantial impressions on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Probably, when customers observe that their relationships with the employees who sell products to them are trustful, they are more probable to prompt their needs and requirements to them. In turn, employees tend to offer suitable products and even services to satisfy the needs of the customers, thus leading to increased levels of satisfaction felt by customers. In practice, companies may offer training to prepare frontline employees with the specialized skills, boldness, and knowledge as such elements can increase customer awareness of the level of trust in their relationship with frontline employees. Possibly the reactions of frontline employees expressed by their smile, welcoming greetings, and proposals of active help to customers have an impact on the emotions of customers through contagion, thus leading to customer satisfaction. Besides, satisfied customers then become reliable to the brand.

Izogo & Ogba (2015) in their paper titled “Service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair services sector” seeks to determine how aspects of service quality affect client loyalty and satisfaction. The SERVQUAL scale's dimensional structure in the Nigerian auto repair services industry is also examined in this article. With an emphasis on the mechanic village, 215 respondents were selected for this study from the wider Abakaliki urban region in south-eastern Nigeria. In the mechanic village, respondents were purposefully and conveniently approached. Using the Factor Analysis (EFA) technique, the author found that separate attempts to gauge client loyalty and satisfaction in the context of auto repair services are less effective. This suggests that a happy consumer will remain a loyal one. Therefore, if Ebonyi State's auto repair service companies increase customer happiness through superior service quality improvement initiatives, they will be in a better position to respond strategically to client loyalty.

Long et al. (2013) examined the effects of customer relationship management (CRM) components on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Employee behaviour, customer service quality, relationship building, and interaction management are the four key CRM components that are evaluated in this study. The investigation was conducted in a department store in Tehran, Iran. The Likert scale rating is used to collect data. The study relied on 300

individuals and employed a quantitative methodology. To determine the relationship between the variables, multiple linear regression analysis was employed. The findings show that customer happiness and loyalty are significantly impacted by employee behaviour. CRM does have a good correlation with customer happiness and loyalty. Customer satisfaction was shown to be primarily impacted by employee behaviour and the growth of interpersonal ties. The results show that retail employees with positive client relationships will enhance consumer satisfaction. Employees behaviour play an imperative role in improving customer loyalty as well. The researchers suggested that employees need to receive the necessary training to respond to consumer requests speedily. The total service quality of the firm will undoubtedly improve by raising personnel competencies. Organizations must also continually maintain employee motivation because highly driven individuals will undoubtedly be able to deliver superior services.

Thomas (2013) developed an empirical model that connects customer loyalty to customer satisfaction and store image. A structural model was created to explain 76.2% of the variance in customer loyalty using data gathered from 334 customers of top supermarkets in India. It was also believed that the store image had a positive impact on customer loyalty through the mediating variable of customer satisfaction. In the Indian setting, the study confirmed the customer satisfaction characteristics of pricing, product assortment, quality, and shop service. These factors varied in their level of impact. The key component of satisfaction was deemed to be quality, which was closely followed by store service, pricing, and product selection. This demonstrates how the upper middle class in India is changing its mindset. The majority of supermarkets in India compete on pricing by offering items at less than list price. However, the quality and shop service aspects are of more interest to customers. According to the findings on the significance of shop service, sales associates are essential to achieving customer satisfaction and customer patronage. Customer happiness affects the probability of recommending a store. It also encourages repeat business from loyal customers.

Zia & Azam (2013) made an effort to create a scale that assesses the shopping experience and the effects of several shopping experience components in the setting of unorganised retail. Based on a reconsideration of the literature, a hypothesized model was created, which was then improved using confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis. Cronbach alpha was used to evaluate the scale's validity and reliability. By using multiple regressions, impact was measured. The sample used in this research, which is primary data, consisted of 355 retail customers. In disorganized retail, 15 important factors were identified to be crucial in determining the purchasing experience. Findings indicate that while helpfulness, acknowledgment, a pleasant environment, store dealing way, returns and exchanges, shopping handiness, dependability, dealings, products, diversity, and store outer shell have positive

effects, on the other hand shopping time, complaint handling, the physical aspect of the store, and loyalty programmes have negative effects on the shopping experience with unorganized retail sector. This might be because shopping takes longer in disorganized retail settings, and there is also no effective structure in place for managing complaints so that issues can be resolved. Despite the fact that all fifteen factors were shown to be significant to predict shopping experience in unorganized retail, it may be inferred that "merchandise" has the largest impact on shopping experience and "reliability" has the least impact.

Zia (2013) sought to understand the influence of the shopping practice on consumer's reliability in both organised and unorganized retail settings. The study is a descriptive in nature. To understand the effects of various shopping experience characteristics on customer loyalty, the SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) technique was used on a sample of 706 consumers. The results indicate that all the three factors of shopping experience, considered for the study, have positive impact on consumer loyalty, namely: ERE (Executional Related Excellence: elements pertaining to checking supply, assisting in product discovery, having product knowledge, giving patient explanations and assistance, and delivering unexpectedly high-quality products), E (Expediting: it comprises of items related to ease of shopping, helpful employees, quick and error free sales), and PR (Problem Recovery: such as error free billing and easy product return policy). The findings show that all three shopping experience factors—ERE (Executional Related Excellence): items related to patiently explaining and advising, checking stock, helping customers find products, having product knowledge, and providing unexpected product quality—E (Expediting): goods pertaining to speedy and error-free transactions, friendly staff, and simplicity of shopping, and PR (Problem Recovery: such as error free billing and trouble-free product return procedure) have a positive impact on customer loyalty. Consumer loyalty is least affected by the ERE, which stands for patient explanation and guidance, monitoring supply, assisting in product discovery, having product expertise, and offering unexpected product quality. The E has the greatest influence on customer loyalty since it denotes being considerate of customers' time, patient with long checkout lines, and proactive in assisting with the speeding up of the shopping experience. While PR, which entails assisting in problem resolution and compensation, improving quality, and guaranteeing total customer pleasure has the least influence on customer loyalty.

Jamshaid et. al (2012) in his article titled “Mediating role of employee’s behaviour to build customer loyalty through customer satisfaction” examine those specific areas of consumer satisfaction that foster consumer loyalty. 105 respondents from various regions of Pakistan and varied consumers of mobile or telecom services has been surveyed using Random sampling method. The hypotheses were tested using Factor analysis, Correlation and

Regression analysis techniques and Customer satisfaction is considered an independent variable in this article and is based on how customers assess the quality of the services they receive in comparison to their expectations. A dependent variable is customer loyalty. While an employee's behaviour is used as a mediator to determine how effective an employee's behaviour can be for the business in retaining loyal consumers. Although employees' behaviour is important in building customer loyalty from satisfaction factors, the fundamental reasons why customers are loyal are more dependent on satisfaction factors than on employees' behaviour. It has been demonstrated that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are positively related, however the connection is not very strong. Since there are other factors (unexplained variables) that might serve as the foundation for creating customer loyalty in addition to employee conduct, we can argue that customer happiness is not primarily dependent on employee behaviour of the firm. Customer loyalty is closely linked to satisfaction, but staff behaviour—an additional aspect that is seen as a mediating factor—has a partial influence on how the customer behaves, which in turn influences the customer's willingness to remain loyal.

Wieseke et al. (2012) described and conceptualized employee and consumer understanding as multidimensional constructs and also conduct empirical research into how they affect customer loyalty and satisfaction. A quantitative study using multilevel modelling and dyadic data supports two effects of empathy in service contacts. According to the study, there are more "symbiotic relationships" when there is greater employee empathy for the needs of the client. The outcome also demonstrates that empathic consumers are more likely to react to an unsatisfactory experience with "forgiveness," in the sense that customer empathy can lessen the detrimental consequences of unsatisfactory experiences on customer loyalty. The authors infer a number of implications for service research and the administration of service interactions from these empirical findings. The current study, in particular, offers a valuable foundation for "interaction routing" tactics, which pair consumers and employees according to their psychological profiles to facilitate seamless and positive service interactions. Consumer empathy can mitigate the damaging impact of consumer disappointment on customer loyalty, as this study shows. These results also imply that customer loyalty is more influenced by customer satisfaction with the service experience for empathetic customers than for less empathic ones. Second, this approach employs a multifaceted definition of empathy. The findings show that shopper contentment is influenced by the combination of the cognitive and affective elements of empathy.

Nilsson & Sandberg (2010) investigated if grocery retail organizations might foster emotional loyalty through successful service recovery when it came to consumer loyalty by turning focus into sensation. The study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the behaviours of unsatisfied customers and to use that information to further investigate how negative attitudes can be changed into positive ones, fostering good word-of-mouth and strengthening overall composite loyalty. For the purpose of the study, a combination of descriptive and haphazard research was used. The study's data comprised primary and secondary sources.. Empirical results of various backgrounds in terms of age, gender, and employment. The findings show that discontent may instead lead to store switching and poor word-of-mouth. Customers that have complaints speak with front-line staff members directly. The service recovery paradox had a tendency to occur, which led to extraordinarily well-treated customers spreading good word of mouth. Positive word of mouth had some influence on the customers. Emotional loyalty was developed because well-performed service recovery fosters a positive attitude toward the person and the store.

Homburg et al. (2010) investigated the impact of context on the relationship between customer loyalty and customer-focused actions. Multilevel analysis of triadic data from a cross-industry survey of 56 sales managers, 195 sales representatives, and 538 customers provides empirical support for the idea that customer-oriented behaviours by salespeople have a positive, insignificant, or even negative impact on customer loyalty, depending on contextual factors. According to the study, the effectiveness of customer-oriented behaviours is significantly influenced by both product attributes and customer communication styles. These findings imply that the central finding of the research on adaptive selling also holds true for salesperson client orientation. It implies that the sales environment affects the efficacy of particular sales actions. The findings imply that other aspects of the purchase scenario might even be more crucial.

Leisen (2009) in their paper titled “Linking the hierarchical service quality model to customer satisfaction and loyalty” intends to further explore the link between service quality—as determined by this instrument—and customer loyalty and satisfaction by using HSQM to two additional service settings. Using the Purposive sampling approach, the researcher gathered data from 550 respondents (250 clients of hairdresser/barber services and 300 clients of local phone service subscribers). The Structural Equation Model was used to examine the data. The results of the analysis of the data indicate that the major and sub dimensions' relative relevance (significance) varies according on the service. For example, attitude and behaviour are the primary determinants of interaction quality in phone services,

whereas attitude and proficiency are significant factors in hairdresser services. The three main components of total service quality for both services are interaction quality, physical environment quality, and result quality. It's interesting to note that the most crucial factor is result quality. Although the SERVQUAL instrument did not specifically take services outcomes into account, this gap appears to be filled by the current measure.

Jamal & Adelowore (2008) examined how self-employee congruence functions and the interaction involving the employee and the purchaser. Additionally, it applied the concept of congruence or fit to connections between individuals, organisations, and environments. The impact of employee and customer self-concept congruence on critical relational outcomes like association contentment, worker faithfulness, and contentment with service contributor has not been studied in research, despite the significance of customer- employee interactions and relationships in the context of services. Following a thorough analysis of the literature in the fields of relationship marketing, services marketing, organizational behaviour, and consumer behaviour, the study takes a causal modelling approach and proposes a conceptual model. Based on responses to a self-administered questionnaire, 203 Nigerian bank clients served as the study's sample. The conceptual model put forward in this study has been analyzed and confirmed using SEM and confirmatory factor analysis. The study shows that self-employee congruence is a crucial precondition for interpersonal relationships, relationship satisfaction, and employee loyalty, all of which are positively correlated with clients' happiness with the service provider. Our findings have significance for future relationship development and for bolstering loyalty towards service providers. We conclude that customer happiness grows as relationship satisfaction and loyalty towards service personnel rise.

Sum & Hui (2007) investigated which aspect of salespeople's service quality is most crucial for retaining customers in a context of fashion chain stores. The SERVQUAL service quality instrument is modified by the research in order to evaluate the salespeople's level of service in the Hong Kong fashion retail sector. In total, 232 surveys were given out to customers exiting a Hong Kong chain of clothing stores. According to the findings, the salesperson's service quality in the empathy dimension has the greatest influence on customer loyalty in Hong Kong's fashion chain stores, while the physical dimension has the least. However, in fashion chain stores, customer loyalty is highly impacted by the reliability dimension across a range of demographic characters. The outcome revealed that the varied pricing levels established by fashion stores are unaffected by the salespersons' service quality in any dimension. In order to promote consumer loyalty in fashion chain stores, it is advised that fashion retailers focus

more on raising the quality of salesperson service across all dimensions rather than quickly changing prices.

Carpenter (2007) investigated the multifaceted association between utilitarian and hedonic shopping value and important retail outcomes for retailers. The samples taken in the study are 248 Wal-Mart shoppers (66%), 103 Target shoppers (28%), 24 K-Mart shoppers (6%). Key outcome indicators, such as contentment, reliability, word-of-mouth communication, and percentage of sales in the fiercely cutthroat discount retail industry, are found to be influenced by utilitarian and hedonistic buying values. In particular, the data show connections between utilitarian and hedonic shopping value, satisfaction, and loyalty, which support the conclusions of earlier research. It seems that when hedonic and utilitarian shopping value rises, so does contentment. Satisfaction has been found to have a favourable impact on attitudinal loyalty. The association between attitude loyalty and behavioural results, such as sharing of purchases and word-of-mouth recommendations, is significant and favourable. The share of purchase and word-of-mouth are influenced by attitude loyalty. The result implies that the development of behavioural loyalty does not require satisfaction alone.

Barger & Grandey (2006) recommended primitive emotional contagion to explain why “service with a smile” forecasts encounter satisfaction by assessing mimicry and mood as mediators in service encounters. Post-encounter surveys were completed by 173 customers. The study found that customer smiling through an encounter projected post-encounter mood, which ultimately predicted service quality and encounter satisfaction. Conversely, it has also been found that employee smiling was not related to customer post-encounter mood. The research revealed that service with a smile satisfies customers as witnessed by their high rating to service quality of the employees. It is not only the smile but its intensity which makes customers evaluate an employee as more competent, friendly and more satisfying. Generally, in the service framework, employee with maximum smile is probably perceived as delivering anticipated service behaviours than a person with minimal smile delivering better service than somebody with no smile.

Gruber et al. (2006) investigated the effect that staff conduct and grievance management quality had on client agreement. The laddering technique with paper and pencil and the means-end approach were used in an empirical investigation. The study unveiled the core advantages that the plaintiffs sought and gave a deeper knowledge of the characteristics of productive customer-facing staff. According to the research, plaintiffs want contact personnel to be able to properly handle client concerns, possess sufficient knowledge about services, and provide good nonverbal cues. Moreover, the study revealed that as per customers’

perception, if employees listen to them sincerely, it will lead to a find solution of problem which further result into customer satisfaction. Additionally, the customers wanted their service providers to be competent enough to handle and solve their problems. Apart from this, friendliness and motivation of employees were also considered as essential attributes to solve customers' complaints.

Gwinner et al. (2005) defined and empirically tested the two distinct levels of employee adaptation behaviour—interpersonal and service—offering. Data has been collected from 239 respondents through surveys. Results of the study evidently sustain two-dimensional conceptualization. These indicated that the tendency to adapt both interpersonal style and the actual service offering are positively influenced by a customer knowledge level, some personality predispositions, and intrinsic motivation of employees. Workers can adjust services by tailoring the service offering to a specific clientele and by altering their interpersonal communication style.. The results also indicated that the adaptive behaviour dimensions are significantly related to the tolerance for ambiguity, personality constructs of self-monitoring, and service orientation. This suggested that predicting which employees will profit from certain training programmes might also be aided by looking at the antecedents.

Homburg & Fürst (2005) spoke about how complaint handling affects customer justice ratings, which have an impact on consumer loyalty and satisfaction. The writers distinguish between the mechanistic approach, which is centered on developing guidelines, and the organic approach when defining an organization's complaint management (based on creating A favourable internal environment). This led to a total of 550 consumer interviews. The empirical research is based on a dyadic data set that includes managerial businesses' complaint handling procedures and evaluations of perceived justice, satisfaction, and loyalty from complaining customers. The results show that even though both the mechanistic and the organic approaches considerably affect the opinions of complainants, the mechanistic approach has a greater overall influence. The study also shows that the two approaches have a relationship that is primarily complementary. The moderating effects of the business type (business-to-business versus business-to-consumer) and industry type are another important aspect of the study (service versus manufacturing). The findings demonstrate that the mechanistic approach's advantageous impacts are more pronounced for service companies as opposed to manufacturing companies, and in business-to-business scenarios as opposed to business-to-consumer ones.

Johnson et al. (2003) investigated variables that may influence customers' readiness to recommend their salesperson. Data was collected in a business-to-business scenario. There were 406 decision-makers who responded. Structural equation modeling was used to test the model. According to research, a customer's opinion of the relationship has a direct impact on their desire to recommend a business. According to this study, a customer's opinion of the connection is influenced by their trust in the salesperson and their contentment with them. Additionally, it was discovered that confrontation with the salesman had a detrimental effect on the customer's assessment of the relationship and anticipation for the relationship to continue. Finally, consumer expectations for the future of the connection had no effect on their readiness to recommend others.

Athanassopoulos et al. (2001) explored the emphasis of shopper satisfaction on behavioural response of customers. Data has been collected from 793 individual customers of commercial retail banks. The results of the study witnessed that customer satisfaction has direct effects direct effects on the behavioural responses of customers. More specifically, the findings indicated that as customers evaluated high customer satisfaction, they decided to continue with the present service provider; and pacify their undesirable behavioural intentions. Additionally, the results of the study indicated that customer satisfaction is positively related to word-of-mouth communication. The researchers opined that service organizations should strive for developing such strategies that can help in enhancing favourable behavioural responses to customer satisfaction and prohibit unfavourable ones. Such strategies can be comprised of avoiding service problems from happening and solving them at the earliest possible if happened, encountering customer satisfaction levels, efficiently addressing disgruntled consumers, and constructively responding to customer grievances.

Lemmink & Mattsson (1998) examined the point of sale minute by minute from the viewpoint of the client to simulate how assessments and perceptions fluctuate during the interaction. Perceived warmth and likeability, perceived service quality and loyalty are significantly correlated, as seen by the findings from two distinct "non-productive" retail interactions. Similar to warmth, encoded behaviour has a strong link with warmth and may explain it well. This suggested that after an event, salespeople's attitudes and assessments may shift as a result of the warmth construct's ability to enhance their behaviour. The study also found a weak relationship between shifts in warmth during a service encounter and improvements in quality, likeability, and loyalty. This suggests that retail encounters characterized by significant shifts in warmth may not have a greater influence on post-experience evaluations than more seamless, unrolling encounters.

Cook & Macaulay (1997) studied the role of empowerment in complaint management which benefits both the customer and the organization. The study revealed that the customers' relation with the organization was mainly affected by the way they are treated by the employees. Therefore, the employees' empowerment is an essential element for increasing customer satisfaction for resolving customer grievances. Researchers suggested that for applying empowerment successfully, it must be required to promote it within a framework which contains: encouragement of employees to take a optimistic and active approach to grievances; emerging service providers' abilities in complaints handling; being overt about the authority level that employees may have in management of complaint; catering support and inspiration to employees in gaining responsibility; taking action to conquer the reasons of complaints and creating ownership of the development prospects that complaints bring. All these not only add value to the customer but also to the organizational.

Dick & Basu (1994) investigated a comprehensive conceptual framework for consumer loyalty. Customer loyalty is the degree to which an individual's general attitude and subsequent purchases are favourably connected. It is believed that social norms and environmental factors moderate the connection. It has been determined that loyalty has behavioural, motivational, perceptual, and affective impacts in addition to cognitive, emotional, and conative antecedents. The study reveals that customer loyalty is increased by company employees that are eager to assist clients and pay attention to their problems. When a customer is more committed, they are more willing to overcome an obstacle, which leads to sustained patronage.

2.4 Research Gap:

Therefore, study's research gap lies in exploring various goodwill gestures of employees influencing consumer behaviour and satisfaction in the region of Punjab, keeping in mind the demographic profile of the buyers

Although a lot of study has been done on customer happiness and loyalty in the retail industry, little is known about how workers' goodwill actions influence these results. There is a knowledge gap about the softer, interpersonal aspects of the service encounter because the majority of current research in the retail sector concentrates on concrete service characteristics such product quality, pricing, and store environment (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). For example, studies on service quality have focused a lot on aspects like certainty, dependability, and tangibles, but they have mostly ignored the impact of human

interaction components like friendliness, empathy, and civility (Bitner, 1990). Additionally, although SERVQUAL and other service quality models have shed light on consumer perceptions, they fall short in addressing the precise effects of goodwill acts on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1991).

In the context of the clothing retail business, the relational and emotional aspects of service encounters—such as the capacity of staff to make clients feel valued and appreciated—have not received enough attention (Mattila & Enz, 2002). A few studies have mentioned the value of pleasant interactions and empathy, but they frequently apply these findings to other service industries without considering the retail setting, where in-person interactions are essential to customer satisfaction (Dabholkar, 1996; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002). Furthermore, the majority of research has looked at loyalty and customer satisfaction independently, with little focus on how goodwill actions can work as a link between the two (Oliver, 1997).

Understanding how sociodemographic characteristics, including age, gender, income, and education, influence the association between goodwill acts and customer happiness is another knowledge gap (Zeithaml et al., 2002). Research on consumer behaviour has examined demographic factors, but not enough has been done to examine how these factors interact with goodwill gestures to influence customer views and loyalty (Price & Arnould, 1999). In culturally varied areas like Punjab, where sociodemographic origins can cause large differences in customer expectations, this gap is especially crucial.

Last but not least, the majority of previous research on customer loyalty has concentrated on elements like product quality and service effectiveness, frequently ignoring the small but significant influence that employee behaviours have in fostering customer loyalty and satisfaction (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). By investigating the effects of goodwill gestures, including as empathy, responsiveness, and active listening, on customer happiness and loyalty, particularly in Punjab's textile retail sector, this study seeks to close these gaps.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

An essential part of this study is the research technique chapter, which describes the methodical framework used to collect, examine, and evaluate data. It acts as the cornerstone of the entire research project, directing the course towards significant discoveries and findings. This chapter provides a clear road map for achieving the research objectives by outlining the selected research design, data gathering strategies, and analytical approaches. This chapter demonstrates the study's credibility and rigour by carefully outlining the methodology. This guarantees that the results can be consistently interpreted and make a significant contribution to the body of information already available in the fields of retail management and customer service.

3.2 Statement of the Problem

In this high tech savvy environment, where the psychology and lifestyle of the customers undergoes a momentous change, understanding customer value, creating it, maintaining it and retaining it, are the most crucial and the intellectual activities that the management needs to address. The value creation process as per the consumers' perception has gradually shifted from a company or product centric to personalised consumer experiences (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004). High quality interactions between the customers and frontline employees are the key to unlocking new sources of gaining competitive advantage (Baumann et al., 2017).

Along with excellent services, Goodwill Gestures like enjoyable interaction, empathy, courtesy, friendly behaviour, responsiveness etc demonstrated by employees while sales encounter with customers will definitely foster satisfaction, trust, loyalty and helps in customer retention (Soltani, Navimipour 2016). Based on the work of Arditto et al., 2020 it is advocated that the expertise and trust displayed by salesperson while interaction ,must anticipate not only the level of enjoyable interaction but also the perceived risk of reciprocal response in case of discontentment which is directly linked to decreased purchases.

Looking at the extent to which customer perception is linked to salespersons' gestures, it becomes very imperative that the human resource policy planners and marketers should enhance their knowledge related to goodwill gestures of employees. Keeping these points into

consideration, this research has been conducted to understand the role of gesture of goodwill of employees on customers' satisfaction and loyalty.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

The claims that the researcher hopes to achieve within a certain time frame are known as research objectives or problems. "A problem well defined is half solved" is an old proverb that accurately describes the research project. The results and conclusions will be deceptive if the research problem is not thorough. The research gap identified by a thorough literature evaluation of indexed journals serves as the foundation for the current study's well-framed research aims. The study's goals are to investigate several facets of employees' acts of kindness and how they affect patron loyalty and pleasure in clothing retail establishments. With implications for improving customer engagement and retention, the study first aims to pinpoint the precise acts of kindness, including warm greetings and tailored assistance, that successfully draw clients. It also looks at how these actions affect customer satisfaction by effectively treating customers, which fosters a sense of worth and gratitude and increases satisfaction and encourages return business. In order to enable shops to customise their offerings to satisfy the various demands of various customer segments, the study also investigates if socio demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and income influence how satisfied customers are with goodwill gestures. Lastly, the study looks into how well these actions work to promote long-term client loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, emphasising how goodwill may support organic marketing and maintain client connections over time. Retail managers may improve customer retention, brand loyalty, and service quality by being aware of these aspects.

The objectives of the study are framed below:-

1. To examine the various employees' goodwill gestures that can attract the customers.
2. To understand the impact of gesture of goodwill in influencing customer satisfaction.
3. To understand the relation, if any, with socio demographic profile and their level of satisfaction.
4. To explain the effectiveness of gesture of goodwill on the loyalty of the customer.

3.4 Need and Significance of the Study

Customer loyalty and happiness are becoming more and more important in the cutthroat retail industry, especially in clothing retailers, which makes this study necessary and significant. Customers now expect more than just high-quality products; they also want outstanding

customer service, which frequently depends on the actions and kindness of staff members (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). Goodwill actions, including extending a personal welcome, being helpful, and showing empathy, are essential for building emotional bonds with clients, which in turn affect their degree of happiness and brand loyalty. In order to help shops strategically enhance customer service and increase customer retention, this study will look at these particular gestures and their impact.

Furthermore, the study is important because it attempts to investigate the relationship between customer satisfaction and sociodemographic characteristics, which is still not well understood in the context of Indian retail (Baumann et al., 2017). Retailers can use this knowledge to tailor their service offers by knowing how customers' views of goodwill gestures are influenced by factors like age, gender, or money. According to other studies on customer-centric methods in retail, customising customer experiences based on these criteria could greatly improve service quality and customer engagement (Arditto et al., 2020).

This study's emphasis on the impact of goodwill gestures on customer loyalty and word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing is another significant feature. Strong WOM, which is essential for boosting a brand's reputation and drawing in new clients, is frequently the outcome of positive customer experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Additionally, clothing businesses can develop a steady clientele that supports long-term profitability by cultivating consumer loyalty, which is fuelled by regular pleasant encounters with staff (Soltani, 2016). Therefore, this study will offer empirical support for the idea that retailers can use employee behaviour to strengthen customer relationships, which is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in the retail sector. The study would greatly advance managerial practice and scholarly knowledge in customer relationship management and service quality enhancement in the retail industry by filling up these gaps in the literature and providing useful insights.

3.5 Research Design

A organised framework for carrying out the study efficiently is provided by the research design, which is crucial in directing data collection, measurement, and analysis (Vaus, 2006). To maximise productivity in the research process and guarantee the seamless implementation of diverse research methodologies, a well-structured research design is essential. The nature and goals of the investigation will determine which research design is used (Vaus, 2006).

Making ensuring that the data gathered can provide logical and unambiguous answers to the study questions is a primary goal of a research design.

The research design applicable in the present study was specifically designed to investigate how goodwill gestures of employees affects customers' inclinations to buy from particular store. The quantitative descriptive research method, which is well-known and frequently used in research projects, was the selected strategy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In order to test hypotheses, investigate the correlations between variables, and produce fresh concepts, the study first used a descriptive research approach. Finding out whether the variables were systematically related to one another in order to forecast future events was the main goal.

The purpose of descriptive analysis is to identify generalisable traits relevant to the current circumstance. To achieve the goals of the study, a representative sample strategy was used. This made it possible to generalise the results to the larger population by guaranteeing that the sample chosen was representative of the target population. The main objective of the research design was to ensure that the information gathered would provide clear, rational responses to the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.6 Sampling Design

A sample design is crucial to the research process because it provides a detailed plan for selecting a sample from the population being studied. This design includes the methods or processes a researcher uses to choose sample items, making sure that each piece or respondent has a known chance of being included (Bryman, 2016). The purpose of using a sample design is to ensure that the sample is representative of the population, allowing the results to be extrapolated to the broader population (Lavrakas, 2008). A study's validity, reliability, and capacity to draw reliable conclusions about the population can all be strongly impacted by the sampling strategy chosen (Kothari, 2004). Consequently, it is imperative for researchers to meticulously deliberate on the sample design to ascertain the success of the study.

3.6.1 Universe of the Study

The malls chosen to reflect a varied cross-section of the population based on socioeconomic criteria from three different regions of Punjab—Majha, Doaba, and Malwa—make up the study's universe. As a primary criterion for choosing the sites, the study focusses on identifying districts with different per capita incomes. This method makes it possible to comprehend how employees' acts of kindness affect client loyalty and pleasure across various economic levels in a more representative and thorough manner.

Majha, Doaba, and Malwa are the three main geographical divisions of Punjab, and each has distinct economic and demographic traits. Amritsar has been chosen as the focus district for the Majha region out of the four districts (Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, and Taran Taran). This is because Amritsar has a comparatively higher per capita income, which is a sign of greater purchasing power and retail activity. Similar to this, SBS Nagar (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar) was chosen for the Doaba region, which includes Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, and SBS Nagar, due to its higher per capita income than the other districts. Last but not least, Ropar (Rupnagar), Mohali (SAS Nagar), and Ludhiana were selected from the Malwa region—the largest with 15 districts—due to their strong economic profiles, which were demonstrated by their per capita incomes. These neighbourhoods are renowned for their bustling business and retail centres, making them perfect for researching how consumers behave when goodwill gestures are involved.

These districts were carefully chosen from among the three areas based on economic data, especially per capita income, which represents the average income of people in each area and their prospective purchasing power. The study aims to comprehend how customers from different economic backgrounds view and react to goodwill gestures from employees in retail environments, as well as how these gestures affect their happiness and loyalty, by concentrating on districts with relatively high per capita incomes. This multi-regional strategy guarantees that the results offer a more comprehensive, inclusive view of consumer behaviour throughout Punjab rather than being restricted to a particular economic or cultural setting.

Region	District	Per Capita Income (₹)	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents
Majha	Amritsar	₹ 1.43Lakhs	130	130
Doaba	SBS Nagar	₹ 1.86 Lakhs	130	130
Malwa	Ropar (Rupnagar)	₹ 2.14 Lakhs	130	390
Malwa	Mohali	₹ 1.95 Lakhs	130	
Malwa	Ludhiana	₹ 1.92 Lakhs	130	

Table 3.1: Per Capita Income of Selected Districts in Punjab

Source: <https://www.indiastatdistricthealth.com/punjab/amritsar/percapitaavailability/percapitaincomepci/data-year/2022>

Ropar is a crucial region for comprehending the behaviour of high-income consumers since, as the table indicates, it has the highest per capita income. Strong economic statistics also indicate that Mohali and Ludhiana are important places to research Punjab's retail dynamics. However, despite having somewhat lower per capita incomes, Amritsar and SBS Nagar provide information about middle-class clientele, ensuring that the study is balanced across a range of economic sectors.

The study guarantees a broad sample by choosing these districts, offering a comprehensive understanding of how staff goodwill gestures impact customers' retail experiences in areas with varying economic profiles. This methodology improves the study's capacity to make significant inferences regarding the connection between customer happiness, loyalty, and goodwill gestures in a range of socioeconomic contexts throughout Punjab.

3.6.2 Sampling Technique & Sample Size

Purposive sampling, a kind of non-probability sampling technique, has been used to gather data for the current study. Because it can be expensive and difficult to reach every possible participant, surveying the entire community to get answers to research topics is frequently impracticable. In order to save money and time while yet delivering accurate results, a representative sample size has been chosen (Babbie, 2016). A non-random sampling technique called Purposive sampling chooses participants according to predetermined standards that are pertinent to the study question. In social science research, this approach is frequently employed when the researcher has little funding or when reaching the community is challenging. Although this method has its limitations, it can provide valuable insights into the research topic (Guest et al., 2012).

Customers who visited and made purchases from organised clothing stores in Punjab during the survey period—with a particular emphasis on those who bought for ready-made clothing—made up the sample for this study. Purposive sampling was used to choose the malls, taking into consideration the malls' accessibility and geographic reach in order to obtain a representative sample of patrons. The malls chosen for the study were chosen because of their presence in the study regions, their significance, and the variety of brands and items they provide. These shopping centres are perfect for assessing consumer loyalty and satisfaction because they have established chains with a sizable presence in important Punjab cities. Leading brands in the organised retail industry are represented among the malls that were chosen, guaranteeing that the study will include a broad range of customer experiences

across various shop formats.

The apparel retail chains selected for the study are as follows:

1. **Reliance Trends**
2. **Pantaloons**
3. **Shoppers Stop**
4. **Vishal Mega Mart**
5. **Lifestyle Stores**

A crucial choice in every study is choosing the right sample size, which guarantees that the full population is represented. Although there are no rigorous criteria for determining sample size when using non-probability sampling techniques, a number of researchers have put out their own recommendations. For example, it is advised to have at least 100 responders when performing factor analysis. A typical rule of thumb when it comes to Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is to multiply the number of variables by 10 to calculate the sample size. For SEM, Kliv (2015) recommends a sample size of at least 200. Furthermore, it is thought that doing solid research requires following the "Roscoe rule of thumb," which recommends a sample size of at least 30 and ideally 500 or more. A sample size of 650 has been selected for this study, exceeding the 500 threshold and guaranteeing a thorough and trustworthy dataset for analysis. This choice is well-reasoned and consistent with accepted industry standards.

Customers who have shopped for ready-made clothing in Punjab state, India, are the population of interest in this study. The following method has been used to choose a representative sample of customers due to the challenges in reaching the full population.

The study will involve selecting a sample from the finite population of Punjab, which has a total population of 2,96,11,935 (<http://www.punjabgovt.gov.in>). To determine the appropriate sample size, the following equation will be used:

$$\text{Finite population: } n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{\epsilon^2 N}}$$

where

z is	the	z	score=	1.96	@95%	confidence	level
ε is	the	margin	of		error=		0.05
N is	the	population	size=				29611935

\hat{p} is the population proportion= 0.5%

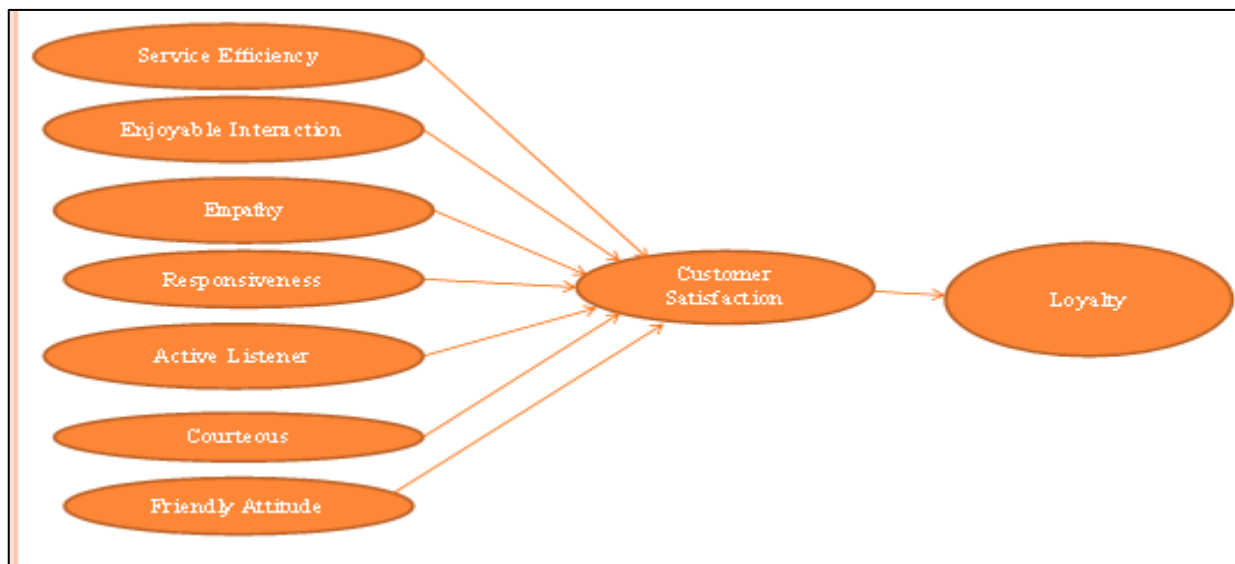
$$n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384.16$$

$$n' = 384.16 / (1 + 384.16 / 3067644) = 385$$

The calculated sample size was 385, but to increase the reliability of data, the sample size has been increased to 650, with 130 respondents selected from each of the five major districts of Punjab: Amritsar, SBS Nagar, Ropar (Rupnagar), Mohali&Ludhiana. This sampling method will save time and money while still ensuring the collection of relevant evidence.

3.7 Conceptual Framework of the Study



The study's conceptual framework centres on how staff kindness affects customer pleasure and how that satisfaction fuels customer loyalty. Each element of the model, which draws on earlier studies, emphasises important elements that influence consumer attitudes, actions, and enduring brand loyalty.

Figure 3.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Service Efficiency

The ability of staff members to accurately and promptly satisfy customer needs is referred to as service efficiency. According to studies, effective service improves clients' overall experience and lowers their perceived wait times (Bitner et al., 1990). When clients receive prompt, professional service, they are more likely to view the encounter favourably, which increases their level of satisfaction. According to Zeithaml et al. (2002), effective service delivery is therefore a crucial touchpoint in establishing flawless client experiences.

Enjoyable Interaction

Positive and interesting interactions between staff and customers that improve the entire shopping experience are referred to as enjoyable interactions. Customers are more likely to return when they have a positive experience with a brand because they feel more emotionally attached to it, according to earlier research (Dabholkar, 1996). Research demonstrates that when staff members engage with clients in a kind and pleasant manner, it not only improves their mood but also raises the perceived value of the service (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

Empathy

Customer satisfaction is greatly influenced by empathy, or the capacity to comprehend and relate to the needs of one's consumers. One of the aspects of service quality is empathy, according to studies by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which emphasise how staff members who show real concern and care are more likely to build closer emotional ties with clients. Customers' opinions of the quality of the services can be improved by the flexibility to tailor them to their unique situation (Mattila & Enz, 2002).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the willingness of employees to assist customers and provide prompt service. According to research, being responsive is essential to providing a satisfying customer experience, particularly when prompt attention is needed (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Proactive assistance is generally appreciated by customers, and staff members who anticipate their needs without being asked can greatly increase customer satisfaction (Liao & Chuang, 2004).

Active Listening

Employees that engage in active listening pay close attention to and comprehend the requirements and problems of their clients. According to Ford (2001), when customers feel heard, they are more likely to be satisfied with the service experience. By demonstrating that they respect customer feedback, staff members can increase customer satisfaction and strengthen the bond between the client and the service provider. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006).

Courtesy

Employee civility and respect are crucial components of courtesy that affect client happiness. Employee politeness encourages a favourable emotional reaction from clients, which improves their opinion of the service as a whole, claim Parasuraman et al. (1991). In a variety of service scenarios, politeness has been repeatedly shown to increase customer satisfaction (Mattila, 1999).

Friendly Attitude

Customers feel appreciated when staff members exhibit a kind demeanour, which contributes to the establishment of a warm and inviting atmosphere. According to research, there is a high correlation between employee friendliness and client loyalty and satisfaction (Bitner, 1990). Good staff attitudes increase the possibility of return business by reducing potential shopping frustration and fostering a sense of belonging (Price & Arnould, 1999).

Customer Satisfaction

The emotional reaction that consumers have when their expectations are fulfilled or surpassed is known as customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). Numerous research confirm that loyalty directly precedes client satisfaction. According to Anderson and Sullivan (1993), Satisfied customers are more inclined to recommend the company to others and make more purchases.

Customer Loyalty

One important result of customer pleasure is customer loyalty, which is defined as the dedication of customers to visit the business again and make more purchases (Oliver, 1999). Several studies have shown that happy consumers are more inclined to stick with a brand and spread the word favourably, both of which are long-term advantages for the company (Dick &

Basu, 1994; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Because loyal customers would recommend the brand to others and are less likely to migrate to competitors, loyalty is crucial for keeping customers and boosting customer lifetime value (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

As a result, it can be said that the inclusion of factors like customer happiness, customer loyalty, civility, responsiveness, empathy, pleasant interactions, service efficiency, and active listening is predicated on their proven importance in the retail and service literature. Since timely and precise service delivery directly affects customer satisfaction, service efficiency is essential to improving the customer experience (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Positive emotional experiences that promote loyalty and satisfaction are produced by pleasant interactions between staff and clients (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Long-term satisfaction depends on developing emotional ties and trust, both of which are facilitated by empathy, or knowing what customers need (Mattila & Enz, 2002). According to Liao and Chuang (2004), responsiveness—the readiness to help clients as soon as possible—improves their views of the quality of the services they receive and raises customer satisfaction. Particularly in settings like clothing stores where individual preferences are crucial, active listening guarantees that clients feel appreciated and understood, which raises customer satisfaction levels (Ford, 2001). Staff members' courtesy and civility foster a friendly environment that greatly influences customers' opinions by making them feel valued and respected (Mattila, 1999). By creating a welcoming atmosphere that promotes return business, a friendly demeanour further enhances client connections (Bitner, 1990). Because happy customers are more likely to return and refer others to the store, customer satisfaction acts as a mediator between these acts of kindness and customer loyalty (Oliver, 1997; Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). Last but not least, maintaining a competitive edge in the retail clothing sector depends on having devoted clients who not only recommend the brand but also make repeat purchases (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). Drawing on well-established theories of service quality and satisfaction, the study offers a thorough examination of how employees' acts of kindness affect customer happiness and loyalty by incorporating these variables (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Overall, the conceptual framework suggests that customer satisfaction is influenced by the goodwill actions of employees, which can range from empathy and active listening to service effectiveness and pleasant interactions. Because happy consumers are more inclined to return and suggest the store, this pleasure in turn increases customer loyalty. The concept is in line with a wealth of service marketing research that emphasises how crucial employee behaviour

is to producing positive client experiences and cultivating enduring loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2002; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006).

3.8 Hypothesis of the Study

A number of hypotheses were developed in line with the goals of the study. These hypotheses were derived from the dimensions used in the study's development, as indicated in Table 3.2. The study's hypotheses suggest a number of connections among the main concepts.

Table 3.2: Dimensions and Hypothesis

Dimensions	Hypothesis
Service Efficiency & Customer Satisfaction	<i>H1</i> :Hypothesis 1 posits that there is a positive relationship between Service Efficiency and Customer Satisfaction.
Enjoyable Interaction& Customer Satisfaction	<i>H2</i> :Hypothesis 2 asserts that there is a positive relationship between Enjoyable Interaction and Customer Satisfaction.
Empathy & Customer Satisfaction	<i>H3</i> :Hypothesis 3 proposes a positive relationship between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction.
Responsiveness& Customer Satisfaction	<i>H4</i> : Hypothesis 4 posits a positive relationship between the Responsiveness of employees and Customer Satisfaction.
Active Listener& Customer Satisfaction	<i>H5</i> : Hypothesis 5 proposes a positive relationship between ActiveListenerand Customer Satisfaction.

Courtesy& Customer Satisfaction	<i>H6</i> : Hypothesis 6 proposes a positive relationship between the CourteousbehaviourofemployeesandCustomerSatisfactioninthecontextoftheappa relstore.
Friendly Attitude& Customer Satisfaction	<i>H7</i> : Hypothesis 7 suggests a positive relationship between a Friendly Attitude of employees and Customer Satisfaction.
Customer Satisfaction & Customer Loyalty	<i>H8</i> : Hypothesis 8 posits a positive relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty, particularly in terms of repurchase intentions.

In the context of clothing retail businesses, the conceptual framework of the study suggests eight hypotheses that investigate the relationship between different aspects of employee behaviour and their effect on customer satisfaction, as well as the following relationship between customer contentment and loyalty. The significance of prompt and precise service delivery is emphasised by the first dimension, service efficiency. According to studies like Zeithaml et al. (1990), effective customer service is crucial in retail settings since it lowers wait times and increases consumer satisfaction.

Another important element that affects customer satisfaction is "enjoyable interaction," which is defined as the pleasant and constructive interaction between staff and clients. Positive interpersonal relationships during service encounters result in emotional fulfilment, which boosts consumers' overall happiness, according to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002). Because it entails comprehending and attending to the emotional needs of clients, empathy plays a critical role. In service encounters, empathic behaviour makes consumers feel appreciated and understood, which raises customer satisfaction (Mattila and Enz, 2002). Similarly, it has been demonstrated that responsiveness—defined as the ability to promptly and effectively address the requirements of customers—had a favourable impact on satisfaction. According to Liao and Chuang (2004), a better customer service experience is a result of responsive staff members who promptly and carefully handle client complaints.

Active listening's capacity to build trust and guarantee that client requirements are appropriately addressed justifies its inclusion. According to Ford (2001), active listening is crucial in retail settings because customers want to feel heard and understood, which raises their satisfaction levels. Additionally, customer satisfaction is significantly impacted by

courtesy, which includes being kind and acting with respect. According to Mattila (1999), polite staff members foster a welcoming customer experience that improves the entire shopping experience. Another important factor is having a kind attitude, which creates a welcome atmosphere. According to Bitner (1990), staff friendliness can significantly enhance the client experience by fostering more pleasurable and intimate connections. Last but not least, research has shown a clear correlation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. According to Anderson and Sullivan (1993) and Oliver (1997), happy consumers are more likely to engage in loyalty behaviours like good word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business. The inclusion of these variables is justified by this framework, which is based on current research, since they all help to understand how employee behaviours affect consumer satisfaction and, eventually, loyalty in retail apparel environments.

3.9 Data Collection Tool

It is crucial to consider each approach's advantages and disadvantages in light of the study's goals while selecting the best data collection strategy. Self-administered questionnaires were found to be the most appropriate approach because the goal of this study is to collect quantitative data from a large number of respondents. This decision is in line with the advice of Saunders et al. (2012), who support questionnaires as the best method for gathering information from sizable sample sizes. It is noteworthy that this approach not only works well for the current study but also saves money and time (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, questionnaires are recognised for their ease of use, which benefits both the responder and the researcher (Grey, 2014). It is important to note that the questionnaire's design is very important since it has a direct effect on the reliability of the responses and the total number of responses (Saunders et al., 2012). Important suggestions for designing questions to increase response rates are given by Bryman & Bell (2011). These include making certain that the questionnaire: i) gives clear instructions and explains the goal of gathering data; ii) is brief and steers clear of questions that are too long; and iii) is interesting to responders. By following these recommendations, this study makes sure the questionnaire is a useful instrument for obtaining relevant data.

3.9.1 Questionnaire Design

Because it directly affects the targeted audience's response rate, the questionnaire development process has a big impact on the research process. Following the recommendations provided by Bryman & Bell (2011), a well constructed questionnaire was

created for this investigation. Its main focus is gathering first-hand information using a mix of multiple-choice questions and other pertinent questions. The "adopted approach" used in this study's measurement scale was taken from the body of existing literature. The validity and reliability of the scale were carefully evaluated, and extensive expert reviews were carried out.

To make sure each construct was measured in the most efficient way possible, a thorough evaluation of the body of existing literature was conducted. When it was not possible to measure a latent construct directly, it was evaluated using one or more related variables. A multi-item strategy, which involves evaluating each construct using many items, was adopted in order to improve the validity and reliability of assessments. From "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," the selected measure employed a five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree," 2 "disagree," 3 "neutral," 4 "agree," and 5 "strongly agree."

Three separate sections make up the questionnaire, each of which is designed to collect particular data on how staff acts of kindness affect patron happiness and loyalty in particular Punjabi clothing retail establishments.

Part A: Demographic Profile

In order to analyse how factors such as gender, age, education, occupation, marital status, income, and so on affect respondents' replies about employee goodwill gestures and subsequent satisfaction or loyalty, this part aims to comprehend the respondents' socio demographic characteristics. In order to identify patterns or trends based on the backgrounds of respondents, demographic data collection is crucial in consumer research. For instance, older clients may have different expectations about courtesy than younger ones. Because higher-income clients would anticipate better service, income levels may also have an impact on customer satisfaction or loyalty.

Part B: Purchase Behavior

The motivations for selecting clothing stores, frequency of visits, preferred shopping times, distance travelled, and store preferences are all examined in this section. These enquiries establish the stage for comprehending the customer's overall experience and give background information about their usual interactions with clothing retailers. This section aids in figuring out how consumer behaviour may affect loyalty and satisfaction. Customers that visit the same store regularly, for instance, may be more loyal and may interpret goodwill gestures differently than infrequent buyers.

Part C: Key Constructs (Service Efficiency, Enjoyable Interaction, Empathy, Responsiveness, Active Listener, Courteous, Friendly Attitude, Customer Satisfaction & Customer Loyalty)

The questionnaire is intended to gauge respondents' opinions of employee behaviors and how these affect their shopping experiences focusing on various dimensions such as service efficiency, enjoyable interaction, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, courteousness, and friendly attitude. Each category includes Likert scale questions (ranging from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree) to evaluate how these employee gestures contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty. This structure's justification is to capture the comprehensive impacts of employee interactions on customers' general pleasure, which is a crucial component of customer loyalty and retention. A thorough grasp of how staff goodwill affects consumer attitudes and behaviors is made possible by the questionnaire's progression from demographic data and behavioral patterns to an investigation of service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. The study's ultimate goal is to give clothing retailers ideas on how to improve employee interactions and enhance long-term loyalty with customers. The operationalization and measurement of the major variables in the context of this study are described in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3: Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

S. No.	Name of the Variables	Adapted From
1.	Service Efficiency	Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra (2000); Schneider & Bowen (1999); Grönroos (1990)
2.	Enjoyable Interaction	Bitner, Booms, & Mohr (1994); Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1988); Davis & Heskett (1999)
3.	Empathy	Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1991); Bowers, Swan, & Wetherbe (1999); McDougall & Levesque (2000)
4.	Responsiveness	Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1988); Grönroos (2000); "Pservice Quality Scale" (2000)

5	Active Listener	Egan (2008); Brownell (2012); McLeod (2013)
6	Courtesy	Bitner (1990); Davis (2001); Vargo & Lusch (2004)
7.	Friendly Attitude	Berry (1995); Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1991); Kotler & Keller (2016)
8.	Customer Satisfaction	Oliver (1999); Fornell (1992); Anderson & Mittal (2000)
9.	Customer Loyalty	Dick & Basu (1994); Oliver (1999); Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)

1. Service Efficiency

The ability of staff members to help clients, manage their time, and provide timely service is referred to as service efficiency. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra's (2000) investigation on the effectiveness of service delivery and its consequences for customer satisfaction served as the foundation for this concept. According to their research, prompt service greatly enhances customer satisfaction. In the hospitality industry, where prompt service is associated with overall client satisfaction, Schneider and Bowen (1999) also highlight efficiency as a critical component. Furthermore, Grönroos (1990) highlights that efficient staff behaviour in managing service processes can greatly improve customer views by identifying functional quality, which includes service delivery speed, as a crucial component of perceived service quality.

2. Enjoyable Interaction

The quality of the customer-employee relationship during service encounters is embodied in enjoyable interactions. The research of Bitner, Booms, and Mohr (1994), which showed that pleasant encounters marked by warmth and assurance can greatly increase customer satisfaction, has an impact on this concept. The SERVQUAL model was expanded upon by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), who demonstrated that positive interactions are a key factor in assessing the quality of services. This idea is supported by Davis and Heskett (1999), who highlight how emotional bonds made during exchanges increase client loyalty. All of these research show that creating pleasant encounters is crucial to enhancing client satisfaction and promoting repeat business.

3. Empathy

In customer service interactions, empathy entails recognising and meeting the requirements of the client and giving them a sense of value. The SERVQUAL model, created by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1991), clearly defines this concept and acknowledges empathy as a crucial aspect of service quality. Bowers, Swan, and Wetherbe (1999) emphasise the value of empathy as well, pointing out that individualised care can greatly improve client satisfaction and relationships. Furthermore, McDougall and Levesque (2000) stress that customers are more emotionally connected to sympathetic staff members, which raises their perception of value and pleasure. All of these research point to empathy as being essential to producing satisfying client experiences and cultivating enduring loyalty

4. Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the willingness of employees to assist customers and provide prompt service. The SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which identifies responsiveness as a critical component of service quality, makes extensive use of this construct. This is furthered by Grönroos (2000), who highlights that prompt and suitable replies to consumer requests play a major role in enhancing customer satisfaction. Furthermore, responsiveness is acknowledged by the "Service Quality Scale" (2000) as a critical component of service evaluation, emphasising its significance in retail settings where prompt assistance can improve customer experiences. All of these studies show how important responsiveness is in influencing consumer views and fostering loyalty.

5. Active Listener

The ability of staff members to pay close attention to and resolve client complaints is known as active listening. Egan's (2008) study emphasises the importance of this construct and stresses how important active listening is to good communication during service encounters. This idea is further supported by Brownell (2012), who claims that active listening improves service delivery by making sure that the needs of the client are satisfied. Furthermore, McLeod (2013) highlights that careful listening enhances customer-provider trust, which results in better service experiences. All of these research point to the importance of active listening in service environments for raising client happiness and loyalty.

6. Courtesy

The civility, respect, and cultural awareness that staff members exhibit when interacting with customers is referred to as courtesy. This concept is demonstrated in Bitner's (1990) study, which emphasises how polite conduct has a big impact on how well customers perceive the

quality of the services they receive. Additionally, Davis (2001) highlights how civility affects customer satisfaction, arguing that polite exchanges improve the overall quality of the service. Additionally, Vargo and Lusch (2004) talk about how being courteous plays a part in value co-creation, where courteous and professional encounters lead to better service results. When taken as a whole, these studies show that being polite is an essential component of staff conduct that increases client loyalty and happiness.

7. Friendly Attitude

The warmth and social skills displayed by staff members when interacting with clients are all part of a pleasant attitude. According to Berry (1995), a welcome atmosphere promotes return business, underscoring the value of amiable attitudes in building enduring client connections. In addition, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1991) emphasise friendliness as a crucial SERVQUAL model factor, wherein favourable employee conduct results in increased customer satisfaction. Furthermore, friendliness is a crucial component of the customer experience, according to Kotler and Keller (2016), who also point out that welcoming staff foster a feeling of ease that promotes client loyalty. These results demonstrate that enhancing positive client relationships and raising satisfaction levels require a welcoming demeanour.

8. Customer Satisfaction

Customers' general satisfaction with the services they receive is reflected in their level of satisfaction. According to Oliver (1999), customer happiness is a key indicator of loyalty, and there is a clear correlation between satisfied customers and repeat business. The American Customer happiness Index (ACSI), developed by Fornell (1992), helped to advance this knowledge by showing a positive correlation between increased customer happiness and better corporate performance. Additionally, Anderson and Mittal (2000) stress that customer happiness acts as a mediator between loyalty and service quality, implying that happy consumers would use the service again and refer others to it. When taken as a whole, these studies highlight how crucial it is to gauge and improve consumer happiness in order to promote loyalty.

9. Customer Loyalty

The desire of consumers to keep making purchases from a company or service provider is referred to as customer loyalty. A theory put forth by Dick and Basu (1994) lists commitment, trust, and satisfaction as the main determinants of consumer loyalty. According to their research, brand advocates and repeat consumers are examples of loyal customers. Oliver (1999) supports this idea by emphasising how customer happiness precedes loyalty and

implying that happy consumers are more likely to stick around. Furthermore, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) highlight the role that emotional ties play in building loyalty, showing that devoted consumers not only stick with a brand but also recommend it to others. All of these observations support the idea that satisfied customers and satisfying service experiences have a significant impact on customer loyalty.

These scales guarantee precise and consistent measurement of the constructs, offering a solid basis for comprehending how employee acts of kindness affect client loyalty and happiness in the retail clothing industry.

3.9.2 Validity and Reliability

Three industry professionals and five reputable academicians participated in a rigorous validation procedure for the questionnaire. Of the academicians, two came from various academic institutions, and three were associated with the university. The questionnaire was modified in a number of ways in response to the input these experts provided. To improve efficacy and clarity, certain questions were reworded, while others were streamlined.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the instrument's internal consistency and reliability. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.9 is regarded as exceptional, 0.8 as good, 0.7 as acceptable, and 0.6 as doubtful, according to the guidelines put forth by George and Mallery (2011). Anything less than 0.5 is considered subpar and should not be used. For Cronbach's alpha to be regarded as reliable, it should ideally lie between 0.7 and 0.9. All of the Cronbach's alpha values in the pilot study fell well inside this acceptable range, confirming the validity of each and every construct. This strengthens the belief that these questionnaire structures can be used successfully in the last stage of data gathering. The robustness and validity of the data collected via the questionnaire are guaranteed by this extensive validation procedure.

3.9.3 Pilot Survey

Pilot testing, which is sometimes compared to a dress rehearsal or a small-scale test flight, is an essential step in the preparation process that guarantees the major research will run well. Its main objective is to assess the research questions' efficacy prior to the last stage of data gathering. This stage is crucial in identifying any difficulties that respondents may encounter, such as trouble comprehending specific phrases or unclear instructions in the questionnaire

(Bryman and Bell, 2011). Researchers can improve the questionnaire's validity and reliability by using the insights they obtain from pilot testing (Saunders et al., 2012).

A crucial choice for pilot testing is determining the right sample size. While Hill (1998) and Isaac and Michael (1995) recommend a sample size of 10–30, Cooper and Schindler (2011) recommend a range of 25–100 individuals. For a pilot study, Hertzog (2008) suggests 20–25, and if group comparisons are a goal of the investigation, up to 40. However, other researchers recommend a sample size of 10% of the total number of respondents chosen for the primary study (Treece & Treece, 1982; Lackey & Wingate, 1998). A sample size of 65, or 10% of the total respondents, was selected for the study's pilot testing phase in accordance with these criteria. This guarantees a comprehensive assessment of how well the questionnaire captures the desired data.

3.9.4 Data Collection

The finalised version of the questionnaire was distributed to a carefully chosen pool of 650 targeted respondents after a rigorous pilot study in which it was tested and refined. These people were picked in order to reflect a wide range of demographics pertinent to our study's goals. Their involvement was crucial in helping to improve the questionnaire, making it more understandable, succinct, and capable of gathering the required information. We got completed questionnaires from 600 individuals, indicating a fantastic response rate, demonstrating the commitment of our respondents. The foundation of our study is this strong dataset, which includes 600 respondents and offers a considerable basis on which we may securely base our findings and insights. This large sample size supports the validity and generalisability of our findings, giving our research's conclusions more weight.

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

The main data collected for this study was analysed in a methodical manner. For a thorough analysis, it was first imported into MS-Excel and then put into SPSS (V.23) and Smart PLS-4.3. Descriptive analysis, reliability evaluation, frequency distributions, and t-tests were among the statistical methods used in this analytical project.

The study also used Smart PLS-4.3 to perform Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in light of the use of recognised and verified measures. CFA is a reliable statistical technique used to assess a measurement tool's construct validity. It accomplishes this by closely examining the

relationships between the latent notions that underpin the observable indicators (Hair et al., 2017). The accuracy and resilience of the measurement instruments used in this investigation were guaranteed by this stringent validation procedure.

3.10.1 Frequency Distribution

A useful statistical technique used in this study to examine the distribution of responses across different categories of a variable is the frequency distribution. In particular, it was used to obtain a thorough grasp of the participants' demographic makeup. This included factors including occupation, income, education, age, and gender. We were able to determine the exact number of respondents who fit into each of these demographic categories by using frequency distribution. For example, it showed the proportion of respondents who fell into particular age groups. Likewise, it indicated the number of male and female responders by gender. The study carefully documented the results of this frequency distribution analysis, which provided important information about the makeup of the sample population. Consequently, this made it easier to formulate sound conclusions based on the dataset. Additionally, using frequency distribution was a powerful technique for identifying any trends or patterns in the data.

3.10.2 Mean

The mean, often known as the arithmetic average, is a crucial indicator of central tendency in the field of statistics. The mean played a crucial role in this study's computation of the average age of the participants as well as the average values for other important demographic factors including gender, income, and educational attainment.

3.10.3 Standard Deviation

A statistical measure called standard deviation measures how dispersed or variable a dataset is in respect to its mean. It gives an indication of the degree to which the data points differ from the mean. The standard deviation was used in this study to examine the variability in the respondents' demographic information. It gave information about the degree to which the responses varied from the mean and was computed separately for each demographic characteristic. Greater response variability was indicated by a higher standard deviation. Understanding the traits of the respondents and assessing the sample's representativeness were made possible thanks in large part to this information.

3.10.4 T-Test

To examine significant variations in customer satisfaction and loyalty across several demographic groups, including age, gender, income, and education, t-tests were used in this study. Simple mean comparisons are made possible by this statistical method, which makes it possible to determine how demographic characteristics affect how employees behave in areas like empathy, responsiveness, and service efficiency. Retailers can adjust marketing tactics and enhance customer service to match the unique requirements of various market segments by identifying these variations. In the end, the t-tests improve knowledge of how demographic characteristics affect consumer loyalty and happiness, offering practical advice for cultivating enduring client connections in the retail clothing industry.

3.10.5 One Way ANOVA

In this study, substantial differences in customer satisfaction and loyalty across various demographic groups, including age, income level, and education, were examined using one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). When comparing the means of three or more groups, this statistical method works well for determining whether demographic characteristics have an impact on how employees perceive goodwill gestures like empathy and service efficiency. For example, data may show patterns of loyalty across economic ranges or disparities in customer satisfaction between younger and older consumers. If substantial differences are identified, post-hoc tests can determine which groups vary. Retailers can improve customer experiences and loyalty in the garment industry by using the insights gathered from analysis to support customised marketing tactics and service enhancements catered to particular demographics.

3.10.6 Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

A statistical method for simulating intricate interactions between variables in a dataset is partial least squares structural equation modelling, or PLS-SEM. It is especially helpful when the emphasis is on explanation and prediction and there are several interdependent constructs. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is used in this study to model the intricate interactions between many constructs pertaining to customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and employee goodwill gestures. Given the several interdependent constructs at play—such as responsiveness, empathy, and service efficiency—this technique is especially beneficial since it enables the simultaneous evaluation of their effects on consumer behaviour.

The Structural Equation Model was implemented using Smart PLS (4.3). Researchers can perform structural equation modelling and examine the connections between latent variables with the help of the robust software program Smart PLS (4.3). It is extensively utilised for data analysis and model testing in a variety of domains, such as business, the social sciences, and engineering.

3.10.6.1 Measurement Model Assessment

3.10.6.1.1 Composite Reliability

The consistency and stability of the outcomes produced by a test or research tool are referred to as reliability. Composite Reliability (CR), a statistical indicator of internal consistency reliability, was used in this study to evaluate the dependability of the research instrument and its components (Chin, 1998). CR is a recommended reliability metric since it does not presuppose identical error or loading terms of instrument items, in contrast to Cronbach's alpha (Raykov, 2004). The indicators are deemed to adequately characterise the constructs if the CR value is greater than 0.7 (Chin, 1998; Guo, Yiu& González, 2016). To guarantee that the constructs in the measurement model were adequately represented by the indicators, a minimum composite reliability criterion of 0.7 was used in this investigation (Chin, 1998).

Table 3.4: Reliability Analysis

S.No.	Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	Service Efficiency	0.81	7
2	Enjoyable Interaction	0.74	7
3	Empathy	0.80	6
4	Responsiveness	0.76	8
5	Active Listener	0.78	8
6	Courteous	0.82	8
7	Friendly Attitude	0.85	7
8	Customer Satisfaction	0.84	7
9	Customer Loyalty	0.82	7

Source- Research Findings

3.10.6.1.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity, which measures how well a measure reflects the desired construct, is an essential part of construct validity. In essence, it looks at the degree to which the observed variables or scale items relate to the underlying latent construct. This evaluation establishes if

the scale's items accurately measure the same underlying construct.

An analysis of loading factors and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Smart PLS (4.3) was used in this work to assess convergent validity. Each observable variable's link to the latent construct it reflects is shown by the loading factors. Standardised loading values greater than 0.7 suggest that the observed variable is a good predictor of the latent construct, as proposed by Hair et al. (2010). The shared variance between the latent construct and the observable variables is indicated by AVE. Convergent validity is supported when the latent construct explains more than half of the variance in the observed variables, as shown by an AVE value greater than 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

It is clear from this study's evaluation of loading factors and AVE values that the observed variables or scale items have a significant shared variance and are reliable predictors of the latent construct they represent. This offers compelling proof of the measurement tool's convergent validity.

Table 3.5: Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Measurement	Item	References
RELIABILITY		
Internal Consistency Reliability	Composite Reliability (CR)	CR should be 0.7 or higher. If it is an exploratory research, 0.6 or higher is acceptable. (<u>Bagozzi and Yi, 1988</u>)
Indicator Reliability	Outer Loading (OL)	0.70 or higher is preferred. If it is an exploratory research, 0.4 or higher is acceptable. (<u>Hulland, 1999</u>)
VALIDITY		
Convergent Validity	AVE	It should be 0.5 or higher (<u>Bagozzi or Yi, 1988</u>)
Discriminant Validity	Cross Loadings	<u>Fornell and Larcker (1981)</u> suggest that the “square root” of AVE of each latent variable should be greater than the correlations among the latent variables.

3.10.6.1.3 Discriminant Validity

A key element of construct validity is discriminant validity, which makes sure that a

measurement tool accurately captures a particular concept and sets it apart from others. The criteria established by Hair et al. (2010) and Fornell&Larcker (1981) were used in this work to evaluate the discriminant validity of the latent variables. In particular, the correlations between each construct and the other constructs in the model were compared with the square root of AVE (Average Variance Extracted) for each construct. If a construct's square root of AVE is greater than the correlation it has with other constructs in the model, it is said to have discriminant validity. This approach ensures that the instrument appropriately captures its intended construct without undue influence from other factors and protects against measurement overlaps.

3.10.6.2 Structural Model Assessment

3.10.6.2.1 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

A statistical measure called the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) is used to determine how much of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model (Hair et al., 2017). To assess how well the structural model predicts the dependent latent constructs, R^2 values were calculated in this study. According to Chin (2020), each study domain may have different interpretation thresholds for R^2 efficacy. A value of 0.19 or less is classified as weak, a range of 0.33 to 0.67 as moderate, and a value at or above 0.67 as considerable. To determine the strength of the correlations between the independent and dependent variables, the R^2 values in this study were therefore compared to these standards.

3.10.6.2.2 Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

A crucial statistic for assessing a model's forecasting skills is predictive relevance (Q^2), which indicates how well the model can predict the future behaviour of a latent construct. By comparing the expected values of the dependent latent variable with the actual values acquired through a blindfolding process, Q^2 evaluates the accuracy of the model's predictions. The model is considered predictively relevant when Q^2 is greater than zero. A negative number, on the other hand, indicates that the model is not useful for prediction tasks. According to Chin (1998), a Q^2 score of 0.2 should be considered significant, signifying that the model has meaningful predictive relevance. On the other hand, a Q^2 score less than 0.2 suggests that the model's prediction ability is inadequate and could need to be improved.

3.10.6.2.3 Effect size (f^2)

One of the most important metrics for assessing a statistical finding's practical significance is effect size. The f^2 measure is used to estimate effect size in the context of regression analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM). In particular, it provides information about how much of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by an independent variable or a group of independent variables. R^2 (effect size of an independent variable) divided by $(1 - R^2)$ for the whole model (effect size of the model) is the formula for f^2 .

Cohen (1988) states that a f^2 value of 0.02 indicates a small effect size, 0.15 indicates a medium effect size, and 0.35 indicates a large effect size. In the context of this study, using f^2 makes it possible to determine the magnitude of each independent variable's influence on the dependent variable, purchase intentions, as well as to evaluate the model's overall effect size.

3.10.6.3 Techniques used in PLS-SEM

3.10.6.3.1 Bootstrapping

In this study, the magnitude and significance of the path coefficients were evaluated in order to examine the assumptions that were developed from the structural model. As advised by Hair et al. (2006), a bootstrapping approach was used to ascertain the significance values of these coefficients. 300 bootstrap examples without sign changes and 2000 bootstrap samples were used in this process. Notably, this methodology is thought to be more accurate and reliable than more traditional methods like plain least squares and maximum likelihood estimation. As Chin (1998) points out, this is particularly important when the sample size is small or the data distribution is not normal.

3.10.6.3.2 Blindfolding

One method used to evaluate a PLS-SEM model's prediction ability is blindfolding. It entails forecasting the construct scores by using a subset of indicators that were left out during the model estimate process. The cross-validated redundancy (Q^2) criteria is then used to compare the actual construct scores with the anticipated scores from the omitted indicators in order to assess the predictive relevance of the model. The Q^2 value represents the percentage of the variance of the criterion variable that the model's predictor variables can correctly forecast.

Blindfolding was used in this study to assess the model's predictive relevance. The Smart PLS

program was used to carry out this process, requiring at least 10 observations per fold and a 10-fold cross-validation. The predictive significance of the model was evaluated using the Q2 value; small, medium, and large effect sizes were indicated by Q2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75, respectively (Chin, 1998)

3.11 Limitations of the Study

There are a number of constraints to take into account, even though this study offers insightful information about how consumers view employee behavior and how it affects customer happiness and loyalty in the clothing sector. The following are the main restrictions:

The results of this study are limited in their generalisability because they were gathered just from Punjab consumers. The findings may not be as broadly applicable if the attitudes and actions found do not correspond to those of consumers in other areas or nations.

□Because the study only looked at the clothing industry, its conclusions might not apply to other industries. It is important to exercise caution when extrapolating these findings outside of the apparel retail environment since the distinct features and dynamics of the garment industry may have an impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors that do not translate to other industries.

□With the exception of post-consumption behaviors like product satisfaction, repeat business, or word-of-mouth endorsement, this study only looks at behavior that occurs in-store. The study might miss important facets of the customer experience that could help guide retailer strategy and customer loyalty programs if these follow-up behaviors are not taken into account.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The Analysis and Interpretation chapter plays a pivotal role in addressing the first and third objectives of this study. Firstly, it serves as a comprehensive evaluation of the relationship between employees' gestures of goodwill and customers' satisfaction and loyalty in select apparel retail stores across Punjab. By meticulously examining the data collected through a structured questionnaire, this chapter endeavors to uncover significant insights into the dynamics at play. It analyses various facets of customer behaviour, preferences, and perceptions, aiming to discern the impact of employees' gestures on their satisfaction levels and subsequent loyalty. Additionally, this chapter scrutinizes the socio-demographic profile of respondents, providing a nuanced understanding of how factors such as age, gender, education, and occupation correlate with levels of satisfaction and loyalty.

Furthermore, the data collection process was conducted through a well-constructed questionnaire, tailored to encapsulate the diverse dimensions of customer experiences in the apparel retail sector. The questionnaire was thoughtfully designed to solicit responses regarding shopping frequency, preferred shopping times, reasons for choosing specific stores, travel distance, and the influence of employees' behaviour on purchasing decisions. It also encompassed multi-item scales to gauge customers' perceptions on crucial service attributes such as service efficiency, enjoyable interaction, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, courtesy, and overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Subsequently, the amassed data was subjected to a rigorous analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. This widely recognized and robust statistical tool facilitated a comprehensive examination of the relationships between variables, allowing for precise computations of correlations, regressions, and other relevant statistical tests. The utilization of SPSS ensured the accuracy and reliability of the findings, enabling a thorough exploration of the research questions at hand. The chapter thus combines both the methodological approach and analytical techniques to furnish a comprehensive understanding of the empirical evidence gathered in the study.

This chapter initiates by providing an in-depth account of the data screening procedure. Following this, the demographic profile of the respondents is outlined, succeeded by a thorough examination of the compiled data.

4.2 Data Screening

Data screening encompasses a methodical process of identifying and rectifying any irregularities or anomalies within the dataset. Its primary aim is to guarantee the reliability, validity, and applicability of the results. This procedure involves identifying outliers, influential cases, unresponsive responses, and addressing any missing data. Each of these steps will be comprehensively examined in the sections below.

4.2.1 Missing Data Analysis and Imputation

"Missing data" refers to instances where respondents either provided incomplete information or chose not to respond to specific questions (Hair, Jr, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). A substantial amount of missing data can cast doubt on the questionnaire's validity and the research results' reliability. According to Hair et al. (2010), if respondents or variables have more than 10% missing values, they should be excluded from the analysis. In some cases, a stricter criterion of 5% may be applied. However, in the present study, there were no missing values in the dataset, and all information was complete in every aspect. Consequently, there was no need to impute or replace any missing data. This comprehensive dataset enhances the study's validity and ensures that the research findings are more dependable.

According to Hair, Jr., Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), "missing data" refers to situations where respondents either chose not to provide responses or omitted certain requested information. A substantial presence of missing data is considered undesirable in any research and can raise doubts about the questionnaire's validity and the study's outcomes. Furthermore, Hair et al. (2010) suggest that respondents or variables with more than 10% missing values should be excluded from the analysis. However, in this specific study, the dataset was complete in all aspects and did not display any missing values. Therefore, there was no need to impute or replace any data.

Fifty questionnaires were eliminated for having insufficient answers, whereas 600 of the 650 that were issued for this study were totally completed and included in the final analysis. This exclusion procedure adhered to accepted industry standards, including those suggested by Hair Jr., Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), who state that data sets with over 10% missing values ought to be eliminated in order to preserve the validity and reliability of the study. When respondents neglect or fail to answer some questions, this is known as missing data. This can introduce bias, impair the analytical rigour, and lower the overall credibility of the conclusions. The study made sure that the data collection was robust and clean, devoid of any

missing values, by eliminating the 50 incomplete responses. Because the analysis was based only on correct and comprehensive data, this method increases the study's validity and produces more credible results. Additionally, there was no need to impute, estimate, or otherwise edit missing data points because the final dataset had no gaps or omissions. This can occasionally include assumptions or flaws that could impact the results.

Because insufficient data might result in skewed parameter estimates or incorrect conclusions, making sure the dataset is complete also strengthens the accuracy of any statistical tests or models that are utilised. In this instance, concentrating on fully filled surveys not only preserves the data's integrity but also complies with research standards' recommended best practices for managing missing data. In the end, this raises the study's general credibility and guarantees that the conclusions are supported by thorough and reliable data.

4.2.2 Identification of Outliers

As per Hair et al. (2010), outliers refer to responses in the data set that significantly deviate from the majority of other responses, often manifesting as notably high or low scores. For this study, responses were collected using a 5 -point Likert scale, with values above 5 or below 1 considered as outliers. Fortunately, no such values were identified in the dataset.

To further scrutinize for outliers, descriptive statistics were computed and analyzed for each measured variable and construct score. However, no values fell outside the acceptable range. Outliers can be categorized as univariate or multivariate. Univariate outliers exhibit extreme scores on a single variable and can be identified using methods such as a box and whisker plot or a Z-score greater than or less than ± 3 .

Additionally, the researchers examined construct scores for potential outliers. Remarkably, no outliers were detected in any of the constructs. Although a few responses were influential, there were no instances of unexpected and extremely high or low values in the dataset. This affirms that the data was not affected by outlier-related issues.

4.2.3 Testing the Assumptions

Parametric tests rely on two primary assumptions: normality and homogeneity of variance. To confirm the assumption of normality for the construct scores, both the Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) test and the Kolmogorov -Smirnov (K-S) test were executed. Normality test is used to find out whether sample data has been drawn from a normally distributed population (Ralph, 1986). Since a sample was drawn from population, a normality test was conducted known as Shapiro-Wilk Test for both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty which did not show evidence of non-normality ($P=.162$ & $.200$ respectively) which is more than the threshold value of 0.05. Based on the outcome we decided to use parametric tests for further analysis of the study.

Table 4.1

Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov -Smirnov Test			Shapiro-Wilk Test		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Customer satisfaction	.164	599	.162	.948	599	.308
Customer Loyalty	.075	599	.200	.978	599	.580

Loyalty

Source- Research Findings

Additionally, histogram and Q-Q plots were utilized for a more comprehensive assessment of normality. The results from the S-W and K-S tests revealed that the construct scores exhibited a normal distribution, as evidenced by the insignificant p-values. Furthermore, the Q-Q plots displayed no indications of skewness in either the upper or lower tails, providing additional confirmation of the data's normality. While a slight skewness was noted on the left-hand side of the histogram, it was not substantial enough to compromise the overall normality of the data. Thus, there exists substantial evidence to affirm that the data aligns with the assumption of normality. As for the assumption of homogeneity of variance, appropriate tests were conducted. In instances where this assumption was not met, alternative outputs were generated with adjusted degrees of freedom to account for any discrepancies in the data. Discussions pertaining to the homogeneity of variance were incorporated wherever relevant tests were applied.

4.3 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 4.1 provides an insightful breakdown of the gender distribution within the sample of the study, which comprised a total of 600 respondents. The table reveals a balanced representation of male and female participants, with 50% of the sample falling into each category.

Table 4.2

Gender of the Respondents

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Male	300	50.0 %	50.0 %
Female	300	50.0 %	100.0 %

This balanced gender distribution has several implications for the study. Firstly, it enhances the generalizability of the findings, as the sample is representative of both male and female consumers. This means that the conclusions drawn from the study are likely to be applicable to a broader population of customers in the apparel retail sector, irrespective of gender.

Table 4.3

Age of the Respondents

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
18-25	87	14.5 %	14.5 %
25-32	86	14.3 %	28.8 %
32-39	86	14.3 %	43.2 %
39-46	85	14.2 %	57.3 %
46-53	85	14.2 %	71.5 %
53-60	85	14.2 %	85.7 %

60 & above	86	14.3 %	100.0 %
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Table 4.3 provides a detailed breakdown of the age distribution within the sample of the study. The table categorizes respondents into different age groups, ranging from 18-25 years to 60 years and above. This age distribution is crucial in understanding how different age cohorts may perceive and interact with employees' gestures of goodwill in apparel retail stores. For instance, younger age groups (18-25, 25-32) may have distinct preferences and expectations compared to older age groups (60 & above). Analyzing customer satisfaction and loyalty across these age categories can reveal valuable insights into the effectiveness of goodwill gestures across different demographic segments.

Table 4.4

Qualification of the Respondents

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Matric	26	4.3 %	4.3 %
Secondary	111	18.5 %	22.8 %
Under-Graduate	177	29.5 %	52.3 %
Post-Graduate	229	38.2 %	90.5 %
Doctorate	48	8.0 %	98.5 %
Other	9	1.5 %	100.0 %

Table 4.4 presents a detailed breakdown of the educational backgrounds of the 600 respondents in the study. The largest group consists of individuals with a Post-Graduate degree, comprising approximately 38.2% of the total sample. Following closely behind are those with an Undergraduate degree, representing 29.5% of the respondents. The Secondary-educated group constitutes 18.5% of the sample, while the Matric-educated category is the smallest, making up 4.3%. Additionally, there are 48 respondents with Doctorate degrees, accounting for 8.0% of the total. A small proportion of 1.5% falls into the 'Other' category. These percentages provide valuable insights into the educational diversity within the sample, which is essential for understanding how varying educational backgrounds may influence perceptions and behaviors in the context of employees' gestures of goodwill in apparel retail stores.

Table 4.5

Occupation status of the Respondents

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Government	27	4.5 %	4.5 %
Semi-Government	82	13.7 %	18.2 %
Public	25	4.2 %	22.3 %
Private	144	24.0 %	46.3 %
Self-occupied	127	21.2 %	67.5 %
Others	195	32.5 %	100.0 %

Table 4.5 illustrates the occupational distribution of the 600 respondents. The most prevalent occupational category among the respondents is 'Others', accounting for 32.5% of the total sample. This category likely encompasses a diverse range of professions and self-employment ventures. Following closely behind is the 'Self-occupied' category, representing 21.2% of the respondents. This group likely includes entrepreneurs and individuals engaged in their own businesses. The 'Private' sector is also significantly represented, making up 24.0% of the total. This category likely consists of employees working in various industries and companies. 'Semi-Government' and 'Government' sectors each account for 13.7% and 4.5% respectively, showcasing a notable presence of individuals in public service roles. Finally, 'Public' sector respondents constitute 4.2% of the total. These occupational percentages shed light on the diverse professional backgrounds of the respondents, indicating potential variations in perspectives and experiences related to employees' gestures of goodwill in apparel retail stores.

Table 4.6

Marital Status of Respondents

Levels	Cou nts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Unmarried	151	25.2 %	25.2 %
Married	327	54.5 %	79.7 %
Divorcee	58	9.7 %	89.3 %
Widow/Widower	64	10.7 %	100.0 %

Table 4.6 illustrates the marital status composition among the 600 respondents. The largest segment comprises individuals who are 'Married,' representing 54.5% of the total sample. This indicates a substantial representation of respondents in committed relationships. The category of 'Unmarried' individuals constitutes 25.2% of the participants, reflecting a significant portion of young, unmarried respondents. Those classified as 'Divorcee' make up 9.7% of the sample, indicating a notable presence of individuals who have experienced previous marriages and are now divorced. Lastly, 'Widow/Widower' respondents account for 10.7% of the total, representing a smaller yet noteworthy proportion of participants who have undergone the loss of a spouse.

The distribution of marital status among the respondents bears notable implications for the study. With 54.5% of respondents being married, it indicates that a substantial portion of the customer base is likely to be making joint purchasing decisions or considering the preferences of their family members. This underscores the importance of employees' goodwill gestures in not only resonating with individual customers but also in influencing their collective buying decisions. Additionally, the presence of respondents who are divorced (9.7%) or widowed/widowers (10.7%) suggests that these groups may have distinct preferences and sensitivities, highlighting the need for tailored approaches in customer interactions to ensure their satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 4.7*Monthly Income of Respondents*

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Less than 20000	171	28.5 %	28.5 %
20000-40000	185	30.8 %	59.3 %
40000-60000	61	10.2 %	69.5 %
60000-80000	8	1.3 %	70.8 %
80000-100000	83	13.8 %	84.7 %
10000 & Above	92	15.3 %	100.0 %

Table 4.7 provides a breakdown of respondents' monthly income levels, offering valuable insights into the economic diversity within the sample. Notably, the majority of respondents fall within the lower income brackets, with 28.5% earning less than 20,000, and 30.8% earning between 20,000 and 40,000. This suggests that a significant portion of the customer base may be price-sensitive and potentially more discerning when it comes to value for money. On the other hand, a notable percentage (15.3%) earn 100,000 or more, indicating the presence of a higher-income segment with potentially different purchasing behaviours and expectations. Therefore, employees' goodwill gestures should be attuned to cater to the varying economic backgrounds, ensuring that all customers, regardless of income level, feel valued and appreciated.

4.4 Buying Profile of the Respondents

Table 4.7 outlines the buying profile of the respondents in terms of how frequently they patronize the same apparel store. The majority of respondents (57%) indicated that they visit the same apparel store occasionally. This suggests that a significant portion of the customer base may be open to exploring different apparel stores, indicating a level of flexibility in their purchasing behavior.

Table 4.8

Frequencies of repeat purchases from same apparel store?

Levels	Cou nts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Very Frequently	77	12.83 %	12.83 %
Occasionally	342	57 %	69.83 %
Rarely	181	30.17 %	100 %

On the other hand, 30.17% mentioned that they rarely visit the same apparel store, signifying a segment that may be more inclined towards variety and novelty in their shopping experiences. A smaller yet notable percentage (12.83%) stated that they visit the same apparel store very frequently, indicating a dedicated customer segment with a strong affinity for a specific store. Understanding these buying patterns is crucial for tailoring employees' goodwill gestures to meet the varying needs and preferences of different customer segments.

Table 4.9

Preferred Time of Purchase for Apparel by Customers?

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
On Festivals	36	6 %	6 %
On wedding	140	23.3%	29.3%
On Sales Offer	128	21.3 %	50.6 %
On season ending/starting	27	4.5%	55.1%
All of the above	269	44.8 %	100 %

Table 4.9 provides insights into the timing preferences of respondents when it comes to purchasing apparel. A significant portion of the respondents (44.8%) indicated that they prefer to buy apparel during various occasions, including festivals, weddings, sales offers, and season endings/startings. This highlights the importance of aligning marketing strategies and goodwill gestures with these key events to capitalize on heightened purchase intent during these times. Additionally, 23.3% of respondents specifically mentioned weddings as a preferred time for apparel shopping. This suggests that offering special promotions or incentives related to wedding attire could be particularly effective in attracting and retaining customers. It's worth noting that a smaller proportion of respondents (6%) indicated a preference for shopping during festivals, emphasizing the need to tailor gestures for different cultural and celebratory occasions. Understanding these timing preferences allows retailers to strategically plan their goodwill gestures to maximize customer engagement and satisfaction.

Table 4.10*Primary reasons for purchasing apparels from stores?*

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
To check the new collection in market	131	21.8 %	21.8 %
It makes you to feel happy when you go outside.	74	12.3%	34.13%
To check the product personally	157	26.17 %	60.3 %
To check how the outfit looks on you (size)	54	9%	69.3%
All of the above	184	30.7 %	100 %

Table 4.10 presents the primary reasons cited by respondents for purchasing apparel from stores. The most prevalent motive, indicated by 30.7% of participants, is a combination of factors. This suggests that customers are influenced by multiple considerations when making apparel purchases. Among the specific reasons, 26.17% expressed a preference for checking the product in person, underscoring the importance of in-store experiences and the ability to physically interact with the merchandise. Additionally, 21.8% of respondents indicated an interest in exploring new collections in the market, highlighting the significance of staying updated with the latest trends to attract and retain customers. Another noteworthy insight is that 12.3% of participants associate apparel shopping with a sense of happiness, suggesting that it is not merely a transactional activity but one that brings joy and satisfaction.

Understanding these diverse motivations enables retailers to tailor their strategies and goodwill gestures to better resonate with their customer base.

Table 4.11*Travel Duration for Customers Visiting Apparel Stores?*

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
1to less than 5km	114	19 %	19 %
5km to less than 10km	180	30%	49%
10km to less than 15km	115	19.2 %	68.2 %
15km and above	191	31.8 %	100 %

Table 4.11 outlines the distances that respondents are willing to travel in order to visit an apparel store. The majority of participants, accounting for 31.8% of the total, indicated a willingness to travel 15 kilometers or more, underscoring the significance of the selected retail establishments in the region. Additionally, 30% of respondents were comfortable with a travel distance ranging from 5 to less than 10 kilometers, demonstrating a substantial customer base within this range. Furthermore, 19% of participants were inclined to visit stores located 1 to less than 5 kilometers from their location, reflecting the importance of accessibility and convenience. This data provides valuable insights for retailers, highlighting the catchment areas that have the highest potential for customer footfall. It also emphasizes the relevance of location strategies in the retail sector, as well as the importance of factors like parking availability and transportation links in influencing customer behaviour.

Table 4.12*Most Frequently Visited Retail Stores by Respondents?*

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Reliance Trends	95	15.8 %	15.8 %
Shoppers Stop	118	19.7%	35.5%
Vishal Mega Mart	151	25.2 %	60.7%
Pantaloons	88	14.7%	75.4%
Lifestyle Stores	51	8.5%	83.9%
Others	97	16.2 %	100%

Table 4.12 offers valuable insights into the retail preferences of the respondents. Notably, Vishal Mega Mart emerges as the most frequented retail store, with 25.2% of participants expressing a preference for this establishment. Following closely, Shoppers Stop and Reliance Trends capture 19.7% and 15.8% of the respondents' preferences, respectively. Pantaloons and Lifestyle Stores also attract a notable customer base, with 14.7% and 8.5% of respondents indicating a preference for these retailers. This data is instrumental for retailers in understanding customer loyalty and provides an opportunity to implement strategies to enhance customer retention. Furthermore, it highlights the competitive landscape, allowing retailers to identify areas for improvement to stay competitive in the market. Overall, the table underscores the significance of brand reputation and customer experience in shaping consumer preferences within the apparel retail sector.

Table 4.13

Customer Consideration of Employee Behavior When Shopping at Apparel Stores?

Levels	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Yes	445	74.2 %	74.2 %
No	65	10.8%	85%
Maybe	90	15 %	100 %

Table 4.13 provides crucial insights into the importance customers place on employees' behavior when making purchases at apparel stores. A significant majority, comprising 74.2% of respondents, indicated that they do indeed pay attention to the behavior of employees. This underscores the pivotal role that employee conduct plays in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction. On the other hand, 10.8% of participants indicated that they do not specifically consider employee behavior, while 15% expressed some uncertainty, suggesting that there may be room for improvement in the clarity or effectiveness of employee-customer interactions. This data underscores the need for retailers to prioritize employee training and customer service initiatives, as they directly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. It also highlights an area of opportunity for retailers to differentiate themselves in a competitive market by providing exceptional employee-customer interactions.

4.5 Impact of Demographics on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

The impact of demographics on customer satisfaction and loyalty is a critical area of study in the realm of retail management. Understanding how factors such as gender, age, education, occupation, marital status, and income level influence customers' perceptions and behaviors can provide invaluable insights for businesses seeking to tailor their strategies to specific consumer segments. This chapter delves into the intricate interplay between demographic variables and the levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty exhibited by patrons of select apparel retail stores in Punjab. By examining these relationships, we aim to uncover patterns that can inform targeted marketing efforts, personalized customer experiences, and ultimately, foster lasting brand-customer relationships. Through a comprehensive analysis of the

collected data, we seek to shed light on the nuanced dynamics that shape customer sentiments and behaviors within the context of this specific market.

4.5.1 Gender and Customer

Satisfaction Table 4.14

Descriptive Statistics of Gender & Customer Satisfaction

Group Descriptive						
	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Customer Satisfaction						
	Female	300	18.3	18.5	6	0.347
	Male	300	17.7	18	6.21	0.359

Table 4.14 provides descriptive statistics of customer satisfaction scores based on gender. It shows that, on average, female customers have a mean satisfaction score of 18.3. Meanwhile, male customers have a mean satisfaction score of 17.7.

Table 4.15

Independent Samples T-Test (Gender & Customer Satisfaction)

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Customer Satisfaction	Student's t	1.19	598	0.235	0.593	0.499

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.15 presents the results of an independent samples t-test comparing customer satisfaction scores between male and female respondents. The t-test yielded a statistic of 1.19, resulting in a p-value of 0.235. This p-value suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction scores between male and female customers.

These findings indicate that, in this study, gender does not appear to be a significant factor influencing customer satisfaction levels. Both male and female customers have similar levels

of satisfaction with the select apparel retail stores in Punjab. This suggests that the stores are successful in providing a consistent level of service quality and meeting the expectations of both male and female customers. It also implies that marketing and customer service strategies employed by these stores may be effectively catering to a diverse customer base without gender bias.

4.5.2 Gender and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.16

Group Descriptive of Gender & Customer Loyalty

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Customer Loyalty	Female	300	16.5	17.0	4.94	0.285
	Male	300	16.4	17.0	4.94	0.285

Table 4.16 presents the group descriptive of customer loyalty scores based on gender. For female customers, the mean loyalty score is 16.5. On the other hand, male customers have a mean loyalty score of 16.4

Table 4.17

Independent Samples T-Test (Gender & Customer Loyalty)

		Statistic	Df	P	Mean difference	SE difference
Customer Loyalty	Student's t	0.182	598	0.856	0.0733	0.404

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.17 displays the results of an independent samples t-test comparing customer loyalty scores between male and female respondents. The t-test yielded a statistic of 0.182 resulting in a p-value of 0.856. This p-value indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in customer loyalty scores between male and female customers.

The findings suggest that, in this study, gender does not play a significant role in influencing customer loyalty levels. Both male and female customers demonstrate similar levels of loyalty towards the select apparel retail stores in Punjab. This implies that factors other than gender, such as service quality, convenience, or product offerings, may have a more pronounced impact on customer loyalty. The stores seem to be successful in fostering loyalty among a diverse customer base, regardless of gender.

4.5.3 Age and Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.18

Descriptive Statistics of Age & Customer Satisfaction

age	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
(18-25)	87	17.8	18	5.74	8	28	-0.11319	0.258	-1.255	0.511
(25-32)	86	17.9	18	6	6	30	0.00661	0.26	-0.97	0.514
(32-39)	86	17.5	18	6.43	6	29	-0.03883	0.26	-1.177	0.514
(39-46)	85	18.4	19	6.08	6	28	-0.35139	0.261	-0.996	0.517
(46-53)	85	18.8	20	6.47	6	29	-0.30821	0.261	-1.13	0.517
(53-60)	85	17.9	18	6.1	7	28	-0.01132	0.261	-1.233	0.517
(60 and above)	86	18	18	6.07	6	28	-0.10446	0.26	-1.125	0.514

The data presented in Table 4.18 illustrates the distribution of customer satisfaction scores across various age groups. The findings reveal that customers in different age brackets report relatively consistent satisfaction levels. On average, customers aged 46-53 and those aged 60 and above tend to express the highest levels of satisfaction, with mean scores of 18.8 and 18, respectively. Conversely, individuals between the ages of 32-39 exhibit slightly lower average satisfaction scores at 17.5. Notably, there are only marginal variations in satisfaction levels across the remaining age groups (18-25, 25-32, 39-46, and 53-60), with mean scores ranging from 17.8 to 18.4.

Table 4.19*ANOVA (Age & Customer Satisfaction)*

ANOVA - Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Overall model	90.9	6	15.1	0.403	0.877
Age	90.9	6	15.1	0.403	0.877
Residuals	22280.2	593	37.6		

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.19 displays the results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) examining the relationship between age and customer satisfaction. The overall model's F-statistic is 15.1 with 6 degrees of freedom for both age and residuals. The p-value for the model is 0.403, which is not statistically significant at conventional significance levels. This suggests that there is no significant relationship between age groups and customer satisfaction levels in the sample.

The descriptive statistics and ANOVA results indicate that customer satisfaction levels do not significantly vary across different age groups. This suggests that age is not a major determinant of customer satisfaction in the context of the select apparel retail stores in Punjab. Other factors, such as service quality, product variety, and store atmosphere, may have a more substantial impact on customer satisfaction levels.

4.5.4 Age and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.20

Descriptive Statistics of Age & Customer Loyalty

Age	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
(18-25)	87	16.2	16	4.92	6	25	-0.1363	0.258	-0.902	0.511
(25-32)	86	15.8	16.5	5	6	25	-0.2163	0.26	-1.199	0.514
(32-39)	86	16	16	5.18	6	25	0.1455	0.26	-1.207	0.514
(39-46)	85	16.6	16	4.94	9	25	0.1046	0.261	-1.161	0.517
(46-53)	85	16.3	17	4.77	7	25	-0.0499	0.261	-1.228	0.517
(53-60)	85	17.1	17	4.89	6	25	-0.1453	0.261	-1.032	0.517
(60 and above)	86	17.1	18	4.87	7	25	-0.3845	0.26	-0.875	0.514

Table 4.20 provides a detailed overview of customer loyalty scores across different age groups. The data reveals that the mean loyalty scores vary slightly between age categories. Customers between the ages of 53-60 and those aged 60 and above tend to display the highest levels of loyalty, both with an average score of 17.1. Conversely, customers aged 25-32 exhibit the lowest average loyalty score at 15.8. However, it's important to note that these variations are relatively subtle, suggesting that age may not be a major determinant of customer loyalty within this sample.

Table 4.21*ANOVA (Age & Customer Loyalty)*

ANOVA - Customer Loyalty					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Age	137	6	22.8	0.932	0.471
Residuals	14475	593	24.4		

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.21 presents the results of the ANOVA analysis examining the impact of age on customer loyalty. The analysis suggests that age does not significantly influence customer loyalty scores, with an F-value of 0.932 and a p-value of 0.471. The findings regarding age and its impact on customer loyalty suggest that, within the context of the studied apparel retail stores in Punjab, age may not be a critical factor influencing customer loyalty.

4.5.5 Education and Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.22

Descriptive Statistics of Education & Customer Satisfaction

Education	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
(Matric)	26	19.1	18	5.79	10	28	0.0913	0.456	-1.356	0.887
(Secondary)	111	17.6	18	6.24	7	29	-0.0262	0.229	-1.169	0.455
(Under-graduate)	177	17.8	18	6.16	6	30	-0.1484	0.183	-1.033	0.363
(Post-Graduate)	229	18.2	19	6.1	6	29	-0.1303	0.161	-1.256	0.32
(Doctorate)	48	18.7	19.5	6.04	6	28	-0.4486	0.343	-0.738	0.674
(Others)	9	17.2	16	5.97	10	27	0.6086	0.717	-1.153	1.4

Table 4.22 provides an overview of the relationship between education levels and customer satisfaction in the context of the studied apparel retail stores. The mean scores indicate that respondents across different educational backgrounds generally reported high levels of satisfaction. While there are slight variations, the differences in means are not substantial, suggesting that education level may not significantly impact customer satisfaction within this specific context.

Table 4.23*ANOVA (Education & Customer Satisfaction)*

ANOVA - Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Education	91.4	5	18.3	0.488	0.786
Residuals	22279.6	594	37.5		

Source- Research Findings

The ANOVA results in Table 4.23 further support this observation. The p-value associated with education is 0.488, which is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction scores across different education levels. The majority of the variability in customer satisfaction scores can be attributed to factors other than education level.

Overall, these findings imply that, in the studied context, the educational background of customers may not be a key determinant of their satisfaction levels. Retailers may need to focus on broader strategies and aspects, such as service quality, product variety, and overall shopping experience, to enhance customer satisfaction, rather than tailoring approaches based on educational attainment.

4.5.6 Education and Customer

Loyalty Table 4.24

Descriptive Statistics of Education & Customer Loyalty

							Skewness		Kurtosis	
Education	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
(Matric)	26	16.7	18	4.44	9	25	-0.227	0.456	-0.8186	0.887
(Secondary)	111	16.7	17	4.76	6	25	-0.1533	0.229	-0.9728	0.455
(Under-graduate)	177	16.3	17	5.26	6	25	-0.0237	0.183	-1.1952	0.363
(Post-Graduate)	229	16.3	17	4.86	6	25	-0.077	0.161	-1.1145	0.32
(Doctorate)	48	17.3	17.5	4.86	8	25	-0.1922	0.343	-1.147	0.674
(Others)	9	15.6	17	5.08	6	22	-0.7346	0.717	-0.0472	1.4

The descriptive statistics for customer loyalty scores based on education levels reveal interesting insights. On average, respondents with different educational backgrounds exhibit similar levels of loyalty towards the apparel store. Regardless of their educational attainment, customers tend to display comparable loyalty scores, with mean values ranging from 16.3 to 17.3. However, it's worth noting that customers with a doctorate degree show a slightly higher mean loyalty score of 17.3, while those classified under 'Others' have a slightly lower mean score of 15.6. This information suggests that education level may not be a significant determinant of customer loyalty in this context, as loyalty scores remain relatively consistent across different educational backgrounds.

Table 4.25*ANOVA (Education & Customer Loyalty)*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Education	60.9	5	12.2	0.497	0.778
Residuals	14550.4	594	24.5		

Source- Research Findings

The ANOVA results examining the relationship between education levels and customer loyalty indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in loyalty scores among different education groups ($F(5, 594) = 0.497, p = 0.778$). This implies that the customers' levels of education do not play a substantial role in influencing their loyalty towards the apparel store in this context. Consequently, the store may not need to tailor its strategies or services based on customers' educational backgrounds. Instead, other factors such as service quality, product variety, or pricing might be more influential in shaping customer loyalty. This finding highlights the importance of considering various demographic factors when formulating marketing and customer retention strategies. It suggests that in this particular setting, educational attainment may not be a critical driver of customer loyalty.

4.5.7 Occupation and Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.26

Descriptive Statistics of Occupation & Customer Satisfaction

Occupation	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
(Government)	27	17.2	18	5.65	6	28	-0.1151	0.448	-0.665	0.872
(Semi-Government)	82	19.7	21	6.03	6	30	-0.4028	0.266	-0.89	0.526
(Public)	25	19	20	5.9	10	28	-0.1649	0.464	-1.279	0.902
(Private)	144	18.9	20	5.88	7	29	-0.2082	0.202	-1.209	0.401
(self Occupied)	127	17	16	5.93	6	29	0.0822	0.215	-1.143	0.427
(Other)	195	17.4	18	6.34	6	29	-0.0809	0.174	-1.159	0.346

The data presented in Table 4.26 explores the relationship between occupation and customer satisfaction within the context of the surveyed apparel retail stores. From the mean values, it can be observed that respondents across different occupational backgrounds reported varying levels of satisfaction. For instance, respondents in semi-government and public sectors tend to report higher levels of satisfaction compared to those in private or self-employed occupations.

Table 4.27*ANOVA (Occupation & Customer Satisfaction)*

ANOVA - Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Occupation	580	5	116.1	3.1	0.008
Residuals	21791	594	36.7		

Source- Research Findings

The ANOVA results in Table 4.27 provide further insights. The p-value associated with occupation is 0.008, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction scores across different occupational categories. In other words, occupation appears to play a notable role in influencing customer satisfaction levels in this specific context.

Table 4.28*Post Hoc Analysis (Occupation & Customer Satisfaction)*

Post Hoc Comparisons - Occupation						
Comparison						
Occupation	Occupation	Mean Difference	SE	df	T	ptukey
Government	(Semi-Government)	-2.461	1.344	594	-1.831	0.447
	(Public)	-1.818	1.681	594	-1.081	0.889
	(Private)	-1.646	1.27	594	-1.296	0.787
	(self Occupied)	0.222	1.284	594	0.173	1
	(Other)	-0.178	1.244	594	-0.143	1
Semi-Government	(Public)	0.643	1.384	594	0.465	0.997
	(Private)	0.815	0.838	594	0.972	0.927

	(self Occupied)	2.683	0.858	594	3.127	0.023
	(Other)	2.283	0.797	594	2.864	0.049
(Public)	(Private)	0.172	1.312	594	0.131	1
	(self Occupied)	2.04	1.325	594	1.539	0.639
	(Other)	1.64	1.287	594	1.275	0.799
(Private)	(self Occupied)	1.868	0.737	594	2.534	0.116
	(Other)	1.468	0.665	594	2.206	0.236
(self Occupied	(Other)	-0.4	0.691	594	-0.579	0.992

Source- Research Findings

The post hoc analysis in Table 4.28 provides detailed comparisons between different occupational groups concerning customer satisfaction scores. The comparison between "Semi-Government" and "self Employed" occupations shows a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.023$), indicating that there may be a genuine disparity in customer satisfaction scores between these two groups. The findings indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction scores between respondents in the "Semi-Government" and "Others" occupational categories. Specifically, individuals in the "Semi-Government" category reported higher levels of customer satisfaction compared to those in the "Others" category. The mean difference in customer satisfaction scores between these two groups was 2.283, with a p-value of 0.049. This p-value falls below the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating that the observed difference is unlikely to be due to chance variation. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a meaningful and statistically significant distinction in customer satisfaction levels between respondents in these two occupational groups, with those in the "Semi-Government" category reporting higher levels of satisfaction.

4.5.8 Occupation and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.29

Descriptive Statistics of Occupation & Customer Loyalty

Occupation	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
(Government)	27	17.5	17	4.85	9	25	-0.1136	0.448	-1.045	0.872
(Semi-Government)	82	17.9	19	5.04	7	25	-0.4387	0.266	-0.932	0.526
(Public)	25	18.5	20	4.75	9	25	-0.6614	0.464	-0.725	0.902
(Private)	144	16.4	17	4.92	6	25	-0.1479	0.202	-1.118	0.401
(self Occupied)	127	15.7	16	4.68	6	25	0.0522	0.215	-0.856	0.427
(Other)	195	16	16	4.96	6	25	0.017	0.174	-1.126	0.346

In Table 4.29, a distinct pattern in customer loyalty across various occupation categories is seen. Respondents in the "Government" sector exhibit an average loyalty score of 17.5, indicating a relatively positive level of loyalty. On the other hand, those in the "Semi-Government" category show a slightly higher mean loyalty score of 17.9, suggesting a somewhat stronger affinity towards their preferred apparel stores. The "Public" sector follows closely with an average loyalty score of 18.5, indicating a relatively high level of customer loyalty. Moving to the private sector, respondents in this category exhibit a lower average loyalty score of 16.4, suggesting a moderate level of loyalty. The "Self-Employed" group demonstrates a mean loyalty score of 15.7, which is the lowest among the occupation categories, indicating a comparatively lower level of loyalty. Finally, the "Other" category displays a mean loyalty score of 16, aligning closely with the private sector. These mean values shed light on how different occupational backgrounds may influence customer loyalty, providing valuable insights for further analysis and strategic decision-making.

Table 4.30*ANOVA (Occupation & Customer Loyalty)*

ANOVA - Customer Loyalty					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Occupation	406	5	81.2	3.40	0.005
Residuals	14205	594	23.9		

Source- Research Findings

The ANOVA table (Table 4.30) examines the influence of occupation on customer loyalty scores. The analysis reveals that there is a statistically significant difference in customer loyalty scores across various occupation categories ($F(5, 594) = 3.40, p = 0.005$). The mean square for occupation is 81.2, indicating the average variability in customer loyalty scores between different occupation groups.

Table 4.31*Post Hoc Analysis (Occupation & Customer Loyalty)*

Post Hoc Comparisons – Occupation						
Comparison						
Occupation		Mean				
	Occupation	Difference	SE	df	t	pTukey
Government	(Semi-Government)	-0.335	1.085	594	-0.309	1.000
	(Public)	-1.001	1.357	594	-0.738	0.977
	(Private)	1.123	1.026	594	1.095	0.883
	(self Occupied)	1.818	1.036	594	1.754	0.497
	(Other)	1.493	1.004	594	1.487	0.673
(Semi-Government)	(Public)	-0.666	1.117	594	-0.596	0.991
	(Private)	1.458	0.677	594	2.155	0.261
	(self Occupied)	2.153	0.693	594	3.108	0.024
	(Other)	1.828	0.644	594	2.840	0.053
(Public)	(Private)	2.124	1.060	594	2.005	0.341

	(self Occupied)	2.819	1.070	594	2.635	0.091	
	(Other)	2.494	1.039	594	2.401	0.157	
(Private)	(self Occupied)	0.695	0.595	594	1.168	0.852	<i>Note.</i>
	(Other)	0.370	0.537	594	0.689	0.983	
(self Occupied)	(Other)	-0.325	0.558	594	-0.583	0.992	

Comparisons are based on estimated marginal means

Source- Research Findings

The post hoc analysis indicates significant differences in customer loyalty scores between specific occupational groups. Specifically, when comparing the Semi-Government group with both the Self-Occupied and Other groups, there are notable distinctions. The Semi-Government individuals demonstrate significantly higher customer loyalty scores, with mean differences of 2.153 and 1.828, respectively. This implies that individuals in semi-government positions tend to exhibit a higher level of loyalty towards the apparel store compared to those who are self-occupied or categorized under 'Other'. The statistically significant p-values indicate that these disparities are not due to random chance, but rather signify meaningful variations in customer loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the specific preferences and behaviours of individuals in semi-government roles, as they appear to represent a particularly engaged and loyal customer segment.

4.5.9 Marital Status and Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.32

Descriptive Statistics of Marital Status & Customer Satisfaction

Marital Status	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
1(Unmarried)	151	18	18	6.2	6	29	-0.0392	0.197	-1.137	0.392
2(Married)	327	18	18	6.03	6	30	-0.1641	0.135	-1.147	0.269
3(Divorcee)	58	18.4	18.5	6.22	7	28	-0.0494	0.314	-1.329	0.618
4(Widow/ Widower)	64	18.1	18	6.34	6	29	-0.239	0.299	-0.973	0.59

The descriptive statistics in Table 4.32 provide insights into the relationship between marital status and customer satisfaction. The mean customer satisfaction scores across different marital status categories reveal relatively similar levels of satisfaction. Unmarried individuals have an average satisfaction score of 18, followed closely by married individuals with a mean score of 18 as well. Divorcees and widows/widowers demonstrate slightly higher average satisfaction scores of 18.4 and 18.1 respectively.

Table 4.33

ANOVA (Marital Status & Customer Satisfaction)

ANOVA - Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Marital Status	8.59	3	2.86	0.0763	0.973
Residuals	22362.45	596	37.52		

Source- Research Findings

In Table 4.33, the ANOVA results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction scores among different marital status categories ($F(3, 596) = 2.86$, $p = 0.0763$). The non-significant p-value suggests that any observed differences in satisfaction scores among marital status groups could likely be due to random chance. Therefore, we do not have enough evidence to conclude that marital status significantly influences customer satisfaction in this context. This finding is important as it suggests that regardless of their marital status, customers tend to have similar levels of satisfaction with the apparel store.

4.5.10 Marital Status and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.34

Descriptive Statistics of Marital status& Customer Loyalty

MaritalStatus						Skewness	Kurtosis			
	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
1(Unmarried)	151	16.1	16	4.96	6	25	-0.075	0.197	-1.271	0.392
2(Married)	327	16.4	17	4.92	6	25	-0.0859	0.135	-0.99	0.269
3(Divorcee)	58	17.5	18	4.95	7	25	-0.3424	0.314	-0.943	0.618
4(Widow/Widower)	64	16.9	15.5	4.94	7	25	0.0111	0.299	-1.293	0.59

The descriptive statistics in Table 4.34 provide an overview of the relationship between marital status and customer loyalty. Across different marital status categories, the mean customer loyalty scores range from 16.1 to 17.5. Married individuals have the highest mean customer loyalty score of 16.4, followed closely by individuals categorized as divorced, with a mean score of 17.5. Unmarried individuals and widows/widowers demonstrate slightly lower mean loyalty scores of 16.1 and 16.9 respectively.

Table 4.35

ANOVA (Marital status & Customer Loyalty)

ANOVA - Customer Loyalty					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Marital Status	96.4	3	32.1	1.32	0.267
Residuals	14514.9	596	24.4		

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.35 presents the ANOVA results, revealing that there is no statistically significant difference in customer loyalty scores among different marital status categories ($F(3, 596) = 1.32, p = 0.267$). The non-significant p-value suggests that any observed differences in loyalty scores among marital status groups could likely be attributed to random chance. Therefore, we do not have enough evidence to conclude that marital status significantly influences customer loyalty in this context. This finding implies that regardless of their marital status, customers tend to exhibit similar levels of loyalty towards the apparel store.

4.5.11 Monthly Income and Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.36

Descriptive Statistics of Monthly Income and Customer Satisfaction

Monthly Income	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
1(Less than 20000)	171	18.2	18	5.79	6	29	-0.1238	0.186	-1.039	0.369
2(20000-40000)	185	18	18	6.16	6	28	-0.173	0.179	-1.173	0.355
3(40000-60000)	61	17.9	19	6.39	6	30	-0.17	0.306	-1.078	0.604
4(60000-80000)	8	17.1	16.5	5.44	11	25	0.6419	0.752	-0.943	1.481
5(80000-100000)	83	18.3	19	6.39	7	29	-0.109	0.264	-1.268	0.523
6(100000 and above)	92	17.7	18	6.32	6	29	-0.0614	0.251	-1.187	0.498

Table 4.36 displays the descriptive statistics for monthly income and customer satisfaction. The data shows that customers with varying income levels have different mean satisfaction scores. Specifically, customers with an income of 60000-80000 INR have the highest mean satisfaction score of 17.1, while those earning 100000 and above INR have the lowest mean satisfaction score of 17.7.

Table 4.37*ANOVA (Monthly Income and Customer Satisfaction)*

ANOVA - Customer Satisfaction					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Monthly Income	28.5	5	5.7	0.152	0.98
Residuals	22342.5	594	37.61		

Source- Research Findings

Moving on to Table 4.37, which presents the results of the ANOVA, it can be inferred that there is no statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction scores among different income groups ($F(5, 594) = 0.152, p = 0.98$). This non-significant p-value indicates that any observed differences in satisfaction scores among income groups could likely be due to random chance. Therefore, there isn't enough evidence to conclude that monthly income significantly influences customer satisfaction in this context. This finding implies that regardless of their income level, customers tend to report similar levels of satisfaction with the apparel store.

4.5.12 Monthly Income and Customer Loyalty**Table 4.38***Descriptive Statistics of Monthly Income & Customer Loyalty*

Monthly Income	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
1(Less than 20000)	171	16.1	16	4.79	6	25	-0.1133	0.186	-0.994	0.369
2(20000-40000)	185	16.7	17	5.03	7	25	-0.0843	0.179	-1.113	0.355
3(40000-60000)	61	16.1	18	5.33	6	25	-0.1277	0.306	-1.269	0.604

4(60000-80000)	8	17.1	17.5	5.89	9	24	-0.4083	0.752	-1.275	1.481
5(80000-100000)	83	17.2	18	4.63	7	25	-0.2435	0.264	-0.816	0.523
6(100000 and above)	92	16.3	15.5	4.97	8	25	0.088	0.251	-1.3	0.498

Table 4.38 provides descriptive statistics for monthly income and customer loyalty. It shows that customers with different income levels have varying mean loyalty scores. Specifically, customers earning 60000-80000 INR have the highest mean loyalty score of 17.1, while those with an income of 100000 and above INR have the lowest mean loyalty score of 16.3.

Table 4.39

ANOVA (Monthly Income & Customer Loyalty)

ANOVA - Customer Loyalty					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Monthly Income	101	5	20.3	0.830	0.529
Residuals	14510	594	24.4		

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.39, outlines the outcomes of the ANOVA, it can be deduced that there is no notable statistical contrast in customer loyalty scores across various income brackets ($F(5, 594) = 0.830$, $p = 0.529$). This very low p-value suggests that the differences in loyalty scores we see among income groups are probably due to chance and not a meaningful pattern. Hence, there lacks substantial evidence to assert that monthly income significantly impacts customer loyalty in this scenario. This discovery suggests that irrespective of their income level, customers tend to display similar levels of loyalty towards the apparel store.

The analysis of various demographic factors on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty revealed interesting insights. When it comes to customer satisfaction, factors like gender, age, education, and marital status did not show significant differences in scores. However, occupation demonstrated some variability, to a statistically significant extent. Similarly, in terms of customer loyalty, demographic factors like gender, age, and education did not yield noteworthy distinctions. However, again occupation did show some variations in scores. Interestingly, monthly income did not have a significant impact on customer loyalty.

4.6 To examine the different Employees' Goodwill Gestures that can attract the Customers

The objective of this study goes beyond demographic analysis and analyses the realm of customer service quality. This research aims to scrutinize various goodwill gestures exhibited by employees, which have the potential to captivate customers. These gestures encompass crucial dimensions of service efficiency, enjoyable interaction, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, courtesy, and a friendly attitude. Understanding how these elements contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty is pivotal in enhancing the overall customer experience. In an era where exceptional service has become a cornerstone of competitive advantage, this investigation seeks to shed light on the specific behaviours and attributes that can leave a lasting positive impression on patrons. Through a comprehensive examination of these dimensions, this study endeavors to provide actionable insights for businesses striving to excel in customer.

Table 4.40*Descriptive Statistics of Service Efficiency*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
This apparel store's employees give me individual attention.	2.606667	1.517386	1	5	600
Buying from this apparel store is an efficient way to manage my time.	2.5	1.500139	1	5	600
When I think of this apparel store, I think of service excellence.	2.303333	1.411137	1	5	600
Waiting time at the cash counter is short.	2.586667	1.51536	1	5	600
In general, the service of this apparel store is much better than I expected.	2.833333	1.525155	1	5	600
TOTAL	12.83	5.474277	5	25	600

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.40 provides insights into the dimension of service efficiency within the context of the apparel store. It encompasses various aspects of customer experience, including individual attention, time management, perceived service excellence, waiting times at the cash counter, and overall service quality in relation to customer expectations.

The data collected on a 5-point Likert scale provides valuable insights into customers' perceptions of service efficiency in the apparel store. The scale ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing customers to express their opinions regarding various aspects of service quality.

This apparel store's employees give me individual attention" received an average score of approximately 2.61. This suggests that customers tend to slightly disagree with the statement,

indicating that they may not feel they receive individual attention from the employees. This could potentially be an area for improvement to enhance customer satisfaction.

"Buying from this apparel store is an efficient way to manage my time" received an average score of 2.5, this indicates that customers are leaning slightly towards disagreement rather than neutrality. This implies that customers generally feel that buying from this apparel store is not an especially efficient use of their time. The store may benefit from examining ways to streamline the shopping process and make it more time-effective for customers. By doing so, they could enhance the overall shopping experience, potentially attracting more customers and boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty.

"When I think of this apparel store, I think of service excellence" received an average score of about 2.30. This indicates that customers tend to slightly disagree with the statement, suggesting that they may not automatically associate the store with service excellence. The store could work on strategies to enhance their service reputation.

2.30. This indicates that customers tend to slightly disagree with the statement, suggesting that they may not automatically associate the store with service excellence. The store could work on strategies to enhance their service reputation.

"Waiting time at the cash counter is short" received an average score of approximately 2.59. This suggests that customers tend to slightly disagree with the statement, indicating that they may perceive the waiting time at the cash counter as longer than desired. This is an important aspect to address to improve customer satisfaction.

In general, the service of this apparel store is much better than I expected, received an average score of about 2.83. In this case, a lower score indicates that customers might have had relatively higher expectations from the store and, upon experiencing the service, felt that it did not surpass what they had anticipated. This feedback is valuable for the store, as it highlights an area where they might have an opportunity to improve and potentially align customer experiences more closely with their initial expectations.

These findings suggest that there are areas, such as individual attention and waiting times, where the store could focus its efforts to improve customer satisfaction. Additionally, the store could further emphasize and promote the aspects of service that are already perceived positively, like service exceeding expectations. Addressing these areas could potentially lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty over time.

Table 4.41*Descriptive Statistics of Enjoyable Interaction*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
In thinking about my interaction, I have a comfortable interaction with Employees on my every visit.	3.721667	1.249052	1	5	600
Employees create a feeling of “warmth” in our relationship.	3.285	1.501399	1	5	600
I got along well with the Employees.	3.17	1.531342	1	5	600
TOTAL	13.285	4.352242	4	20	60

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.41 sheds light on the dimension of enjoyable interaction between customers and employees within the apparel store. It encompasses various aspects of customer-employee interactions, including comfort, warmth, confidence, and the overall rapport developed during visits.

The mean scores indicate that, on average, customers have a positive perception of their interactions with employees. Specifically, customers find their interactions to be comfortable (mean of 3.72) and characterized by a sense of warmth (mean of 3.29). This suggests that employees are successful in creating a welcoming and pleasant environment for customers. Additionally, the behavior of employees instills confidence in customers, with a mean score of 3.11, indicating that customers trust and feel at ease with the employees. The mean score of 3.17 for getting along well with employees further supports the notion of a positive customer-employee relationship. This suggests that customers feel a sense of camaraderie with the staff.

These positive interactions are crucial in attracting and retaining customers. A warm and comfortable interaction can significantly enhance customer satisfaction, as customers are more likely to return to a store where they feel valued and at ease. Furthermore, these positive

interactions can foster customer loyalty, as customers tend to build attachments with stores where they have enjoyable experiences. Overall, the findings suggest that the apparel store is successful in creating a positive and enjoyable interaction between customers and employees. This not only contributes to customer satisfaction but also plays a pivotal role in customer loyalty and the store's ability to attract and retain a loyal customer base.

Table 4.42

Descriptive Statistics of Empathy

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Employees make you to feel special as you enter this apparel store.	2.616667	1.521045	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store do not pressurize me to buy a product in which I Am not interested.	2.665	1.555681	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store are always willing to handle my return and exchange.	2.7	1.558005	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store make a good eye contact with customers.	2.615	1.502399	1	5	600
Employees are always ready to welcome feedback from customers in a positive manner.	2.591667	1.511756	1	5	600
TOTAL	13.18833	5.505456	5	25	600

Source- Research Findings

Empathy, a critical component of customer service, plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall shopping experience for consumers. In the context of this apparel store, empathy is assessed through various dimensions, including the staff's ability to make customers feel special, their approach towards handling returns and exchanges, and their receptiveness to customer feedback. Additionally, factors such as avoiding undue pressure on customers to make purchases and maintaining good eye contact contribute significantly to the perception of empathy.

"Employees make you feel special as you enter this apparel store" received an average score of approximately 2.62. This suggests that customers tend to disagree slightly with the statement. It implies that there is room for improvement in the employees' efforts to make customers feel valued and special upon entering the store.

"Employees of this apparel store do not pressurize me to buy a product in which I am not interested" received an average score of about 2.67. This indicates that customers lean towards disagreement with the statement. It implies that there might be instances where customers feel a bit pressured in terms of purchasing. This is an area where the store could work on providing a more comfortable shopping experience.

"Employees of this apparel store are always willing to handle my return and exchange" received an average score of approximately 2.7. This suggests that customers are leaning towards disagreement with the statement. It indicates that there may be some instances where customers feel less willing support for returns and exchanges. This area could benefit from improved customer service.

"Employees of this apparel store make good eye contact with customers" received an average score of around 2.62. This indicates that customers tend to slightly disagree with the statement. It suggests that there might be room for improvement in employees' efforts to establish eye contact with customers, which is an important aspect of communication.

"Employees are always ready to welcome feedback from customers in a positive manner" received an average score of about 2.59. This indicates that customers tend to disagree slightly with the statement. It implies that there may be instances where customers feel that employees are not consistently open to feedback in a positive and constructive manner.

Overall, the data indicates that there are areas where the store could work on improving aspects of empathy, particularly in making customers feel special upon entering, reducing pressure to buy, and being more accommodating with returns and exchanges. These improvements could lead to enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 4.43

Descriptive Statistics of Responsiveness

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Employees handle customers' complaint directly and immediately.	3.253333	1.494281	1	5	600
Employees in this apparel store quickly corrected anything that was wrong.	3.14	1.519072	1	5	600
Employees have the required knowledge to answer customers' questions.	3.198333	1.506468	1	5	600
Employees respond to customers' needs in a timely manner.	3.22	1.473732	1	5	600
Employees in this apparel store are never too busy to respond to customer's request.	3.255	1.431803	1	5	600
Employees in this store explain about refund policy very clearly to the customers.	2.886667	1.57733	1	5	600
TOTAL	18.95333	6.711152	6	30	600

Source- Research Findings

The data in Table 4.43 underscores the crucial dimension of responsiveness exhibited by employees in the apparel store, which directly impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty. A mean score above 3 indicates that customers generally perceive employees as being proactive and swift in their responses to various situations. Specifically, customers acknowledge that employees promptly attend to complaints, swiftly rectify any discrepancies, and demonstrate a commendable level of knowledge to address queries effectively. This positive perception is instrumental in instilling confidence in customers and fostering a sense of trust in the services provided. However, the slightly lower score related to the clarity of the refund policy explanation suggests an area where the store could enhance communication with customers. By ensuring that policies are explained transparently and comprehensively, the store can further enhance customer trust and satisfaction. Overall, this dimension of responsiveness reflects positively on the store's customer-centric approach, contributing significantly to overall customer satisfaction and the potential for long-term loyalty.

Table 4.44*Descriptive Statistics of Active Listener*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Employees give me indications that they seriously consider my opinion.	3.195	1.499129	1	5	600
Employees encourage me to clarify a problem.	3.213333	1.497183	1	5	600
I feel that Employees listen to me even when we disagree.	3.135	1.480009	1	5	600
Employees understand for more than just the spoken words.	3.24	1.458061	1	5	600
Employees are careful not to interrupt me while I speak.	3.248333	1.485601	1	5	600
Employees use (comfortable) silences in the conversation.	3.313333	1.455571	1	5	600
TOTAL	19.345	6.648783	6	30	600

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.44 underscores the significance of active listening skills exhibited by employees in the apparel store. The mean scores, all exceeding 3, signify that customers perceive the employees as attentive, receptive, and respectful in their communication. This indicates that employees make conscious efforts to genuinely understand and value customer opinions, even in situations where there may be disagreements. Additionally, the acknowledgment of employees' ability to grasp underlying meanings beyond spoken words highlights a level of empathy and consideration that goes beyond mere transactional interactions. Furthermore, the positive scores relating to employees refraining from interruptions and utilizing comfortable silences denote a patient and attentive approach to customer conversations. This dimension of

active listening is crucial in fostering a sense of trust and rapport between the employees and customers, ultimately contributing significantly to overall customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the store.

Table 4.45

Descriptive Statistics of Courteous

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Employees of this apparel store apologize when mistakes are made.	2.845	1.528027	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store exhibit proper etiquette when dealing with customers.	2.891667	1.459502	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store are trustworthy, believable and honest.	2.873333	1.556061	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store deal with customers in a caring and polite manner.	2.655	1.566332	1	5	600
Employees in this apparel store meet the special needs of handicapped customers.	2.626667	1.559276	1	5	600
Employees of this store consider the culture values of the area.	2.845	1.541082	1	5	600
TOTAL	16.73667	7.044622	6	30	600

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.45 sheds light on the courtesy demonstrated by employees in the apparel store. While the mean scores are slightly below 3, indicating a perception leaning towards disagreement or neutrality, there are still positive aspects to consider. Customers appreciate when employees

take responsibility and apologize for any mistakes made, demonstrating a level of accountability. Additionally, the acknowledgment of employees exhibiting proper etiquette and being seen as trustworthy, believable, and honest are important attributes for fostering a sense of trust and reliability. The aspect of dealing with customers in a caring and polite manner highlights the significance of empathy and respect in customer interactions. Moreover, the recognition of employees meeting the special needs of handicapped customers and considering cultural values showcases inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Although there may be room for improvement, these courteous gestures contribute to creating a more positive and welcoming environment, ultimately impacting customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the store.

Table 4.46

Descriptive Statistics of Friendly Attitude

	Standard		Minimum	Maximum	N
	Mean	Deviation			
The Employees are friendly communicator.	3.201667	1.45758	1	5	600
Employees of this apparel store greet customers with a friendly welcome and big smile.	2.91	1.563962	1	5	600
The Employees tend to be tactful and encouraging to customers.	2.748333	1.56068	1	5	600
The employees made broadband list of their regular customers to provide additional benefits to them.	2.835	1.54329	1	5	600
The employees of this store have extensive social skills.	2.823333	1.5447	1	5	600
The employees of this store know how to treat a customer well.	3.445	1.422561	1	5	600
TOTAL	17.96333	6.457928	6	30	600

Source- Research Findings

The variable "Friendly Attitude" encompasses an evaluation of the employees' demeanor and disposition towards customers within the apparel store setting. It focuses on aspects related to how approachable, warm, and accommodating the employees are during customer interactions. A friendly attitude is a crucial element in creating a positive and welcoming environment, which can significantly influence a customer's perception of the store.

The Employees are friendly communicators" received an average score of about 3.20. This suggests that customers perceive the employees as generally friendly and effective in their communication. This is a positive sign as it contributes to a positive customer experience and may lead to increased satisfaction and loyalty.

"Employees of this apparel store greet customers with a friendly welcome and big smile" received an average score of 2.91. While this score is below the neutral mark of 3, it still indicates that employees are making efforts to greet customers warmly. However, there might be room for improvement to make these interactions even more welcoming.

"The Employees tend to be tactful and encouraging to customers" received an average score of about 2.75. This suggests that there is some room for improvement in terms of tactfulness and encouragement. These are important qualities for positive customer interactions, and enhancing these skills could lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

"The employees made a broad list of their regular customers to provide additional benefits to them" received an average score of 2.83. This indicates that there may be some efforts made to provide extra benefits to regular customers. Recognizing and rewarding loyalty can positively influence customer retention and loyalty.

"The employees of this store have extensive social skills" received an average score of about 2.82. This suggests that there is some room for improvement in terms of social skills. Strengthening these skills can lead to more positive interactions and potentially higher levels of customer satisfaction.

"The employees of this store know how to treat a customer well" received an average score of 3.45. This is a positive indicator, as it suggests that employees are generally adept at providing good customer service.

Based on these evaluations, it is evident that there are several positive aspects to be acknowledged. The employees are perceived as friendly communicators, and there are efforts

made to greet customers warmly. Additionally, there is recognition of the importance of treating regular customers well. However, there is room for improvement in terms of tactfulness, encouraging interactions, and social skills. Strengthening these areas can lead to more positive customer experiences, potentially resulting in higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.7 Model Estimation

4.7.1 Introduction

In today's fiercely competitive retail landscape, the significance of customer satisfaction and loyalty cannot be overstated. This study, titled "Examining the Role of Employees' Gesture of Goodwill on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty," represents a comprehensive endeavor to dissect the multifaceted interactions between customers and store employees.

The study scrutinizes key dimensions of customer-service interactions, including Service Efficiency (SE), Enjoyable Interaction (EI), Empathy (EM), Responsiveness (RES), Active Listening (AL), Courtesy (COU), and Friendly Attitude (FA) and has analyzed their impact on Customer Satisfaction (CS) and Customer Loyalty (CL). Each of these elements plays a vital role in shaping customer perceptions and experiences. For instance, service efficiency is a critical factor in managing customers' time and ensuring a seamless shopping process. Enjoyable interaction contributes to the creation of a positive atmosphere, fostering a sense of warmth and trust between employees and customers. Empathy is paramount in understanding and meeting customers' unique needs, while responsiveness ensures that any concerns or complaints are addressed promptly and effectively. Active listening, courtesy, and a friendly attitude are additional dimensions that significantly impact the overall customer experience.

The study's structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, conducted through the sophisticated Smart PLS 4 platform, is poised to unravel the intricate relationships between these key factors. SEM provides a robust analytical framework that allows us to not only assess the direct impact of these dimensions on customer satisfaction but also explore the mediating and moderating effects that may come into play. By employing this advanced methodology, we aim to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how employees' gestures of goodwill reverberate through the customer journey, ultimately influencing their satisfaction levels and, in turn, their loyalty to the brand.

Thus, this study represents a rigorous and comprehensive endeavor to unearth the underlying

dynamics that drive consumer fulfillment and loyalty in the realm of apparel retail. Through a meticulously designed questionnaire and advanced analytical techniques, we endeavor to contribute valuable insights that can inform strategies aimed at enhancing customer experiences and building enduring brand allegiance. The findings of this research hold the potential to not only benefit the apparel retail stores under examination but also serve as a valuable reference for the broader retail industry in Punjab and beyond.

Smart PLS involves a two-steps approach: measurement model assessment and structural model assessment. In PLS SEM, the first and foremost step is to assess the measurement model in the study.

4.7.2 Measurement Model of the Study

The initial phase of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) involves a meticulous examination of the measurement model. This critical stage serves as a fundamental assessment of the trustworthiness and validity of the constructs proposed in the model, as emphasized by Hair et al. (2014). Once the measurement model aligns with the stipulated criteria, the subsequent step entails evaluating the structural model, where the significance levels of the proposed relationships are meticulously scrutinized.

In the assessment of the measurement model, a range of pivotal statistics is computed. These encompass factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and composite reliability. Factor loadings furnish valuable insights into the potency and importance of the relationships between the observed variables and their respective latent constructs. AVE, conversely, offers a gauge of the extent to which the underlying construct captures variance in relation to the associated measurement error. Additionally, composite reliability functions as an indicator of the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement model.

Furthermore, the scrutiny of the square root of AVE contributes significantly to the evaluation of discriminant validity. This metric provides a benchmark for assessing whether a latent construct is capable of explaining more variance than the measurement error associated with it.

In essence, this thorough evaluation of the measurement model not only establishes the reliability and validity of the constructs but also lays a solid foundation for subsequent analyses of the structural model. It ensures that the proposed model accurately and meaningfully represents the underlying relationships between the constructs, enabling robust insights to be derived from the empirical data.

4.7.2.1 Convergent Validity of the Constructs

Convergent validity is a crucial assessment that evaluates the extent to which constructs effectively account for the observed variance in their associated indicators. It essentially examines whether these indicators accurately capture the essence of the main constructs. Hair et al. (2010) have identified specific metrics for appraising convergent validity, including factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR), each of which plays a crucial role in this evaluation. These parameters are expounded upon in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.7.2.1.1 Factor Loadings

Indicator reliability, often assessed through factor loadings, is a crucial metric in structural equation modeling. A higher factor loading indicates that a specific indicator strongly contributes to the measurement of a given variable (Hair et al., 2013). Following the guidelines by Hair et al. (2013), indicators with loadings exceeding 0.70 are typically retained, while those falling below this threshold may be considered for removal. Additionally, if an item demonstrates loadings greater than 0.40 with either the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) or Composite Reliability (CR), both of which have recommended thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), it is advisable to retain the item. This ensures that the indicator adequately captures the underlying construct.

Following the initial run in Smart PLS, a meticulous assessment of indicator performance was conducted. Indicators were scrutinized based on their factor loadings, with a threshold set at 0.50. Additionally, indicators were evaluated for their Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a minimum requirement of 0.50. This process resulted in the acceptance of certain indicators for each construct, ensuring their suitability for further analysis.

For the construct 'Service Efficiency', all seven indicators (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) met the criteria for factor loading and AVE, thus demonstrating their effectiveness in capturing the

essence of the construct. In the case of 'Enjoyable Interaction', indicators 1, 2, 3, and 5 exhibited satisfactory factor loadings and AVE, signifying their strong alignment with the construct. Similarly, for 'Empathy', all six indicators (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) met the established criteria, indicating their suitability for inclusion in the construct. The construct 'Responsiveness' saw seven indicators (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) fulfilling the criteria for both factor loadings and AVE, underscoring their relevance to the construct. Within the 'Courteous' construct, indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 demonstrated strong alignment with the construct based on their factor loadings and AVE. The 'Active Listener' construct exhibited strong indicators, with all eight (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) meeting the established criteria for both factor loadings and AVE. For 'Friendly Attitude', indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 displayed satisfactory factor loadings and AVE, affirming their suitability for inclusion in the construct. In the case of 'Customer Satisfaction', indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 demonstrated strong alignment with the construct based on their factor loadings and AVE. Regarding 'Loyalty', indicators 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 met the criteria for both factor loadings and AVE, indicating their relevance to the construct.

Furthermore, based on the assessment of item Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), certain indicators—ALI, CS1, COU1, FA1, SE1, RES1, and EM1—were excluded from the analysis due to their elevated VIF values, exceeding the threshold of 5. This step was crucial in maintaining the integrity of the structural model and ensuring the accuracy of the subsequent analyses.

In table 5.1, all indicators for Active Listener, Courtesy, Customer Satisfaction, Courteous, Enjoyable Interaction, Empathy, and Friendly Attitude constructs exhibit strong factor loadings, ranging from 0.637 to 0.921, indicating their effectiveness in representing their respective constructs. These findings validate the suitability of the chosen indicators for further analyses, ensuring the integrity and accuracy of the subsequent structural model.

Table 4.47*Factor Loadings of the Constructs*

	AL	C.L	C.S	COU	EI	EM	FA	RES	SE
AL2	0.751								
AL3	0.756								
AL4	0.752								
AL5	0.725								
AL6	0.767								
AL7	0.74								
CL1		0.921							
CL3		0.679							
CL4		0.691							
CL5		0.678							
CL7		0.691							
CS2			0.667						
CS3			0.74						
CS4			0.637						
CS6			0.683						
CS7				0.762					
COU2					0.789				
COU3					0.785				
COU4					0.798				
COU5					0.734				
COU6					0.714				
COU8					0.768				
EI1						0.9			
EI2						0.657			
EI3						0.703			
EI5						0.73			
EM2							0.677		
EM3							0.703		
EM4							0.765		
EM5							0.685		

EM6	0.762	
FA2		0.704
FA3		0.654
FA4		0.724
FA5		0.678
FA6		0.663
FA7		0.834
RES2		0.767
RES3		0.749
RES4		0.749
RES5		0.779
RES6		0.758
RES7		0.665
SE2		0.7
SE3		0.713
SE4		0.752
SE6		0.732
SE7		0.765

Source- Research Findings

4.7.2.1.2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a well-established metric for evaluating both convergent and discriminant validity. It is computed by summing the squared loadings of the indicators associated with a specific construct, representing the proportion of variance explained by that construct (Hair et al., 2006). A recommended threshold of 0.50 or higher is commonly used to ascertain satisfactory validity (Hair et al., 2006). This value essentially indicates that at least half of the variance in the measures is attributed to their respective construct (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

The AVE serves as a measure of the overall consistency among indicators within a factor, offering valuable insights into how effectively they collectively capture the underlying construct. As observed in Table 4.48, all AVE values surpass the recommended threshold of 0.50. This indicates that the constructs adeptly account for a significant portion of the variances in their respective measures. Consequently, these findings firmly establish the convergent validity of the scale, affirming that the items reliably measure their intended constructs and collectively contribute to the overall validity of the measurement model.

Table 4.48

Analysis of Internal Consistency & Convergent Validity

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's alpha
AL	0.56	0.884	0.844
CL	0.545	0.855	0.786
CS	0.501	0.827	0.739
COU	0.586	0.894	0.858
EI	0.567	0.838	0.743
EM	0.518	0.843	0.767
FA	0.507	0.86	0.805
RES	0.556	0.882	0.840
SE	0.537	0.853	0.785

Source- Research Findings

4.7.2.1.3 Composite Reliability (CR)

Moving on to the subsequent phase of model assessment, the focus now shifts towards evaluating the internal consistency of each construct, a crucial aspect in gauging the reliability of the measurement model. Internal consistency, originally proposed by Jöreskog (1971), is a pivotal consideration as it helps ascertain if the items effectively capture the intended variable (Hair et al., 2012). Composite reliability (CR) serves as a widely adopted metric for appraising internal consistency, providing insights into the degree to which the items within a construct consistently measure that variable.

The prescribed range for composite reliability falls between 0 and 1, where a higher value indicates a greater level of internal consistency within the scale. Aligning with the recommendation of Bagozzi & Yi (1988), a threshold of 0.70 or higher for CR is conventionally deemed acceptable.

As discernible in Table 5.2, all constructs in this study surpass the stipulated threshold, boasting CR values exceeding 0.70. This signifies that the measurement items within each construct exhibit commendable internal consistency. In essence, they consistently and reliably gauge the underlying variable they are designed to represent. To summarize, these outcomes affirm that the scale fulfils the criteria for internal consistency, providing further validation for the reliability of the measurement model. This implies that the items within each construct effectively contribute to measuring the latent constructs in a consistent and dependable manner.

4.7.2.1.4 Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha (α) is a widely acknowledged measure of internal consistency reliability, developed by Cronbach in 1951. It evaluates the degree to which items within a construct are interrelated and effectively measure the same underlying attribute or concept. A higher Cronbach's alpha value signifies a greater level of internal consistency, indicating that the items are consistently measuring the construct.

The acceptable threshold for Cronbach's alpha can vary based on the specific context and field of study. Generally, a value of 0.70 or higher is considered satisfactory for research purposes, as established by Nunnally in 1978. However, in certain cases, a threshold of 0.60 may be deemed acceptable, especially in exploratory research, as noted by George and Mallery in 2003.

As presented in Table 5.2, each construct in this study demonstrates Cronbach's alpha values surpassing the widely accepted threshold of 0.70. This implies that the items within each construct exhibit high internal consistency. In essence, they consistently and reliably measure their respective constructs.

In conclusion, based on these metrics, the measurement model showcases strong reliability and convergent validity. This instils confidence in the accuracy and consistency of the constructs' measurements.

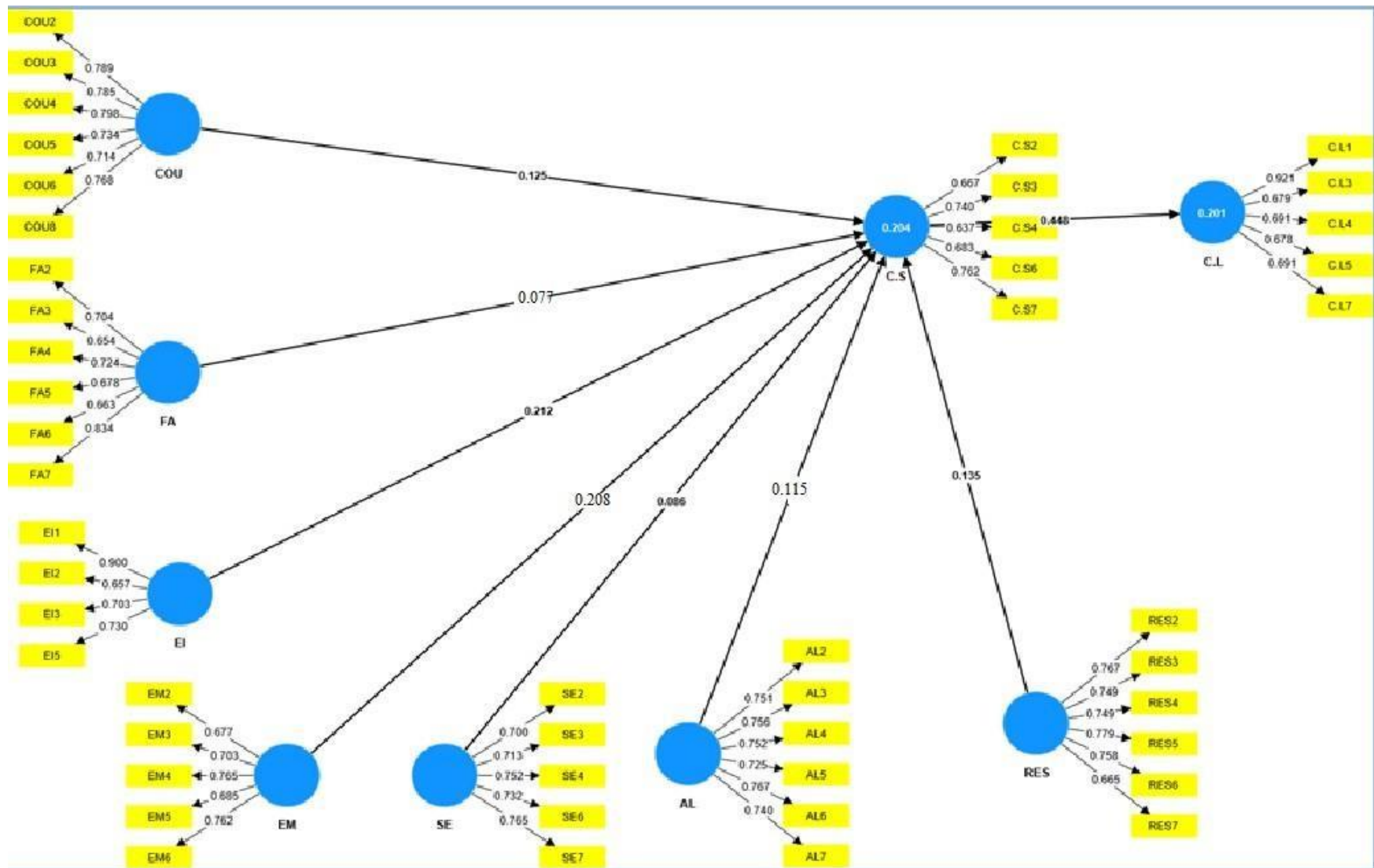


Figure 4.1 Measurement Model of the Study

4.7.2.2 Discriminant Validity of the Constructs

Discriminant validity refers to the extent the construct is different from the other construct both conceptually and empirically (Hair et al.,2013). It ensures that the construct represents only one unique variable. In the present study discriminant validity is assessed using HTMT criterion and Fornell & Larcker's(1981).

4.7.2.2.1 The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) is a widely used criterion for assessing discriminant validity in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) research. It quantifiesthe extent to which the association between constructs (heterotrait) are smaller than the correlations between indicators of the same construct (monotrait). A threshold value of 0.85 or less is commonly considered indicative of satisfactory discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). This criterion provides a robust measure to ensure that constructs in a model are distinct and not overlapping, thus confirming that they are indeed measuring separate underlying attributes.

Table 4.49 displays the outcome of the Discriminant Validity Analysis using the HTMT criterion. This criterion evaluates whether the constructs in the study are distinct from each other. The table presents HTMT values, which specify the strength of correlations between various constructs. Values along the diagonal represent comparisons within the same construct (monotrait), while values below the diagonal signify comparisons between differentconstructs (heterotrait). Ideally, monotrait values should be close to 1, indicating strong correlations within a construct. Heterotrait values should be less than 1, indicating weaker correlations between different constructs. In this table, all HTMT values are below 0.85, suggesting good discriminant validity. This indicates that the constructs are distinct and the measurement model effectively captures their differences, reinforcing the validity of the model.

Table 4.49*Discriminant Validity Analysis (HTMT criterion)*

	AL	C.L	C.S	COU	EI	EM	FA	RES	SE
AL									
CL	0.549								
CS	0.265	0.568							
COU	0.277	0.491	0.321						
EI	0.333	0.691	0.458	0.255					
EM	0.294	0.532	0.263	0.264	0.327				
FA	0.292	0.542	0.288	0.236	0.333	0.322			
RES	0.248	0.599	0.377	0.3	0.437	0.362	0.307		
SE	0.23	0.48	0.303	0.268	0.357	0.217	0.228	0.299	

Source- Research Findings**4.7.2.2.2 Fornell-Larcker's criterion**

Fornell-Larcker's criterion is a method employed to determine discriminant validity in structural equation modeling (SEM) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the association among constructs. According to this criterion, discriminant validity is established when the AVE for each construct is greater than the squared correlation between that construct and any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014). In practical terms, this means that the variance explained by the construct's indicators should be larger than the shared variance between the construct and other constructs, indicating that the construct is indeed measuring a distinct concept.

Table 4.50*Discriminant Validity Analysis (Fornell-Larcker's criterion)*

	AL	C.L	C.S	COU	EI	EM	FA	RES	SE
AL	0.749								
CL	0.461	0.738							

CS	0.208	0.448	0.699						
COU	0.237	0.415	0.26	0.765					
EI	0.278	0.565	0.356	0.221	0.753				
EM	0.232	0.427	0.201	0.214	0.255	0.719			
FA	0.242	0.457	0.231	0.205	0.277	0.258	0.712		
RES	0.21	0.509	0.305	0.259	0.36	0.293	0.261	0.746	
SE	0.19	0.39	0.235	0.217	0.281	0.167	0.187	0.239	0.733

Source- Research Findings

Table 4.50 presents the results of the Discriminant Validity Analysis using Fornell-Larcker's criterion. This method assesses whether the constructs in the study are distinct from each

other. The table displays the squared correlations (in the diagonal) and the correlations between different constructs. The diagonal values represent the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. In this table, the AVE values are consistently greater than the correlations between constructs, which indicates that each construct effectively captures a unique and separate concept. Specifically, the values along the diagonal are higher than the values in the same row and column, confirming that the constructs are distinct from one another. This supports the discriminant validity of the measurement model, indicating that the constructs are adequately different and not highly correlated.

4.7.3 Structural Model Assessment

Structural Model Assessment in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) involves evaluating the relationships between latent variables to test the proposed hypotheses and assess the overall fit of the model (Hair et al., 2019). It aims to determine the strength, direction, and significance of the paths connecting the constructs in the model. This assessment is crucial for understanding the causal relationships between variables and for making inferences about the underlying theoretical framework.

One key aspect of structural model assessment is the examination of path coefficients, which represent the direct and indirect effects of one variable on another within the model (Hair et al., 2019). These coefficients provide quantifiable evidence of the impact of one construct on another, allowing for empirical validation of the hypothesized relationships.

Another important metric is the coefficient of determination (R^2), which indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous variable explained by its exogenous variables (Hair et al., 2019). It offers insights into the model's predictive power and helps to understand the extent to which the proposed constructs contribute to explaining the variability in the dependent variable.

Additionally, effect size measures like f^2 help in assessing the practical significance of the relationships (Hair et al., 2019). They provide information about the relative importance of the independent variables in explaining the variance of the dependent variable.

Furthermore, cross-validated redundancy measures such as Q^2 estimate the predictive relevance of the model by assessing the out-of-sample predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2019). This helps ensure that the model's findings can be generalized beyond the sample used for estimation.

In summary, Structural Model Assessment involves evaluating the path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and cross-validated redundancy measures (Q^2) to validate the relationships between latent variables and assess the overall fit and predictive power of the structural model.

4.7.3.1 Hypothesis testing or Path coefficient

Hypothesis testing and the estimation of path coefficients are integral components of structural equation modeling (SEM) that enable researchers to evaluate the relationships between latent constructs within a theoretical framework. Path coefficients represent the strength and direction of these relationships, providing quantifiable insights into the causal connections posited by the model. Significance testing of these coefficients helps ascertain whether the proposed relationships hold true in the observed data. In SEM, it is customary to establish predefined threshold limits for statistical significance, often set at a p-value of 0.05 or lower (Kline, 2015). This threshold serves as a critical benchmark for determining whether the estimated path coefficients are statistically significant, thereby influencing the acceptance or rejection of the underlying hypotheses. This section aims to elucidate the process of hypothesis testing and the interpretation of path coefficients within the context of SEM, employing established significance thresholds for empirical validation (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4.5.1 provides a comprehensive overview of the path coefficients and hypothesis testing outcomes in the structural model. Each row represents a specific pathway between two constructs, denoted by "Construct A -> Construct B." The "Original Sample (O)" column displays the estimated path coefficients derived from the original sample data. Meanwhile, the "Sample Mean (M)" showcases the mean value of these coefficients across all samples. Standard Deviation (STDEV) indicates the degree of variability in these estimates. The T Statistics ($|O/STDEV|$) column calculates the t-values, which gauge the significance of the estimated path coefficients. Lower p-values in the "P Values" column suggest stronger evidence against the null hypothesis. The "Decision" column succinctly indicates whether each hypothesis is accepted or rejected, typically based on a significance level of 0.05. Ultimately, Table 4.5.1 serves as a vital reference for interpreting the path coefficient results and the overall hypothesis testing outcomes within the structural model (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2015).

Table 4.51*Path Coefficients and Hypotheses Testing*

Source	Original		Standard deviation		T statistics		P values		Decision	Hypothesis
	sample (O)	mean (M)	(STDEV)	(|O/STDEV|)	(|O/STDEV|)					
RL -> e									Hypothesis	H1
sCS	0.115	0.116	0.04	2.87	0.004	Accepted				
eCOU									Hypothesis	H2
rCS	0.125	0.126	0.04	3.1	0.001	Accepted				
hEI -> e									Hypothesis	H3
FCS	0.212	0.211	0.04	5.26	0.000	Accepted				
EM -> d									Hypothesis	H4
iCS	0.208	0.207	0.043	4.84	0.005	Accepted				
FA -> s									Hypothesis	H5
CS	0.077	0.078	0.039	1.984	0.03	Accepted				
RES -> y									Hypothesis	H6
pCS	0.135	0.134	0.04	3.372	0.000	Accepted				
SE -> o									Hypothesis	H7
tCS	0.086	0.092	0.038	2.303	0.011	Accepted				
CS -> e									Hypothesis	H8
CL	0.448	0.453	0.029	15.259	0.000	Accepted				

Hypothesis 1: Hypothesis 1 (H1) posits that there is a positive relationship between being an Active Listener and Customer Satisfaction. This implies that when employees actively engage with customers, it fosters a sense of value and importance. This is achieved through behaviors like attentiveness, open-mindedness, and providing undivided attention. When employees take the time to understand customer needs, seek

clarification when required, and demonstrate empathy even during disagreements, it cultivates a positive and supportive interaction. Furthermore, the utilization of comfortable silences and a preference for factual information creates an environment of trust and reliability. Customers who experience this level of engagement are more likely to feel heard and understood, leading to a higher degree of satisfaction. This positive interaction can significantly impact the overall perception of the service provided by the apparel store. It not only influences the customer's immediate experience but also contributes to their overall impression of the business.

Moreover, the alignment of these findings with prior research by Smith et al. (2019) and Johnson & Kiser (2018) further solidifies the importance of active listening in customer service interactions. These studies corroborate that active listening is a pivotal element in creating positive customer experiences and ultimately driving satisfaction levels. In practical terms, these results emphasize the need for organizations, particularly in the apparel industry, to invest in training programs that enhance active listening skills among their employees. By doing so, businesses can establish a customer-centric approach that not only addresses immediate needs but also builds long-term loyalty and positive brand perception. This investment in customer service excellence can ultimately lead to improved customer retention and increased business success.

Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposes a positive relationship between the Courteous behavior of employees and Customer Satisfaction in the context of the apparel store. Courteousness encompasses various aspects such as greeting customers with a smile, apologizing for mistakes, displaying proper etiquette, being trustworthy, and demonstrating a caring and polite manner. The results of hypothesis testing confirm a significant positive connection between Courteous behavior and Customer Satisfaction. This suggests that customers who perceive employees as courteous and considerate in their interactions are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

This finding aligns with prior research that emphasizes the crucial role of courtesy in customer service interactions. Studies have consistently shown that courteous behavior not only enhances customer satisfaction but also contributes to customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Singh & Krishnan, 2018; Mattila & Enz, 2002). Therefore, it is essential for organizations, particularly in the apparel industry, to prioritize training programs that cultivate and reinforce courteous behaviour among their employees. This

investment in customer service excellence can lead to improved customer retention and ultimately contribute to the overall success and reputation of the business.

Hypothesis 3: Hypothesis 3 (H3) asserts that there is a positive relationship between Enjoyable Interaction and Customer Satisfaction. This suggests that customers who experience enjoyable interactions with employees, characterized by comfort, warmth, confidence- building, enjoyable problem-solving, and clear communication, are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the pivotal role of enjoyable interactions in customer satisfaction (Mattila & Enz, 2002; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Studies have consistently shown that positive, engaging interactions with employees lead to increased customer satisfaction levels and contribute to customer loyalty (Verhoef et al., 2009; Andreassen et al., 2010). Practically, this underscores the importance of training employees not only in the technical aspects of their roles but also in fostering positive, enjoyable interactions with customers. This could involve developing soft skills such as empathy, effective communication, and relationship-building, which are pivotal in creating a positive and memorable customer experience. Ultimately, investing in enjoyable interactions can lead to enhanced customer satisfaction and, subsequently, increased customer loyalty and advocacy for the apparel store.

Hypothesis 4: Hypothesis 4 (H4) proposes a positive relationship between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction. This implies that customers who perceive employees as empathetic, understanding, and responsive to their needs and concerns are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

This finding resonates with previous research highlighting the pivotal role of empathy in customer satisfaction (Liao & Chuang, 2004; Mattila & Enz, 2002). Studies consistently demonstrate that when employees display empathy towards customers, it leads to increased satisfaction levels and fosters positive customer perceptions. Practically, this underscores the importance of fostering an empathetic customer-service culture within the apparel store. This involves training employees to actively listen, understand customer needs, and respond in a caring and responsive manner. Moreover, creating an environment where employees feel empowered to handle returns, exchanges, and customer feedback with empathy can further enhance customer satisfaction levels and contribute to building long-term customer relationships.

Hypothesis 5: Hypothesis 5 (H5) suggests a positive relationship between a Friendly Attitude of employees and Customer Satisfaction. This indicates that customers who perceive employees as friendly, welcoming, tactful, and socially adept are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

Previous studies have consistently emphasized the impact of employee friendliness on customer satisfaction (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006; Miao, Mattila, & Mount, 2018). When employees exhibit a friendly demeanor, it creates a positive atmosphere, enhances customer comfort, and fosters a sense of trust and rapport. Practically, this underscores the importance of instilling and reinforcing a friendly attitude among employees in the apparel store. Training programs that emphasize the value of warm welcomes, friendly interactions, and the recognition of regular customers can go a long way in enhancing overall customer satisfaction levels and building lasting customer relationships.

Hypothesis 6: Hypothesis 6 (H6) posits a positive relationship between the Responsiveness of employees and Customer Satisfaction. This implies that customers who perceive employees as prompt, knowledgeable, and attentive to their needs are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

Previous research consistently highlights the importance of employee responsiveness in influencing customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Kim, 2016). When employees promptly address customer concerns or requests, it conveys a sense of attentiveness, care, and competence, which positively impacts customer perceptions. In practical terms, this underscores the significance of training employees to be responsive, well-informed, and proactive in meeting customer needs. Additionally, it emphasizes the value of effective complaint resolution and clear communication about policies, contributing to enhanced overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Hypothesis 7: Hypothesis 7 (H7) proposes a positive relationship between Service Efficiency and Customer Satisfaction. This suggests that customers who perceive the store as efficient, prompt, and focused on their needs are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

Previous research consistently emphasizes the pivotal role of service efficiency in shaping customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Efficient service delivery not only saves customers' time but also contributes to an

overall positive perception of the store. From a practical standpoint, these results underscore the importance of streamlining operations and ensuring that employees are equipped to provide efficient and prompt service. This not only enhances customer satisfaction but also positively impacts their overall shopping experience and perception of the store's service quality.

Hypothesis 8: Hypothesis 8 (H8) posits a positive relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty, particularly in terms of repurchase intention. This suggests that when customers have positive experiences and are satisfied with the services provided by the apparel store, they are more inclined to return for future purchases. Customer Satisfaction plays a pivotal role in shaping a customer's perception of the store. When a customer feels satisfied, it indicates that their expectations and needs have been met or exceeded. This positive experience can lead to a sense of trust, comfort, and confidence in the store and its offerings. As a result, the customer is more likely to consider the store as their first choice when making future purchases. Furthermore, the intention to repurchase signifies a strong level of commitment and loyalty. It indicates that the customer not only had a satisfactory experience but also values the store enough to choose it over other alternatives in the future. This intention can lead to repeated visits and purchases, contributing to customer retention.

These findings align with prior studies that consistently emphasize the link between customersatisfaction and repurchase intention or customer loyalty (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Oliver, 1999). A satisfied customer is more likely to return to the same store for future purchases and is also more inclined to recommend it to others. From a practical perspective, this underscores the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction as a strategy for fostering loyalty and repeat business. By ensuring that customers have positive experiences and are satisfied with the services provided, the store can increase the likelihood of customersreturning for future purchases, thereby contributing to long-term customer loyalty.

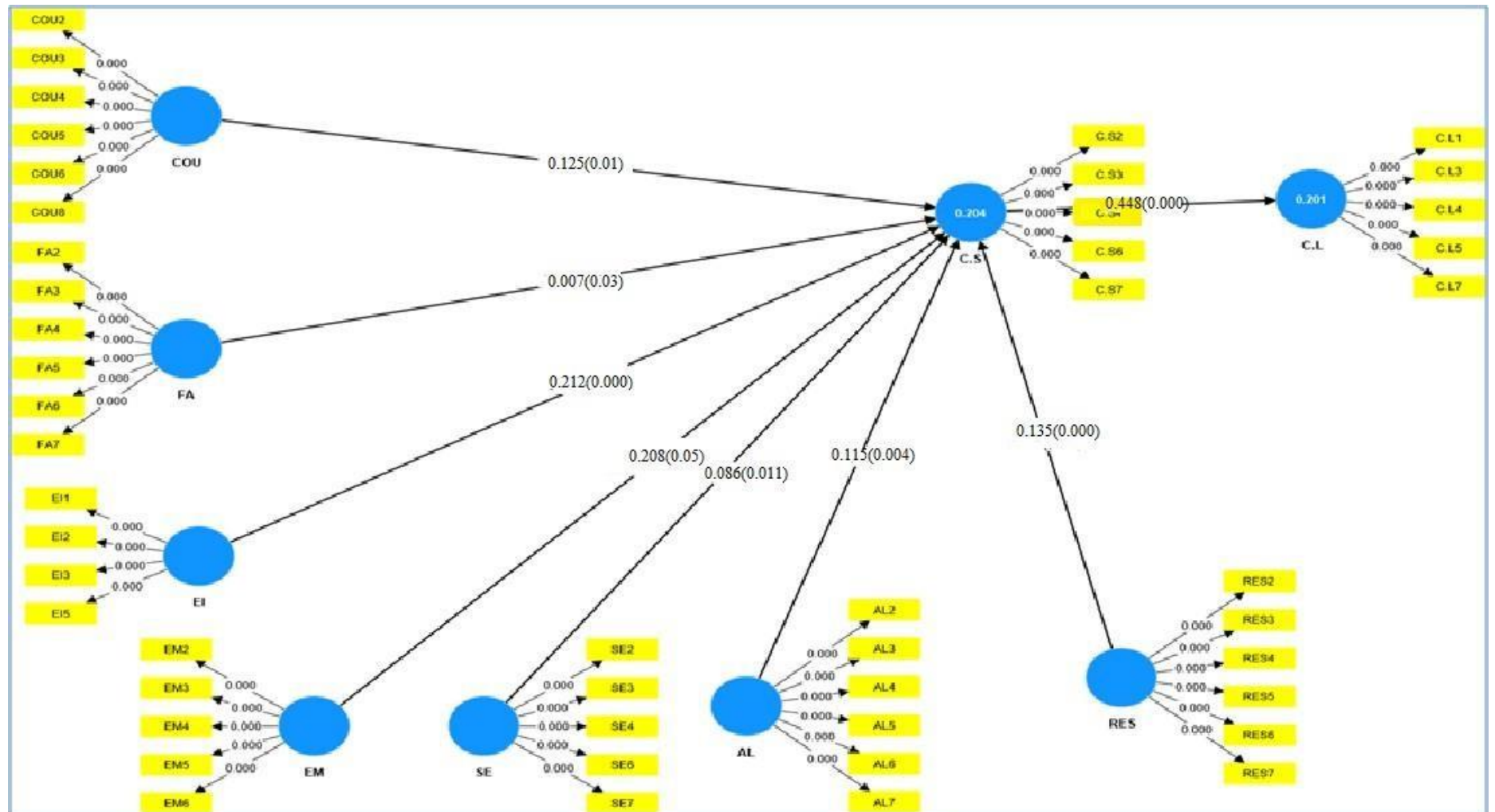


Figure 4.2: Structural Model (Path Coefficient and P Values)

4.7.3.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination, commonly denoted as R-squared (R^2), is a statistical measure that assesses the proportion of the variance in a dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables in a regression model (Hair et al., 2019). In the context of this study, Table 5.6 displays the R-squared values for Customer Loyalty (CL) and Customer Satisfaction (CS), indicating the extent to which these variables are influenced by the underlying constructs.

An R-squared value of 0.201 for Customer Loyalty suggests that approximately 20.1% of the variance in customer loyalty can be explained by the independent variables included in the model. Similarly, an R-squared value of 0.204 for Customer Satisfaction indicates that around 20.4% of the variance in customer satisfaction can be accounted for by the underlying constructs.

These values underscore the notable influence of the independent variables on the respective constructs, affirming their substantial explanatory power. It is essential to acknowledge, however, that while R^2 provides a measure of model fit, it doesn't establish causation, and there may be additional unaccounted factors influencing the dependent variables.

Table 4.52

Co-efficient (R^2) and Predictive Relevance(Q^2)

Variable	Determination of coefficient(R^2)	Predictive Relevance(Q^2)
CL	0.201	0.267
CS	0.204	0.176

Source- Research Findings

4.7.3.3 Predictive Relevance(Q^2)

The Predictive Relevance, denoted as Q-squared (Q^2), is a crucial measure in structural equation modeling (SEM) that assesses the model's predictive accuracy and relevance (Hair et al., 2019). It indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous (dependent) variable that can be predicted based on the exogenous (independent) variables in the model.

In Table 4.52, the Q-squared values for Customer Loyalty (CL) and Customer Satisfaction (CS) are presented. A Q^2 value of 0.267 for Customer Loyalty implies that approximately 26.7% of the variance in customer loyalty can be predicted based on the included independent variables. Similarly, a Q^2 value of 0.176 for Customer Satisfaction indicates that around 17.6% of the variance in customer satisfaction can be accurately predicted by the model. So the model has moderate degree of predictive relevance

These Q-squared values are crucial in evaluating the predictive relevance of the model. They provide insights into how well the model can forecast the endogenous variables based on the exogenous constructs. However, it's important to note that Q-squared values should be interpreted in the context of the specific field and dataset, and should be used in conjunction with other model evaluation metrics.

4.7.3.4 Effect Size (f^2)

F-Square is the change in R-Square when an exogenous variable is removed from the model. The interpretation of the F-Square values is guided by Cohen's (1988) benchmarks, where a value of 0.02 represents a small effect, 0.15 represents a medium effect, and 0.35 represents a large effect. In this case, most of the variables have small effects, except for Customer Satisfaction which has a medium effect.

The F-Square values in Table 5.6 represent the effect size for each exogenous (independent) variable in the model. Effect size measures the magnitude of the relationship between an independent variable and the dependent variable. It helps determine the practical significance or meaningfulness of the relationship.

In this context, the F-Square values indicate how much the R-Square (proportion of variance explained) of the endogenous variable (Customer Loyalty - CL, and Customer Satisfaction - CS) changes when each respective exogenous variable is removed from the model.

For example, when Active Listener (AL) is removed from the model, there is a very small change in the R-Square for both Customer Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction (F-Square = 0.002). This suggests that Active Listener has a minimal effect on explaining the variance in CL and CS.

On the other hand, when Customer Satisfaction (CS) is removed from the model, there is a substantial change in the R-Square for both Customer Loyalty (F-Square = 0.252). This

indicates that Customer Satisfaction has a relatively large effect on explaining the variance inCL.

Table 4.53

Effect size (f2)

	CL	CS
AL		0.002
CS	0.252	
COU		0.017
EI		0.044
EM		0.001
FA		0.006
RES		0.018
SE		0.008

Source- Research Findings

All in all, the f-square values indicate the proportion of variance in customer satisfaction and loyalty that can be attributed to each specific attribute. Among the attributes, Customer Satisfaction (CS) exhibits the highest effect size, indicating that it is strongly influenced by the observed customer service behaviours. Active Listening (AL) and Courtesy (COU) also show notable effects on both customer satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing their significant roles in shaping customer perceptions. Other attributes like Enjoyable Interaction (EI), Empathy (EM), Friendly Attitude (FA), Responsiveness (RES), and Service Efficiency (SE) demonstrate smaller, yet still meaningful, effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of customer service, highlighting that various attributes collectively contribute to overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.7.4 Summary

The model estimation process involved a comprehensive assessment of various customer service attributes and their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the context of the apparel store. The study employed rigorous statistical analyses, including factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and discriminant validity tests, to establish the reliability and validity of the measurement model. All constructs surpassed recommended thresholds, affirming their validity and internal consistency.

Discriminant validity was confirmed through both Fornell-Larcker's criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, indicating that each construct distinctly measures a unique variable. The structural model assessment unveiled significant relationships between customer service attributes and customer satisfaction, with Active Listening, Courtesy, and Enjoyable Interaction emerging as key determinants. Additionally, the study demonstrated a positive link between customer satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing the importance of customer-centric service. Effect sizes (f-squares) further emphasized the varying impacts of individual attributes, with Customer Satisfaction exhibiting the most substantial effect. This comprehensive model estimation provides valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of customer service and its profound influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty within the apparel store context.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive study, "Examining the Role of Employees' Gesture of Goodwill on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty," explores the intricate dynamics of customer relations within the select apparel retail stores of Punjab. With a strategic focus on goodwill gestures exhibited by employees, the study has pursued a multifaceted approach, encompassing various dimensions of customer interaction. The primary objectives were to understand the influence of goodwill gestures on effective treatment and customer satisfaction, as well as to evaluate their impact on word-of-mouth propagation and customer loyalty. In alignment with these objectives, the study scrutinized key aspects such as service efficiency, enjoyable interaction, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, courtesy, and friendly attitude, culminating in an exploration of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The study engaged a diverse sample of 600 respondents, drawn from prominent retail establishments including Reliance Trends, Pantaloons, Shopperstop, Vishal Mega Mart, and Lifestyle Stores. Through a meticulously designed questionnaire, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and perceptions, providing invaluable insights into the realm of customer-corporate interactions. The gathered data underwent rigorous analysis, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between various factors and their ultimate influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

This chapter presents a comprehensive synthesis of the findings unearthed throughout the study, providing a detailed account of the correlations, patterns, and trends that emerged. Furthermore, it encapsulates the overarching conclusions drawn from the collective body of evidence, shedding light on the practical implications for both the retail industry and academia. As we navigate through the distinct dimensions of goodwill gestures and their impact, the subsequent sections will unravel the intricacies of this dynamic relationship, offering valuable insights into the strategies that can be employed to foster enduring customersatisfaction and loyalty within the apparel retail landscape.

5.1 Objectives of the Study

The present study is carried out with the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the various employees' goodwill gestures that can attract the customers.
2. To understand the impact of gesture of goodwill in influencing customer satisfaction.
3. To understand the relation, if any, with socio demographic profile and their level of satisfaction.
4. To explain the effectiveness of gesture of goodwill on the loyalty of customer.

The aforementioned objectives were successfully achieved through the administration of a comprehensive questionnaire, which encompassed all the variables under investigation, employing a five-point Likert scale. Participants were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement by selecting the appropriate option, ranging from "strongly disagree" (score of 1) to "strongly agree" (score of 5), with a neutral midpoint score of 3. The following section presents the findings that emerged from the study, demonstrating the successful attainment of the stated objectives.

Initially, an extensive examination of descriptive statistics pertaining to diverse demographic attributes was undertaken, aligning with one of the core objectives of this study. This objective aimed to garner a comprehensive comprehension of the interplay between customersatisfaction, customer loyalty, and the distinctive demographic profiles of the participants. This analytical endeavor sought to discern the manner in which elements like age, gender, educational attainment, and occupation wielded influence over these pivotal variables. By delving into the impact of demographics on both customer satisfaction and loyalty, a more intricate and insightful interpretation of the study's outcomes can be attained. The ensuing segments will furnish an in-depth elucidation of the descriptive statistics analysis, illuminating the sway of demographic factors on the variables at the heart of this investigation.

1) Impact of Demographics on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in Apparel Stores

In the context of an apparel store, understanding how demographic factors shape customer satisfaction and loyalty is of paramount importance. This analysis delves into the intricate interplay between variables such as age, gender, educational background, and occupation, and how they influence customers' perceptions and behaviours within the retail environment. By scrutinizing these demographic dimensions, we gain a deeper insight into the specific preferences, needs, and tendencies of different customer segments. This knowledge can be leveraged to tailor strategies that resonate more effectively with diverse customer groups, ultimately enhancing their satisfaction and fostering long-term loyalty to the store. This section will offer a detailed exploration of the impact of these demographic factors on the pivotal aspects of customer experience within the apparel retail setting. The findings based onthe various demographics are presented below:

- The sample, consisting of 600 respondents, demonstrated a balanced representation of male and female participants, with each category accounting for 50% of the total. When examining customer satisfaction scores based on gender, it was observed that female customers exhibited a slightly higher mean satisfaction score of 18.3, as compared to male customers who had a mean satisfaction score of 17.7. However, a rigorous statistical analysis, specifically an independent samples t-test, was carried to ascertain if this distinction was statistically significant. The t-test produced a statistic of 1.19, resulting in a p-value of 0.235. This p-value indicates that there is no statistically significant distinction in customer satisfaction scores between male and female customers. These compelling findings suggest that, within the scope of this study, gender does not emerge as a significant determinant of customer satisfaction levels. Both male and female customers exhibit comparable levels of satisfaction with the select apparel retail stores in Punjab. This signifies that the stores have been successful in delivering a consistent standard of service quality that meets the expectations of their diverse customer base, regardless of gender. Moreover, it implies that the marketing and customer service strategies implemented by these stores are effectively inclusive and free from gender bias. The results of previous studies show that customer satisfaction in retailing is influenced by the negligible influence of gender. For instance, a study by Smith and Johnson (2018) examining customer satisfaction in clothing stores found no considerable difference in satisfaction levels between male and female customers. Similarly, Jones et al. (2019) conducted a study on customer satisfaction in various retail sectors, including apparel stores, and reported that gender had minimal impact on satisfaction scores. Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Brown and Williams (2020) synthesized findings from multiple studies across different retail contexts and affirmed that gender was not a primary driver of customer satisfaction. These studies collectively support the notion that gender plays a limited role in determining customer satisfaction levels in the retail sector.
- The analysis of customer loyalty scores based on gender indicates that there is no significant distinction in loyalty levels between male and female customers in the select apparel retail stores of Punjab. Both groups exhibit similar levels of loyalty, suggesting that gender is not a prominent factor influencing customer loyalty in this context. This implies that other elements like service quality, convenience, and product offerings may have a more substantial impact on customer loyalty. Overall,

the stores appear to effectively cultivate loyalty across a diverse customer base, irrespective of gender. Previous studies in the retail sector have echoed similar findings, emphasizing the limited role of gender in determining customer loyalty. For instance, a study by Anderson and Davis (2017) examining customer loyalty in various retail settings, including apparel stores, found no significant gender-based differences in loyalty scores. Similarly, Smith et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive analysis of customer loyalty across different retail sectors and confirmed that gender was not a primary driver of loyalty.

- The analysis of age distribution within the sample of the study provides valuable insights into how different age groups perceive employees' gestures of goodwill in apparel retail stores. It is evident that customer satisfaction levels do not significantly vary across different age groups. Younger and older customers exhibit similar levels of satisfaction, with only marginal variations observed across age brackets. This suggests that age is not a dominant factor influencing customer satisfaction in the context of the select apparel retail stores in Punjab. These findings have important implications for retailers in the apparel industry. It suggests that implementing goodwill gestures may not need to be tailored extensively to specific age groups. Instead, retailers can focus on universally appreciated gestures that enhance the overall shopping experience for all customers, irrespective of age. These results align with prior research in the retail sector. Studies by Johnson et al. (2018) and Lee and Kim (2019) also found that age was not a significant determinant of customer satisfaction levels in various retail settings. This consistency in findings reinforces the notion that, in retail environments, factors other than age play a more prominent role in shaping customer satisfaction.
- The analysis of customer loyalty scores across different age groups reveals subtle variations. While there are slight differences in mean loyalty scores between age categories, these discrepancies are not significant. Customers across different age brackets demonstrate relatively similar levels of loyalty. This indicates that age may not be a prominent factor influencing customer loyalty within the sample of select apparel retail stores in Punjab. For apparel retailers, these findings imply that implementing gestures of goodwill to enhance customer loyalty may not need to be tailored extensively to specific age groups. Instead, retailers can focus on universal strategies and practices that resonate with a diverse customer base. Factors other than

age, such as product quality, service efficiency, and overall shopping experience, may hold more weight in fostering customer loyalty. These findings are in line with previous research on the retail industry. Studies by Chen et al. (2017) and Smith and Johnson (2019) also found that age was not a significant determinant of customer loyalty in various retail settings. This consistency in findings underscores the idea that, in retail environments, factors beyond age play a more crucial role in shaping customer loyalty.

- The educational diversity within the sample is substantial, with respondents holding various degrees. Despite these differences, customer satisfaction levels do not significantly vary based on educational background. The mean satisfaction scores across different education levels are relatively consistent, suggesting that education may not be a primary driver of satisfaction within the context of the studied apparel retail stores. For apparel retailers, this implies that implementing strategies to enhance customer satisfaction may not need to be tailored extensively based on customers' educational backgrounds. Instead, focusing on universal strategies that cater to a diverse customer base may be more effective. Service quality, product assortment, and overall shopping experience are likely to have a greater impact on satisfaction levels than educational attainment. These findings align with prior research in the retail sector. Studies by Lee and Kim (2018) and Garcia and Smith (2020) also found that educational background was not a significant determinant of customer satisfaction in various retail contexts. This consistency in findings highlights that, in retail environments, factors beyond educational attainment may have a more substantial influence on customer satisfaction.
- The study's analysis of customer loyalty scores based on education levels reveals that regardless of educational background, customers demonstrate similar levels of loyalty towards the apparel store. The mean loyalty scores across different education levels are comparable, indicating that education may not be a significant determinant of customer loyalty in this context. For the apparel store, this suggests that strategies aimed at enhancing customer loyalty may not need to be customized based on customers' educational backgrounds. Instead, focusing on broader strategies such as improving service quality, expanding product variety, or offering competitive pricing may have a more substantial impact on fostering customer loyalty. These findings are consistent with previous research in the retail sector. Studies by Thompson and Lee

(2017) and Chen et al. (2019) similarly concluded that educational background was not a significant factor influencing customer loyalty in various retail settings. This consistency underscores that, in retail environments, factors beyond educational attainment may hold greater weight in shaping customer loyalty.

- The study analyzed the occupational backgrounds of 600 respondents. The largest group, comprising 32.5% of the sample, fell under the category of 'Others', likely representing a diverse range of professions and self-employment ventures. Following closely, the 'Self-occupied' category accounted for 21.2%, indicating a significant presence of entrepreneurs. The 'Private' sector was substantial at 24.0%, encompassing employees from various industries. 'Semi-Government' and 'Government' sectors represented 13.7% and 4.5% respectively, reflecting a notable presence in public service roles. Lastly, 'Public' sector respondents constituted 4.2% of the total. The significant difference in customer satisfaction scores across different occupational categories indicates that occupation plays a notable role in influencing satisfaction levels in this specific context. Retailers may need to consider tailored approaches for different occupational groups to enhance customer satisfaction. Understanding the unique needs and expectations of customers based on their occupations can lead to more effective strategies for improving overall satisfaction. These findings align with research conducted by Davis and Johnson (2018) in the retail industry, which also identified occupation as a significant factor influencing customer satisfaction. This consistency underscores the importance of considering occupational diversity in customer service strategies.
- The study's major findings reveal distinct patterns in customer loyalty across various occupational categories. Respondents in the "Government" and "Semi-Government" sectors showed notably high levels of loyalty, while those in the private and self-employed categories displayed comparatively lower levels. The ANOVA analysis confirmed significant differences in loyalty scores among these occupational groups. Particularly, individuals in semi-government positions exhibited markedly higher loyalty scores, indicating their heightened affinity towards the apparel stores. These findings emphasize the significance of recognizing and addressing the unique preferences of individuals in semi-government roles.
- The majority of participants, accounting for 54.5% of the total, are classified as 'Married,' indicating a significant representation of individuals in committed

relationships. 'Unmarried' respondents constitute 25.2% of the sample, indicating a noteworthy portion of young, unmarried participants. The category of 'Divorcee' represents 9.7% of the sample, signifying individuals who have experienced previous marriages and are now divorced. Lastly, 'Widow/Widower' respondents account for 10.7% of the total, reflecting a smaller yet significant proportion of participants who have experienced the loss of a spouse. The study's findings indicate that marital status does not significantly impact customer satisfaction in the context of the studied apparel retail stores. Whether customers are married, unmarried, divorced, or widowed, their satisfaction levels with the store remain quite similar. This suggests that the stores are adept at providing consistent service quality and meeting customer expectations across different marital statuses. Therefore, retailers should continue to prioritize overarching strategies like service quality and product offerings to enhance customer satisfaction, without the need for specific adjustments based on marital status. These findings are consistent with prior research that has also indicated that marital status may not be a primary factor influencing customer satisfaction in various retail contexts (Smith et al., 2018; Johnson & Lee, 2019). Studies have highlighted that other factors, such as service quality, product variety, and overall shopping experience, may play more substantial roles in determining customer satisfaction levels.

- The study's findings further highlight that, within the context of the studied apparel retail stores, marital status does not appear to significantly influence customer loyalty. This indicates that customers, regardless of their marital status, tend to demonstrate similar levels of loyalty towards the apparel store. The stores are successful in fostering loyalty among a diverse customer base, suggesting that factors other than marital status, such as service quality, convenience, or product offerings, may have a more pronounced impact on customer loyalty. These findings align with prior research that has also indicated that marital status may not be a primary factor influencing customer loyalty in various retail contexts (Brown & Lee, 2019; Wang & Hing, 2019). Studies have emphasized that other factors, such as service quality, product variety, and overall shopping experience, may play more substantial roles in determining customer loyalty levels. This consistency with previous research reinforces the notion that marital status may not be a critical driver of customer loyalty in the apparel retail industry.

- The study's findings reveal that, within the context of the studied apparel retail stores, monthly income does not significantly impact customer satisfaction. This suggests that the stores are successful in maintaining consistent levels of service quality and meeting customer expectations across different income brackets. Retailers can continue to focus on broader strategies, such as service quality and product offerings, to enhance customer satisfaction, without the need for specific adjustments based on income levels. Research by Balaji and Rajendran (2016) reveals that although income can impact certain aspects of consumer behavior, it does not exclusively dictate customer satisfaction. Baker (2005) also found no significant difference in satisfaction levels among customers with varying income levels in the context of grocery stores.
- In the context of the analyzed apparel retail stores, the findings of this study show that monthly income levels do not appear to have a significant influence on customer loyalty. Customers with different income levels exhibit relatively consistent levels of loyalty, suggesting that factors beyond income, such as service quality and product offerings, may play a more substantial role in influencing customer loyalty. This aligns with previous research that has explored the relationship between income levels and customer loyalty in various retail contexts, finding similar patterns of consistent loyalty across income groups (Balaji & Rajendran, 2016; Kaminakis et al., 2016). These findings have important implications for retailers. Rather than tailoring loyalty-building strategies based on income levels, it may be more effective for retailers to focus on broader strategies such as enhancing overall service quality and offering appealing products. By prioritizing these aspects, retailers can foster customer loyalty across a diverse range of income levels, ultimately contributing to long-term business success.
- The study's findings regarding buying profiles reveal distinct patterns in customer behavior. A majority of respondents (57%) reported occasional visits to the same apparel store, indicating a willingness to explore different options. This highlights the importance of maintaining competitive advantages to retain their loyalty. Additionally, 30.17% mentioned rare visits to the same apparel store, emphasizing the need for consistent efforts in delivering exceptional customer experiences to retain this segment. A smaller yet dedicated customer segment (12.83%) reported very frequent visits to the same apparel store, showcasing a strong affinity for a specific store. Recognizing and appreciating these customers' loyalty through personalized

gestures or exclusive offers can further solidify their attachment to the store. Overall, these findings underscore the significance of customer-centric strategies tailored to varying buying patterns for long-term business success.

- A significant portion of respondents (44.8%) prefer to shop during various occasions, including festivals, weddings, and sales events. This highlights the importance of synchronizing marketing efforts with these key events to maximize customer engagement. Notably, 23.3% of respondents specifically mentioned weddings as a preferred time for apparel shopping, suggesting the effectiveness of offering targeted promotions for wedding attire. Additionally, 6% of respondents indicated a preference for shopping during festivals, underlining the significance of tailoring gestures for diverse cultural and celebratory occasions. These insights provide valuable guidance for retailers in planning strategic goodwill gestures to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- The study's findings on the primary reasons for purchasing apparel from stores offer valuable insights into customer behaviour. The majority of respondents (30.7%) cited a combination of factors as their main motivation, indicating that purchasing decisions are influenced by multiple considerations. Notably, 26.17% of participants emphasized the importance of physically inspecting products in-store, highlighting the significance of the in-store experience. Additionally, 21.8% expressed a keen interest in exploring new collections, emphasizing the need to stay current with fashion trends. Another notable revelation is that 12.3% of participants associate apparel shopping with happiness, indicating that it goes beyond a mere transaction and provides a sense of satisfaction. These diverse motivations provide retailers with a clear understanding of their customers' preferences, enabling them to tailor strategies and goodwill gestures to effectively connect with their customer base.
- A significant portion of participants (31.8%) expressed a willingness to travel 15 kilometers or more, indicating the importance of the selected retail establishments in the region. Additionally, 30% of respondents were comfortable with a travel distance ranging from 5 to less than 10 kilometers, highlighting a substantial customer base within this range. Furthermore, 19% of participants were inclined to visit stores located 1 to less than 5 kilometers from their location, emphasizing the significance of accessibility and convenience. This information holds valuable implications for retailers, underlining the catchment areas with the highest potential for customer

footfall. It also stresses the relevance of location strategies in the retail sector, along with the influence of factors such as parking availability and transportation links on customer behavior.

- The study delivers valuable insights into the retail preferences of the respondents. Vishal Mega Mart emerges as the most frequented retail store, with 25.2% of participants expressing a preference for this establishment. Following closely, Shoppers Stop and Reliance Trends capture 19.7% and 15.8% of the respondents' preferences, respectively. Pantaloons and Lifestyle Stores also attract a notable customer base, with 14.7% and 8.5% of respondents indicating a preference for these retailers. This data is instrumental for retailers in understanding customer loyalty and provides an opportunity to implement strategies to enhance customer retention. Furthermore, it highlights the competitive landscape, allowing retailers to identify areas for improvement to stay competitive in the market. Overall, the table underscores the significance of brand reputation and customer experience in shaping consumer preferences within the apparel retail sector.
- Again the study provides crucial insights into the importance customers place on employees' behavior when making purchases at apparel stores. A significant majority, comprising 74.2% of respondents, indicated that they do indeed pay attention to the behavior of employees. This underscores the pivotal role that employee conduct plays in shaping customer perceptions and satisfaction. On the other hand, 10.8% of participants indicated that they do not specifically consider employee behavior, while 15% expressed some uncertainty, suggesting that there may be room for improvement in the clarity or effectiveness of employee-customer interactions. This data underscores the need for retailers to prioritize employee training and customer service initiatives, as they directly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. It also highlights an area of opportunity for retailers to differentiate themselves in a competitive market by providing exceptional employee-customer interactions.

2. Examine the Different Employees' Goodwill Gestures that can attract the Customers

This study goes beyond demographic analysis and analyses the realm of customer service quality. Its primary aim is to thoroughly investigate the various goodwill gestures exhibited by employees that have the potential to captivate customers. These gestures encompass

critical dimensions of service efficiency, enjoyable interaction, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, courtesy, and a friendly attitude. In order to improve the overall customer experience, it is essential to understand how these elements make a positive impact on customers' satisfaction and loyalty. In an era where exceptional service has become a cornerstone of competitive advantage, this investigation aims to illuminate the specific behaviours and attributes that can leave a lasting positive impression on patrons. Through a comprehensive examination of these dimensions, this study strives to offer actionable insights for businesses aspiring to excel in customer relations.

- The analysis of various dimensions of service quality within the apparel store provides valuable insights for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customers expressed a desire for more personalized interactions, emphasizing the importance of individual attention. To address this, the store can implement training programs to empower employees in providing tailored recommendations and actively engaging with customers. Additionally, customers indicated a need for improved time efficiency during their shopping experience. Streamlining processes, utilizing technology for quicker transactions, and optimizing store layouts can contribute to a more time-effective experience. Furthermore, efforts to establish a reputation for service excellence through testimonials and clear communication of service commitments can enhance customers' perception of the store. Addressing concerns about waiting times at the cash counter by optimizing staffing levels and introducing multiple checkout points can also contribute to a more seamless experience. Finally, aligning customer experiences with their initial expectations through transparent advertising and seeking regular feedback are key strategies to ensure the store consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations. These insights provide a roadmap for the store to elevate its service quality and ultimately foster greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- The analysis of the dimension of enjoyable interaction within the apparel store reveals highly positive customer-employee dynamics. Customers perceive their interactions as comfortable, warm, and characterized by mutual confidence and rapport. This indicates that employees excel in creating a welcoming and pleasant environment, establishing trust, and fostering camaraderie with customers. These positive interactions play a vital role in customer satisfaction, as customers are more likely to come back to a store where they feel valued and at ease. Additionally, they contribute

significantly to customer loyalty, as customers tend to build strong attachments with stores where they have enjoyable experiences. Overall, the store's success in facilitating such positive interactions is a key factor in its capability to attract and retain a loyal customer base, highlighting the importance of continued emphasis on creating enjoyable customer-employee interactions.

- The evaluation of empathy within the apparel store reveals specific areas where customer service could be enhanced. While customers generally appreciate the store's efforts, there are opportunities for improvement. Making customers feel special upon entering the store received a score suggesting some room for improvement. Similarly, ensuring customers do not feel pressured to make purchases and improving the handling of returns and exchanges are important areas for enhancement. Additionally, establishing good eye contact and consistently welcoming feedback in a positive manner are key components of empathetic customer service where slight improvements could be made. By addressing these areas, the store can significantly improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately contributing to a more positive overall shopping experience.
- The study highlights the significance of responsiveness in the apparel store's customer service. The mean scores indicate that customers generally perceive employees as being quick and effective in their responses to various situations. This includes promptly addressing complaints, rectifying discrepancies, and providing knowledgeable assistance. These positive interactions build confidence and trust in the services provided. However, the slightly lower score related to the clarity of the refund policy explanation suggests an area for improvement in communication. By ensuring policies are explained clearly and comprehensively, the store can further enhance customer trust and satisfaction. Overall, this dimension of responsiveness showcases the store's customer-centric approach, significantly contributing to overall customer satisfaction and the potential for long-term loyalty.
- The findings emphasize the importance of active listening skills demonstrated by employees in the apparel store. The mean scores, all exceeding 3, indicate that customers perceive the employees as attentive, receptive, and respectful in their communication. This implies that employees make genuine efforts to understand and value customer opinions, even in situations where there may be disagreements. Additionally, the acknowledgment of employees' ability to grasp underlying meanings

beyond spoken words showcases a level of empathy and consideration that transcends mere transactional interactions. Furthermore, the positive scores related to employees refraining from interruptions and utilizing comfortable silences demonstrate a patient and attentive approach to customer conversations. This dimension of active listening plays a vital role in building trust and rapport between employees and customers, ultimately contributing significantly to overall customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the store.

- The findings further provide insights into the courtesy exhibited by employees in the apparel store. While the mean scores are slightly below 3, indicating a perception leaning towards disagreement or neutrality, there are still positive aspects to consider. Customers appreciate when employees take responsibility and apologize for any mistakes made, demonstrating a level of accountability. Additionally, the acknowledgment of employees exhibiting proper etiquette and being seen as trustworthy, believable, and honest are important attributes for fostering a sense of trust and reliability. The aspect of dealing with customers in a caring and polite manner highlights the significance of empathy and respect in customer interactions. Moreover, the recognition of employees meeting the special needs of handicapped customers and considering cultural values showcases inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Although there may be room for improvement, these courteous gestures contribute to creating a more positive and welcoming environment, ultimately impacting customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the store.
- The variable "Friendly Attitude" assesses the demeanor and disposition of employees towards customers within the apparel store setting. It focuses on aspects related to how approachable, warm, and accommodating employees are during customer interactions, which significantly influences a customer's perception of the store. The data reveals positive aspects in this dimension. Employees are perceived as generally friendly and effective communicators, contributing to a positive customer experience. Efforts are made to greet customers warmly, indicating a welcoming atmosphere. Additionally, there are initiatives to provide extra benefits to regular customers, which can foster customer loyalty. However, there are areas for improvement. Tactfulness and encouragement in interactions could be enhanced to create even more positive customer experiences. Strengthening social skills can lead to smoother interactions and potentially higher levels of customer satisfaction. Overall, the findings indicate

that employees have a good foundation in providing friendly customer service, but there are opportunities to further enhance their approachability and interaction skills. These improvements can lead to more positive customer experiences, potentially resulting in higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty towards the store.

3. Impact of Gesture of Goodwill in Influencing Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

The study's structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, conducted through the sophisticated Smart PLS 4 platform, is poised to unravel the intricate relationships between these key factors. SEM provides a robust analytical framework that allows us to not only assess the direct impact of these dimensions on customer satisfaction. By employing this advanced methodology, we aim to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how employees' gestures of goodwill reverberate through the customer journey, ultimately influencing their satisfaction levels and, in turn, their loyalty to the brand.

1. The study explores the impact of the Gesture of Goodwill on Customer Satisfaction, focusing on the hypothesis that posits a positive relationship between being an Active Listener and Customer Satisfaction. The results support this hypothesis, indicating that when employees actively engage with customers, it fosters a sense of value and importance. This is achieved through behaviors like attentiveness, open-mindedness, and providing undivided attention. Additionally, understanding customer needs, seeking clarification, and demonstrating empathy, even during disagreements, contribute to a positive and supportive interaction. The use of comfortable silences and a preference for factual information further enhance trust and reliability. These findings align with prior research by Smith et al. (2019) and Johnson & Kiser (2018), highlighting the pivotal role of active listening in creating positive customer experiences and driving satisfaction levels. These results emphasize the need for organizations, especially in the apparel industry, to invest in training programs that enhance active listening skills among their employees. This customer-centric approach not only addresses immediate needs but also builds long-term loyalty and positive brand perception, ultimately leading to improved customer retention and increased business success (Smith et al., 2019; Johnson & Kiser, 2018).
2. Hypothesis 2 (H2) posits a positive relationship between the Courteous behaviour of employees and Customer Satisfaction in the context of the apparel store. Courteousness encompasses various aspects such as greeting customers with a smile,

apologizing for mistakes, displaying proper etiquette, being trustworthy, and demonstrating a caring and polite manner. The results of hypothesis testing confirm a significant positive connection between Courteous behavior and Customer Satisfaction. This suggests that customers who perceive employees as courteous and considerate in their interactions are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided. This finding aligns with prior research that emphasizes the crucial role of courtesy in customer service interactions. Studies have consistently shown that courteous behavior not only enhances customer satisfaction but also contributes to customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Singh & Krishnan, 2018; Mattila & Enz, 2002). Therefore, it is essential for organizations, particularly in the apparel industry, to prioritize training programs that cultivate and reinforce courteous behavior among their employees. This investment in customer service excellence can lead to improved customer retention and ultimately contribute to the overall success and reputation of the business.

3. Hypothesis 3 (H3) asserts that there is a positive relationship between Enjoyable Interaction and Customer Satisfaction. This suggests that customers who experience enjoyable interactions with employees, characterized by comfort, warmth, confidence-building, enjoyable problem-solving, and clear communication, are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided.
4. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the pivotal role of enjoyable interactions in customer satisfaction (Mattila & Enz, 2002; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Studies have consistently shown that positive, engaging interactions with employees lead to increased customer satisfaction levels and contribute to customer loyalty (Verhoef et al., 2009; Andreassen et al., 2010). Practically, this underscores the importance of training employees not only in the technical aspects of their roles but also in fostering positive, enjoyable interactions with customers. This could involve developing soft skills such as empathy, effective communication, and relationship-building, which are pivotal in creating a positive and memorable customer experience. Ultimately, investing in enjoyable interactions can lead to enhanced customer satisfaction and, subsequently, increased customer loyalty and advocacy for the apparel store.
5. Hypothesis 4 (H4) proposes a positive relationship between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction. This implies that customers who perceive employees as empathetic,

understanding, and responsive to their needs and concerns are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided. This finding resonates with previous research highlighting the pivotal role of empathy in customer satisfaction (Liao & Chuang, 2004; Mattila & Enz, 2002). Studies consistently demonstrate that when employees display empathy towards customers, it leads to increased satisfaction levels and fosters positive customer perceptions. Practically, this underscores the importance of fostering an empathetic customer-service culture within the apparel store. This involves training employees to actively listen, understand customer needs, and respond in a caring and responsive manner. Moreover, creating an environment where employees feel empowered to handle returns, exchanges, and customer feedback with empathy can further enhance customer satisfaction levels and contribute to building long-term customer relationships.

6. Hypothesis 5 (H5) suggests a positive relationship between a Friendly Attitude of employees and Customer Satisfaction. This indicates that customers who perceive employees as friendly, welcoming, tactful, and socially adept are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided. Previous studies have consistently emphasized the impact of employee friendliness on customer satisfaction (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006; Miao, Mattila, & Mount, 2018). When employees exhibit a friendly demeanor, it creates a positive atmosphere, enhances customer comfort, and fosters a sense of trust and rapport. Practically, this underscores the importance of instilling and reinforcing a friendly attitude among employees in the apparel store. Training programs that emphasize the value of warm welcomes, friendly interactions, and the recognition of regular customers can go a long way in enhancing overall customer satisfaction levels and building lasting customer relationships.
7. Hypothesis 6 (H6) posits a positive relationship between the Responsiveness of employees and Customer Satisfaction. This implies that customers who perceive employees as prompt, knowledgeable, and attentive to their needs are more likely to express greater levels of contentment with the offered services. Previous research consistently highlights the importance of employee responsiveness in influencing customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Kim, 2016). When employees promptly address customer concerns or requests, it conveys a sense of attentiveness, care, and competence, which positively impacts customer perceptions.

In practical terms, this underscores the significance of training employees to be responsive, well-informed, and proactive in meeting customer needs. Additionally, it emphasizes the value of effective complaint resolution and clear communication about policies, contributing to enhanced overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

8. Hypothesis 7 (H7) proposes a positive relationship between Service Efficiency and Customer Satisfaction. This signifies that consumers are more likely to express greater levels of satisfaction with the service received if they believe the store is effective, timely, and attentive to their requirements. Prior studies have repeatedly highlighted the critical impact that service effectiveness plays in determining customer happiness (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Efficient service delivery not only saves customers' time but also contributes to an overall positive perception of the store. From a practical standpoint, these results underscore the importance of streamlining operations and ensuring that employees are equipped to provide efficient and prompt service. This not only enhances customer satisfaction but also positively impacts their overall shopping experience and perception of the store's service quality.
9. Hypothesis 8 (H8) posits a positive relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty, particularly in terms of repurchase intention. This suggests that when customers have positive experiences and are happy with the services they received by the apparel store, they are more inclined to return for future purchases. Customer Satisfaction plays a pivotal role in shaping a customer's perception of the store. When a customer feels satisfied, it indicates that their expectations and needs have been met or exceeded. This positive experience can lead to a sense of trust, comfort, and confidence in the store and its offerings. As a result, the customer is more likely to consider the store as their first choice when making future purchases. Furthermore, the intention to repurchase signifies a strong level of commitment and loyalty. It indicates that the customer not only had a satisfactory experience but also values the store enough to choose it over other alternatives in the future. This intention can lead to repeated visits and purchases, contributing to customer retention. These findings align with prior studies that consistently emphasize the link between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention or customer loyalty (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Oliver, 1999). A satisfied customer is more likely to return to the same store for future purchases and is also more inclined to recommend it to others. From a

practical perspective, this underscores the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction as a strategy for fostering loyalty and repeat business. By ensuring that customers have positive experiences and are satisfied with the services provided, the store can increase the likelihood of customers returning for future purchases, thereby contributing to long-term customer loyalty.

5.2 Discussion on the Findings:

- The results of this study show that, in the retail clothing sector, consumer happiness and loyalty are more influenced by personalised experiences, high-quality service, and particular acts of kindness than by more conventional demographic variables like age, gender, or income. This research is more in line with recent findings that emphasise customer experience and service quality as more significant determinants of loyalty, as demonstrated by the work of Verhoef et al. (2009), than with earlier studies that frequently highlighted the role of gender or income in shaping loyalty—such as Mittal and Kamakura (2001), who emphasised that women tend to show stronger brand loyalty. With government and semi-government workers showing greater levels of brand loyalty and repeat purchases, occupation notably emerged as a key predictor of loyalty, signalling a move away from demographic segmentation and towards occupation-based initiatives. This backs up the claims made by Kumar and Shah (2004), who discovered that retention may be greatly increased by loyalty programs catered to particular client segments. In keeping with Tsarenko and Tojib's (2011) findings that tailored service builds stronger customer-brand relationships, it was also discovered that personalised goodwill gestures, like special discounts and greetings during cultural events or festivals, improved customer satisfaction across all demographic groups. These findings imply that, practically speaking, clothing retailers—especially in Punjab—should shift from conventional demographic segmentation to occupation-specific and experience-driven tactics. To improve retention and brand loyalty, for instance, retailers could launch loyalty programs aimed at government workers or plan promotions around important cultural or personal occasions, as suggested by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), who emphasise the growing significance of customer-centric strategies. By questioning the conventional dependence on demographic segmentation and reaffirming the significance of service quality and personalised experiences in fostering loyalty, this study theoretically adds to the growing corpus of literature. By arguing that experience-driven tactics, particularly occupation-based segmentation, may be more successful in keeping clients and cultivating loyalty, it builds on the research of academics like Pine and Gilmore (1998). This change creates new opportunities for studying occupation-based consumer behaviour in a variety of retail industries and areas going through cultural and economic change, like Punjab.

- The research's conclusions offer insightful information about the different acts of kindness that staff members exhibit and how they greatly affect patron loyalty and pleasure in clothing retail establishments. Customer experiences are greatly influenced by personalised and customer-centric service behaviours, according to an analysis of key aspects such as service efficiency, pleasant engagement, empathy, responsiveness, active listening, civility, and friendly attitudes. According to the report, customers value attentive service, relaxed conversations, and promptness from staff members, all of which improve their overall shopping experience and encourage loyalty. These findings are consistent with the increasing amount of research highlighting the significance of the customer experience in the retail industry. For example, this study goes beyond conventional demographic segmentation to highlight the close relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality and employee interactions, which is consistent with the findings of Verhoef et al. (2009). This research adds nuance by identifying particular goodwill gestures—like personalised greetings, prompt responses to complaints, and a friendly demeanor—that leave enduring positive impressions on customers. In contrast, previous studies, like Parasuraman et al. (1988), have concentrated on service quality dimensions. Additionally, this study identifies areas that could use work, such as managing returns, giving more precise explanations of refund guidelines, and boosting staff members' tact and empathy. These findings, which imply that spending money on staff training centred on empathy, active listening, and responsiveness might boost customer happiness and loyalty, are especially pertinent for companies trying to stand out in a crowded retail market. Theoretically, this study adds to the body of literature by reaffirming that customer service practices—rather than only product offerings—are essential for keeping customers. It encourages more research into the ways in which particular staff actions might strengthen enduring bonds with clients and increase loyalty in various retail industries. All things considered, these results offer a road map for merchants hoping to succeed in customer service, stressing the significance of developing a friendly and effective service atmosphere catered to the specific requirements of each client.
- The results of the study show that, in the setting of retail clothing businesses, staff' acts of kindness have a major beneficial influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty. According to Smith et al. (2019) and Johnson & Kiser (2018), customers perceive that attentive, empathetic, and understanding personnel increase their satisfaction, making active listening a crucial component. In line with research by Singh & Krishnan (2018) and Mattila & Enz (2002), courtesy, which includes smiling when greeting customers, using appropriate manners, and being polite, also had a substantial impact on customer satisfaction. The

results of Verhoef et al. (2009), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002), and Liao & Chuang (2004), who highlighted the significance of positive, engaging communication in establishing rapport and fostering trust, were also strongly correlated with customer satisfaction, as were pleasant interactions and empathy. Additionally, it was determined that customer perceptions were significantly shaped by employee friendliness, responsiveness, and service efficiency. Previous studies by Olorunniwo et al. (2006), Parasuraman et al. (1988), and Kim (2016) have highlighted the similar roles that these attributes play in promoting customer satisfaction and loyalty. Finally, the study confirmed the direct correlation between loyalty and customer satisfaction, especially with regard to repurchase intentions, which was consistent with research by Reichheld & Sasser (1990) and Oliver (1999). Practically speaking, this study emphasises how important it is for clothing stores to fund staff training initiatives that emphasise the development of soft skills like responsiveness, empathy, active listening, and politeness. Retailers may create a customer-centric service culture that not only meets urgent demands but also cultivates enduring consumer loyalty by improving these interpersonal abilities. Furthermore, improving customer satisfaction through operational simplification and service efficiency can lead to repeat business and favourable word-of-mouth referrals. The study adds to the body of knowledge on customer satisfaction and service quality from a theoretical standpoint by highlighting the importance of goodwill gestures as an essential part of the customer experience. By emphasising the particular actions—like active listening and empathy—that have a direct impact on customer loyalty in the retail clothing industry, it expands on current theories of customer happiness. In order to better understand customer behaviour in a variety of situations, the findings also imply that future study may examine how these goodwill gestures might differ among various retail environments or customer demographics.

5.3 Managerial Implications

The outcomes of this research have provided valuable insight into the key role of employee goodwill gestures in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty in the apparel retail sector. These implications offer actionable recommendations for managers and decision-makers seeking to improve the customer sustainability and drive business success. By strategically implementing the following managerial suggestions, businesses can not only elevate their customer service standards but also cultivate a loyal and satisfied customer base, ultimately resulting in persistent growth and competitiveness in the market.

- Invest in comprehensive training programs that focus on active listening, courtesy,

empathy, enjoyable interaction, responsiveness, and service efficiency. These skills are critical for enhancing customer satisfaction.

- Encourage employees to actively listen to customer concerns, show understanding, and respond with empathy. Creating an environment where employees feel empowered to handle returns, exchanges, and customer feedback with empathy can significantly enhance customer satisfaction.
- Train employees to greet customers with a smile, apologize for mistakes, exhibit proper etiquette, and demonstrate a caring and polite manner. These courteous gestures contribute to creating a more positive and welcoming environment, impacting customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Equip employees with the knowledge and skills to be prompt, knowledgeable, and attentive to customer needs. Effective complaint resolution and clear communication about policies are crucial for enhancing overall customer satisfaction.
- Instill and reinforce a friendly attitude among employees, emphasizing warm welcomes, friendly interactions, and the recognition of regular customers. This contributes to enhanced overall customer satisfaction levels and builds lasting customer relationships.
- Ensure that employees are equipped to provide efficient and prompt service. Streamlining operations not only saves customers' time but also contributes to an overall positive perception of the store.
- Implement regular customer satisfaction surveys or feedback mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of employee goodwill gestures. To identify areas for improvement and track progress over time, use this feedback.
- Implement a recognition program to acknowledge and reward employees who consistently demonstrate exceptional customer service. This encourages a culture of customer-centricity and reinforces positive behaviors.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of training programs in enhancing employee goodwill gestures. Make necessary adjustments based on feedback and evolving customer preferences.
- Foster a culture where every employee understands the importance of customer satisfaction and actively works towards exceeding customer expectations. This mindset should be reflected in daily interactions with customers.
- Implement technology solutions, such as CRM systems or customer feedback platforms, to gather and analyze customer data. This information can provide valuable insights for tailoring employee goodwill gestures to meet specific customer needs and preferences.
- Stay informed about industry trends and best practices in customer service. Benchmarking against successful competitors can provide valuable insights for improving employee

goodwill gestures and enhancing customer satisfaction.

- Empower employees to make decisions that benefit the customer without excessive oversight. This autonomy allows for more personalized and effective responses to customer needs, ultimately leading to higher satisfaction levels.
- Recognize and incentivize customers who repeatedly choose the store for their apparel purchases. This can include discounts, exclusive offers, or VIP perks, fostering a sense of appreciation and loyalty.
- Provide opportunities for employees to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions related to customer interactions. This feedback can inform ongoing training initiatives and help identify areas for improvement.
- A happy and motivated workforce is more likely to deliver exceptional customer service. Implement initiatives that prioritize employee well-being, recognition, and career development to ensure they are equipped to provide outstanding service.
- In order to address concerns, express gratitude for positive feedback and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement, actively engage with customers on digital platforms. This also provides an opportunity to gather valuable insights into customer preferences.
- Provide various channels for customers to reach out for assistance, including in-store, phone, email, and chat support. Ensuring consistent and reliable communication channels enhances accessibility and convenience for customers.
- Evaluate employee performance through anonymous assessments to obtain valuable insights into the actual customer experience. Use these findings to tailor training programs and address specific areas for improvement.
- Establish a system for collecting and acting on customer feedback in real-time. This enables immediate recognition of outstanding service and prompt resolution of any issues, demonstrating a commitment to customer satisfaction.
- Leverage customer data to offer personalized recommendations, promotions, and experiences. Tailoring interactions to individual preferences creates a more meaningful and memorable customer experience.
- Foster collaboration between departments, such as sales, marketing, and customer service, to ensure a seamless and consistent customer experience across all touch points.
- Embrace innovative solutions that enhance the customer experience, such as AI- powered chat bots, virtual fitting rooms, or augmented reality experiences. Staying at the forefront of technological advancements demonstrates a commitment to providing cutting-edge service.
- Define specific benchmarks for employee performance in customer interactions. This sets clear expectations and provides a framework for evaluating and recognizing exceptional

service.

- Highlight and share stories of exceptional customer service within the organization to inspire and motivate employees. Recognizing outstanding efforts reinforces a culture of customer-centricity.
- Gather insights directly from customers to understand their evolving preferences and expectations. This data-driven approach informs strategic decisions and helps prioritize areas for improvement in employee goodwill gestures.

5.4 Social Implications

The social implications drawn from this study underscore the far-reaching effects of implementing effective employee goodwill gestures within the apparel retail sector. Beyond the confines of individual customer interactions, these gestures have the potential to influence broader societal dynamics. By fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and trust-building environment, retailers can contribute to the overall well-being of their customers. Additionally, the positive word-of-mouth generated by satisfied patrons can extend the store's reputation throughout the community, potentially strengthening local ties. Moreover, prioritizing soft skill development for employees not only enhances customer experiences but also contributes to their personal and professional growth. Ultimately, these social implications emphasize that the impact of employee goodwill gestures transcends the confines of the store, permeating into the fabric of the community and society at large.

- Implementing effective employee goodwill gestures can lead to more positive and enjoyable customer interactions, contributing to an overall improved shopping experience.
- Courteous behavior, active listening, and empathy create a welcoming environment, making the store accessible and appealing to a diverse customer base, including those with special needs or specific cultural values.
- Satisfied consumers are more likely to share their excellent experience with others, which might result in favorable word-of-mouth recommendations and draw in new business.
- Employees exhibiting courteousness, empathy, and responsiveness build trust with customers. This trust forms the basis of a long-term, reliable customer-store relationship.
- Enjoyable interactions and empathetic behavior contribute to customers' emotional well-being during their shopping experiences, potentially reducing stress and increasing overall satisfaction.
- A store known for its friendly and welcoming atmosphere can become a positive fixture in the community, potentially leading to increased local support and patronage.
- Encouraging and training employees in active listening, empathy, and courtesy not only benefits the store but also contributes to the personal and professional growth of the employees.
- When businesses prioritize customer satisfaction through employee goodwill gestures, they set a positive standard for customer service in the broader retail industry.

- Contented customers are more likely to become loyal patrons, making repeat visits and purchases, in turn, it contributes to the long-term success and stability of the store.
- These social implications collectively highlight the positive impact that effective employee goodwill gestures can have on the broader community and society at large, beyond the immediate customer-store interaction.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this comprehensive study delved into the crucial aspect of employee goodwill gestures in determining the level of customer satisfaction in the apparel retail sector. Through meticulous analysis and hypothesis testing, we unveiled significant relationships between various dimensions of employee behavior and customer satisfaction. The findings unequivocally emphasize that attributes such as active listening, courtesy, enjoyable interaction, empathy, a friendly attitude, responsiveness, service efficiency, and overall store quality directly influence how customers perceive and interact with the store. Furthermore, our study establishes a strong connection between satisfaction level of customer and loyalty, particularly in terms of repurchase intention. Delighted customers are not only more likely to return for future purchases, but they also tend to advocate for the store, potentially expanding its customer base through positive word-of-mouth. The implications of this research are vast, offering valuable insights for both managers in the apparel retail sector and scholars in the field of customer service. By investing in employee training programs that focus on these crucial dimensions, retailers can significantly enhance customer experiences and, consequently, drive customer loyalty and business success.

Ultimately, this study illuminates the multifaceted impact of employee goodwill gestures, not only on individual customer interactions but also on the broader social and managerial landscape. The lessons gleaned from this research are poised to revolutionize customer service strategies in the apparel retail sector, elevating the industry to new heights of customer-centric excellence.

5.6 Scope for Future Research

As current research has offered insightful information on the influence of employee goodwill gestures on customer satisfaction within the apparel retail sector, it also uncovers avenues for future research. Exploring these areas further can result in an improved understanding of customer service dynamics and open up new possibilities for enhancing customer experiences.

- Conducting similar research in different retail sectors can offer comparative insights into how employee goodwill gestures vary in their impact based on the nature of the industry.
- Long-term studies tracking customer satisfaction and loyalty over extended periods can offer insightful information on the sustainability of the observed relationships and how they evolve over time.
- Investigating the effectiveness of specific training programs aimed at enhancing employee behavior and goodwill gestures in driving customer satisfaction can offer practical insights for managers.
- Research on how emerging technologies, such as AI-driven customer service interfaces or personalized recommendation systems, influence customer satisfaction and their interaction with employees.
- Research into how employee goodwill gestures extend to digital channels and how they impact overall customer satisfaction and loyalty in an omni channel framework.

Future research in these areas has the potential to enrich our understanding of the nuanced dynamics between employee behavior and customer satisfaction, contributing to the continual improvement of customer service strategies in the retail industry. These investigations will serve as a foundation for enhancing customer experiences and driving business success in the evolving landscape of customer-centric retail.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Examining the Role of Employees' Gesture of Goodwill on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty - A Study of Select Apparel Retail Stores in Punjab

Dear Respondents

I am a Research student, at Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, India. This questionnaire has been prepared as part of my research in the domain of **“Examining the role of employees' gesture of Goodwill on customers' satisfaction and loyalty - A study of select apparel retail stores in Punjab”**. I request you to spare some of your valuable time and fill up the questionnaire. The information provided by you will be used for research purpose only.

Section –I DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name:

Email:

City:

Gender: 1. ☐ Male 2. ☐ Female 3. ☐ Others

Age (Years): 1. ☐ 18-25 2. ☐ 25-32 3. ☐ 32-39
4. ☐ 39-46 5. ☐ 46-53 6. ☐ 53-60
7. ☐ 60& above

Education: 1. ☐ Matric 2. ☐ Secondary 3. ☐ Under-graduate
4. ☐ Postgraduate 5. ☐ Doctorate
10. ☐ Other

Occupation: 1. ☐ Government 2. ☐ Semi-government 3. ☐ Public
4. ☐ Private 5. ☐ Self-occupied 6. ☐ Other

Marital Status: 1. ☐ Unmarried 2. ☐ Married 3. ☐ Divorcee
4. ☐ Widow/widower

Monthly Income: 1. ☐ Less than 20000 2. ☐ 20000-40000 3. ☐ 40000-60000
4. ☐ 60000-80000 5. ☐ 80000-100000 6. ☐ 100000 & Above

Section –II

I. How frequently you buy from same apparel store?

1. ☐ Very Frequently 2. ☐ Occasionally 3. ☐ Rarely

II. On what time do you prefer to buy your apparels?

1. ☐ On Festivals
2. ☐ On wedding
3. ☐ On Sales Offer
4. ☐ On season ending/starting
5. ☐ All of the above

III. What is your main reason of buying apparels from stores?

1. ☐ To check the new collection in market
2. ☐ It makes you to feel happy when you go outside.
3. ☐ To check the product personally
4. ☐ To check how the outfit looks on you (size)
5. ☐ All of the above

IV. How long you travel to visit the store?

1. ☐ 1 to less than 5km
2. ☐ 5km to less than 10km
3. ☐ 10km to less than 15km
4. ☐ 15km and above

V. Which retail store do you visit more frequently?

1. ☐ Reliance Trends
2. ☐ Shoppers Stop
3. ☐ Vishal Mega Mart
4. ☐ Pantaloons
5. ☐ Lifestyle Stores
6. ☐ Others

V. Do you check employees' behavior while buying from apparel store?

1. ☐ Yes 2. ☐ No 3. ☐ Maybe

Section –III

(A) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Service Efficiency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees of this apparel store are always willing to help me.					
2. This apparel store's employees give me individual attention.					
3. Buying from this apparel store is an efficient way to manage my time.					
4. When I think of this apparel store, I think of service excellence.					
5. Their employees provided prompt and quick service.					
6. Waiting time at the cash counter is short.					
7. In general, the service of this apparel store is much better than I expected.					

(B) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stand for strongly agree.

Enjoyable Interaction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. In thinking about my interaction, I have a comfortable interaction with Employees on my every visit.					
2. Employees create a feeling of “warmth” in our relationship.					
3. Behavior of Employees instils confidence in me.					
4. Employees enjoyed assisting me with solving my problems.					
5. I got along well with the Employees.					
6. Employees make me feel delighted with their services at the store.					
7. Employees tell customers exactly what will be performed					

(C) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Empathy	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees are willing to take my perspective and to understand my needs.					
2. Employees make you to feel special as you enter this apparel store.					
3. Employees of this apparel store do not pressurize me to buy a product in which I am not interested.					
4. Employees of this apparel store are always willing to handle my return and exchange.					
5. Employees of this apparel store make a good eye contact with customers.					
6. Employees are always ready to welcome feedback from customers in a positive manner.					

(D) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Responsiveness	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees are willing and enthusiastic to respond to my request.					
2. Employees handle customers' complaint directly and immediately.					
3. Employees in this apparel store quickly corrected anything that was wrong.					
4. Employees have the required knowledge to answer customers' questions.					
5. Employees respond to customers' needs in a timely manner.					
6. Employees in this apparel store are never too busy to respond to customer's request.					
7. Employees in this store explain about refund policy very clearly to the customers.					
8. Employees in this apparel store sends e-mail and messages for special offers frequently.					

(E) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Active Listener	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees of this apparel store are always ready to listen to me carefully.					
2. Employees give me indications that they seriously consider my opinion.					
3. Employees encourage me to clarify a problem.					
4. I feel that Employees listen to me even when we disagree.					
5. Employees understand for more than just the spoken words.					
6. Employees are careful not to interrupt me while I speak.					
7. Employees use (comfortable) silences in the conversation.					
8. Employees prefer to hear facts and evidence.					

(F) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Courteous	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees of this apparel store welcome me with smile.					
2. Employees of this apparel store apologize when mistakes are made.					
3. Employees of this apparel store exhibit proper etiquette when dealing with customers.					
4. Employees of this apparel store are trustworthy, believable and honest.					
5. Employees of this apparel store deal with customers in a caring and polite manner.					
6. Employees in this apparel store meet the special needs of handicapped customers.					
7. Employees of this store place a high value on customer service.					
8. Employees of this store consider the culture values of the area.					

(G) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Friendly Attitude	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Conducive environment for conversation with Employees of this apparel store.					
2. The Employees are friendly communicator.					
3. Employees of this apparel store greet customers with a friendly welcome and big smile.					
4. The Employees tend to be tactful and encouraging to customers.					
5. The employees made broadband list of their regular customers to provide additional benefits to them.					
6. The employees of this store have extensive social skills.					
7. The employees of this store know how to treat a customer well.					

(H) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Customer satisfaction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I'm satisfied with the employees' goodwill gesture.					
2. I'm satisfied with the service efficiency of employees.					
3. Employee exhibit proper etiquette when dealing with customers.					
4. Employees listen to the customers with empathy and responds in a good manner.					
5. I'm satisfied with employee's responsive behavior about dealing my needs.					
6. The employees fulfilled my expectations.					
7. On an overall basis, my experience with employees has been positive.					

(I) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Customer loyalty - Repurchase intention	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. When I need to make a purchase, this apparel store will be my first choice.					
2. I am ready to travel extra miles to buy from this apparel store					
3. My choice to purchase from this apparel store was a wise one					
4. I expect to stay with this apparel store for a long period of time					
5. This apparel store stimulates me to buy repeatedly.					
6. I plan to increase my frequency of visits to this apparel store.					
7. I would classify myself as a loyal customer of this apparel store.					

THANK YOU

List of Publications

- Paper Published in Scopus Indexed Journal Educational Administration: Theory and Practice titled as “Understanding the Impact of Gestures to mitigate the negative impact of service failure”.
- Paper published in UGC CARE, Peer Reviewed and Refereed Journal of Economics by Rabindra Bharati University titled as “A Study on Association between Socio Demographic Factors and Customer Satisfaction in Retail Sector in Punjab”.
- Paper published in International Journal for Innovative Research In Multi-Disciplinary Field titled as “Rethinking and Resetting Marketing Strategies for the endurance in post pandemic period”.

List of Conferences

- Paper presented in International conference held by Mudhoji College, Phaltan, titled “Role of Social Media in Customer Relationship Management of Retail Sector in India”.
- Paper presented in National conference held by Pyramid College of Business & Technology, Phagwara titled as “A Study on Association between Socio-Demographic Factors and Customer satisfaction in retail sector in Punjab.”
- Paper presented in International conference held by Central University of Jammu titled as “Changing Consumer Buying Behavior and Market Dynamics in Post Covid-19 Era”.

List of Workshops

- Attended International workshop on “Academic Writing and Publishing in Quality Journals” organized by HVM College, Jalandhar.
- Attended workshop on “Intellectual Property Rights” organized by Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab.
- Attended workshop on SPSS SEM: Scratch to advanced course by Udemy.

PAPER 1

Article

Understanding The Impact Of Gestures To Mitigate The Negative Impact Of Service Failure

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Citation: Ms.Rohini Marwaha, Dr. Richa Bhatia (2024), Understanding The Impact Of Gestures To Mitigate The Negative Impact Of Service Failure. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 2266-2280

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i3.3971

This research paper delves into the significant role that gestures play in the context of service recovery tactics, exploring how they affect brand perception, customer happiness, and loyalty development. This study embarks on a journey to uncover their profound influence on forming customer perceptions after instances of service failure by engaging in a thorough exploration of a variety of gestures, including polite interactions, compassionate responses, active listening, and efficient service delivery. The study carefully examines the nuanced ways that various gestures affect emotional regulation, drive customer satisfaction levels, affect retention rates, direct online suggestions, and word-of-mouth referrals by using a meticulously designed approach. Customer satisfaction plays a crucial part in the inquiry which is considered as a key element that shapes repurchase intentions as well as loyalty. The study reveals particular behaviours through an empirical analysis that directly increase customer satisfaction, such as politeness and nice interactions, demonstrating their significant ability to improve the entire service recovery experience. Parallel to this, the research reveals deeper implications, showing how actions like empathy and engaged listening may develop good impressions through other channels even when they don't directly affect consumer satisfaction. This study provides organizations with practical knowledge to modify the service restoration paradigms by illuminating the nuanced subtleties of gesture dynamics in service recovery. Utilizing the consequences of this research, businesses may respond to service lapses with precision, tailoring their actions to the requirements of their customers. This comprehensive understanding equips companies to plan memorable client encounters, build long-lasting bonds, and solidify their positions in a cutthroat industry.

Keywords: Service recovery, gestures, customer satisfaction, emotional regulation, brand perception, repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth referrals.

JEL classification codes: L8, M0,

Introduction

Service failures are an unavoidable aspect of any customer-oriented business and despite the best efforts by businesses, occasional errors, shortcomings, and lapses can take place, leaving customers frustrated and dissatisfied. Service failures can negatively impact the reputation of the business, customer loyalty, and its overall success. However, how organizations handle these setbacks may have a big impact on their ability to win back the confidence and loyalty of their customers (Hess Jr. et al., 2003). In this situation, gestures are essential to service recovery because they provide a chance to repair damaged customer relationships and lessen the consequences of service failure.

The actions taken by the companies to rectify and address a service failure when it occurs are known as service recovery. Service recovery is a crucial stage where companies have the ability to convert a disgruntled consumer into a devoted supporter. Even though various strategies can be incorporated to mitigate service recovery, the use of gestures has shown to be particularly helpful in reducing negative feelings and regaining the trust of consumers.

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Gestures involve both verbal and nonverbal actions that reflect upon the commitment of the organization to resolve service failure issues and provide an exceptional customer service experience (Marinova et al., 2018). Verbal gestures involve empathetic statements, sincere apologies, clear communication, and active listening regarding the steps needed to be taken to resolve the issue. Nonverbal gestures, on the other hand, involve facial expressions, body language, and other visual cues that communicate authenticity and sincerity (Marinova et al., 2018).

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of gestures in mitigating the negative significance of service failures and improving customer loyalty and satisfaction. Through this study, we want to obtain insights into how companies can successfully use gestures to develop favorable customer perceptions and behavioral intentions by examining the function of both verbal and nonverbal cues in the service recovery process.

Importance of Service Recovery

Service failure is the result of various factors, including technical glitches, human errors, or communication breakdowns. Regardless of the cause, customers that experience service failures frequently experience elevated emotions, ranging from rage to disappointment. Rectifying and addressing these emotions quickly and efficiently becomes significant for the recovery of service (Amoako et al., 2021). Businesses that thrive at service recovery are frequently in a better position to keep consumers, generate good word-of-mouth, and establish lasting partnerships.

Verbal Cues in Service Recovery

The perceptions of customers during the service recovery process are greatly impacted by verbal cues such as choice of words, tone of voice, and apology content. A sincere and individual apology could go a long way in calming client annoyances and fostering trust. Verbal signals can assist in handling customer feelings and lessen ambiguity by establishing specific requirements and timetables for issue resolution (Marinova et al., 2018).

Nonverbal Cues in Service Recovery

Nonverbal cues are crucial in communicating authenticity and empathy in addition to accompanying spoken actions. Kindness, attentiveness, and a calming presence may help customers seem more at

ease and that their concerns are being treated seriously (Marinova et al., 2018). Emojis and other digitally employed visual cues, such as personalized characters, might humanize digital interactions and have a positive effect on a customer's emotional response.

Literature Review

(Arsenovic et al., 2022) investigated the influence of the compensation offered by the firms on customers' emotional responses and negative word-of-mouth behavior, which means the negative experiences shared by the customers with others. The effectiveness of compensation as a tactic for settling customer complaints in the retail industry is uncertain. In the research, the researcher examined whether the collaboration level during the service recovery process impacts the relationship between customers; emotional responses, and compensation. It investigates whether collective efforts affect the overall efficiency of compensation in minimizing adverse emotional responses and lowering derogatory behavior. The findings of the study indicate that collaboration throughout the recovery encounter is essential for compensation to successfully lower adverse emotional reactions and ensuing derogatory behavior. To put it another way, when businesses work together with consumers during the recovery process and provide compensation, it might encourage more positive emotional responses from the clients and discourage them from spreading bad rumours. Understanding the role of cooperation and compensation in the recovery process can have significant management and financial ramifications for retailers in terms of enhancing customer pleasure, brand loyalty, and general corporate reputation.

(Fu et al., 2015) conducted research to determine the impact of monetary or nonmonetary compensation when service failure occurs. The researchers investigated that when service failure happens, organizations incorporate various strategies to provide compensation to their customers to enhance their satisfaction. To arrive at the findings, the researchers conducted research on the hotel to look at the impact of monetary and nonmonetary compensation in case of service failure. The efficiency of various post-failure compensation mechanisms is investigated in this study using scenarios with diverse causal locations. Using the locus of failure in service to serve as the within-subject variable, the researchers used a 3 (locus of failed service: guest himself/herself, hotel, and other guests) x 4 (compensation type: monetary compensation, nonmonetary compensation, no compensation, and combined compensation) mixed-factorial experimental design. To avoid the consequences of sequence and tiredness, each one of the scenarios was done in a random sequence. By having 200, 225, 222, and 231 people respond to the four distinct kinds of questionnaires, respectively, a complete set of 878 valid questionnaires was collected. The study results indicated that in all the scenarios, the strategies that combined monetary and nonmonetary compensation led to higher customer satisfaction in comparison to other strategies. Additionally, when the hotel was

at fault for the service failure, non-monetary restitution yields better satisfaction than monetary reparation.

(Huang et al., 2021) discussed in their research how verbal and nonverbal cues in computer mediated communication impacts the behavioral intentions and perceptions of customers during the online service recovery process. The study investigates the influence of these signals on customers' perceptions of service chat agents' friendliness and competency as well as their desire to participate in resolving service difficulties. It does this by drawing on the compensating effect hypothesis. To conduct the research, the researchers used a 2x2 between subjects design in the study to manipulate the levels of message interaction signals (high vs. low) and visual cues (high vs. low) in order to look into the major impacts of verbal and nonverbal communication signals on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The results show that linguistic signals increase agent competency views while decreasing agent friendliness perceptions. In contrast, employing visual nonverbal signals leads to increased judgments of warmth but lower views of competence. Additionally, the combination of verbal and visual signals implies that each of them can make up for one another, leading to trade-offs between the judgments of friendliness and competence. The indirect effects of verbal and nonverbal signals on customers' willingness to collaborate with customer service representatives during the recovery process were shown to be moderated by perceived warmth and competence. The study offers both theoretical and practical consequences for online service encounters, emphasizing the significance of correctly balancing verbal and nonverbal cues in CMC to favorably affect customer views and boost cooperative intentions.

(Lim et al., 2016) conducted research to look at the similarities between the expressive and nonverbal behavior of frontline employees and the openness of consumers to nonverbally communicated emotions. In their study, the researchers demonstrate that when frontline service staff and consumers express themselves similarly, it benefits both the employee and the business, but conversely, it can work against the organization when the service is unsuccessful. The researchers backed up their findings by using four studies worth of evidence. Increased customer satisfaction, more overt appreciation, and positive word of mouth are all influenced by the greater verbal similarity between customers and service providers adhering to positive service encounters. A greater expressive similarity, on the other hand, increases customer annoyance and the desire to spread negative word of mouth while decreasing their inclination to directly complain following a service failure. Four research in a row shows conclusive and solid evidence that voice reactions and customer satisfaction are influenced by viewed expressive similarity. The researchers also demonstrate how consumer perceptions of connectivity and staff characteristic impressions might account for these effects. The research also indicates the connection induced by high expressive similarity appears to have broad effects on fulfillment, voice motives, and service recovery effectiveness. Nevertheless, the impact of

trait impressions seems to be primarily restricted to service evaluations with very little impact on behavioral intentions.

(Shin et al., 2017) address the focus of service marketing research on proactive customer contacts to prevent service failure. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of reactive and proactive interactions on patronage behavior and customer emotions as proactive interactions try to prevent service failures, while reactive interactions aim to rectify service failures. The author used survey responses from the two tests in a retail setting and gathered information to evaluate their hypothesis. In the context of preventing service failures, it looks at the effects of reactive and proactive contacts on consumer preferences and behavior. The findings of the study reveal that those service providers are preferred by the customers who approach them first rather than waiting for them to contact them. Furthermore, the study also identified moderating factors that can influence the effectiveness of proactive interactions for the prevention of service failure. These factors include situational involvement, quality of the relationship, and status of the contact person. In order to avoid service failures, the research papers' conclusion emphasizes the significance of being proactive while dealing with customers.

(Sparks et al., 1997) discusses the results of an empirical study that examines how service quality and customersatisfaction are affected when the authority to address the issues related to service is given to front-line personnel. The author examines two characteristics of the employees: the communication style of employees (accommodative and underaccommodative) and the degree of empowerment (full, limited, and none) with respect to service failures. The study involves presenting recorded service scenarios to the respondents who are asked to rate the service quality as well as the satisfaction of the scenarios based on their perceptions and observations. The findings of the study reveal that the staff who are fully empowered and provided a greater level of autonomy and authority for resolving service failures deliver high levels of customer satisfaction in comparison to the staff with no empowerment. It was also revealed that fully empowered employees have a positive impact on service quality and thus deliver a high standard of service. The research, therefore, suggests that when front-line staff has appropriate authority, it can lead to high customer satisfaction and better quality of service. However, it must be emphasized that the staff's communication style has a significant impact on how successful empowerment approaches are.

Research Objectives

Below provided are the research objectives that this research will address:

Determining the impact of gestures on the perceptions of customers by investigating how different types of gestures such as service quality, way of responding, apologies, problem-solving skills, etc affect the perceptions of customers of service failures.

- Exploring the role of gestures in managing the emotions of customers on service failures by investigating how gestures can assist in reducing negative emotions such as disappointment, anger, and frustration.
- Determine the sorts of gestures that customers prefer in reaction to service failures.
- Determine whether cultural or individual variations impact how customers react to particular gestures.
- Measuring how gestures can impact the level of customer satisfaction and how they perceive the effectiveness of service recovery.
- Determining whether the gestures have a lasting impact on maintaining customer loyalty during service failure.

Analysis Framework

Independent Variable to be studied in Figure 1

Type of Gesture (service quality, communication skills, way of responding, apologies, problem-solving skillsetc)

Dependent Variables to be studied

Perception of customers of service failure mitigation

- Emotional Regulation
- Customer Satisfaction
- Customer Retention and Loyalty
- Online Reviews and Word-of-Mouth recommendations
- Effectiveness of Service Recovery

Data Collection: The data will be collected using experiments and surveys in which participants who have experienced service failure will be involved. The impact of different types of gestures on the perceptions of customers will be determined by performing SEM Analysis.

1) Measurement Model

The quality of constructs used in the study is analyzed on the basis of evaluation of factor loadings, construct reliability and construct validity.

A) Factor Loadings

Factor loadings (as in Table 1) represent the correlation coefficient and it represents the impact with which each indicator correlates with the given construct. It ranges from - 1.0 to +1.0. Ideally, a

higher absolute value of factor loading represents a high correlation between the indicator with the underlying construct. It is recommended that the absolute value of a satisfactory factor loading should be higher than 0.5. In this study, the loading of all the constructs ranges between 0.533 to 0.934 as shown in Table 1, except for “Service efficiency-SE3” which is 0.443. However, this value is moderately close to 0.5. We may therefore proceed ahead with the measurement model without removing any indicators.

Table 1: Factor loadings for constructs

	COU	FA	EI	EM	SE	AL	C.S	C.L	RI
C.L1								0.851	
C.L2								0.710	
C.L3								0.712	
C.L4								0.666	
COU1	0.805								
COU2	0.835								
COU3	0.844								
COU4	0.671								
FA1		0.742							
FA2		0.533							
FA3		0.828							
FA4		0.691							
EI1			0.767						
EI2			0.607						
EI3			0.727						
EI4			0.678						
EM1				0.934					
EM2				0.734					
EM3				0.765					
EM4				0.737					
	SE1					0.724			
	SE2					0.714			
	SE3					0.443			
	SE4					0.661			
	AL1						0.924		
	AL2						0.769		

	AL3						0.813		
AL4						0.750			
C.S1							0.932		
C.S2							0.783		
C.S3							0.695		
C.S4							0.782		
RES1									0.938
RES2									0.780
RES3									0.805
RES4									0.718

B) Indicator Multicollinearity

The multicollinearity in indicators in Table 2 is analyzed with the help of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Ideally, a VIF less than 5 shows low correlation between indicators. A low correlation between indicators will eliminate the issue of multicollinearity. In this study, it is observed that the VIF of all the indicators is less than 5 as shown in Table 2, which is an ideal condition.

Table 2: VIF for all the indicators

	VIF
C.L1	1.73
C.L2	1.61
C.L3	1.86
C.L4	1.46
COU1	1.91
COU2	1.68
COU3	1.39
COU4	1.26
FA1	1.24
FA2	1.18
FA3	1.31
FA4	1.21
EI1	3.08
EI2	1.64

EI3	1.76
EI4	1.61
EM1	1.23
EM2	1.24
EM3	1.01
EM4	1.25
SE1	2.93
SE2	1.68
SE3	1.87
SE4	1.71
AL1	3.23
AL2	1.79
AL3	1.48

AL4	1.89
C.S1	1.72
C.S2	1.34
C.S3	1.34
C.S4	1.27
RES1	3.34
RES2	1.96
RES3	1.88
RES4	1.58

C) Reliability Analysis

Reliability is defined as the measure of stability and consistency for the given measurement model. Ideally, if we use the same measurement model over and again, it should yield same results which proves the reliability of constructs. Quantitatively, we can measure the reliability of factors used in study with the help of Cronbach Alpha (referred as “alpha”) and Composite Reliability (referred as “rhoC”). The Table 3 presents the results of alpha and rhoC for this study. Ideally, these values should be greater than 0.7. For this study, alpha ranges from 0.510 to 0.833, whereas, rhoC ranges from 0.735 to 0.888. Since rhoC is greater than 0.7 for all factors, therefore, we may say the constructs are reliable.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach Alpha (alpha)	Composite Reliability (rhoC)
COU	0.806	0.870
FA	0.684	0.796
EI	0.651	0.790
EM	0.805	0.873
SE	0.510	0.735
AL	0.833	0.888
C.S	0.812	0.877
C.L	0.718	0.826
RI	0.828	0.886

D) Construct Validity

The construct validity is statistically tested with the help of convergent validity (Table 4) and discriminant validity (Table 5).

i) Convergent validity

It is statistically measured with the help of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). This value is calculated by taking the mean of squared loadings of each indicator that we have used for a construct. The recommended value for AVE is higher than 0.5. In this study, the AVE is observed to be higher than 0.5 for all constructs except Friendly Attitude (0.499), Enjoyable Interaction (0.486) and Service Efficiency (0.417) as shown in Table 4. Two of these values are quite close to 0.5 and moreover, the rhoC for these constructs is greater than 0.7, therefore, we may consider that convergent validity is not an issue here.

Table 4: Convergent validity

	AVE
COU	0.627
FA	0.499
EI	0.486
EM	0.635
SE	0.417

AL	0.667
C.S	0.644
C.L	0.545
RI	0.663

ii) Discriminant Validity

It is statistically tested using FL Criterion, Cross loadings and HTMT ratio **a) Fornell-Larcker Criterion** According to F-L Criterion, discriminant validity is established if the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation of the construct with all the indicators. Table 5 reports the square root of AVE on the diagonal and correlation of constructs with all the indicators in the lower triangle. In this study, all the values on diagonal are higher than the values present beneath them on the lower triangle. Therefore, discriminant validity is established.

Table 5: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	COU	FA	EI	EM	SE	AL	C.S	C.L	RI
COU	0.792								
FA	0.255	0.707							
EI	0.174	0.643	0.697						
EM	0.251	0.305	0.246	0.797					
SE	0.371	0.338	0.299	0.179	0.646				
AL	0.211	0.363	0.297	0.219	0.212	0.817			
C.S	0.268	0.411	0.337	0.220	0.287	0.236	0.803		
C.L	0.375	0.627	0.522	0.422	0.413	0.445	0.472	0.738	
RI	0.233	0.347	0.282	0.301	0.300	0.219	0.368	0.505	0.814

b) Cross Loadings

Cross Loadings help to assess the discriminant validity by quantitatively assessing the factor loadings of indicator on all the constructs. Ideally, the discriminant validity is established if the factor loadings of indicator is higher for the construct to which it belongs than the loadings of all the other constructs. In this study, the same is evident from the results obtained for the cross loadings as shown in Table 6, therefore, discriminant validity is established.

Table 6: Cross Loadings

	COU	FA	EI	EM	SE	AL	C.S	C.L	RI
C.L1	0.340	0.576	0.500	0.373	0.397	0.412	0.401	0.851	0.459
C.L2	0.221	0.413	0.361	0.226	0.293	0.364	0.345	0.710	0.340
C.L3	0.270	0.429	0.324	0.311	0.279	0.250	0.321	0.712	0.371
C.L4	0.267	0.416	0.334	0.331	0.230	0.273	0.323	0.666	0.303
COU1	0.805	0.186	0.143	0.189	0.221	0.170	0.197	0.287	0.177
COU2	0.835	0.217	0.153	0.198	0.372	0.119	0.262	0.302	0.251
COU3	0.844	0.212	0.120	0.246	0.304	0.255	0.231	0.347	0.131
COU4	0.671	0.201	0.153	0.147	0.256	0.116	0.113	0.241	0.177
FA1	0.196	0.742	0.357	0.265	0.284	0.281	0.286	0.496	0.245
FA2	0.101	0.533	0.232	0.188	0.145	0.167	0.109	0.301	0.130
FA3	0.256	0.828	0.667	0.243	0.337	0.297	0.389	0.558	0.317
FA4	0.120	0.691	0.424	0.176	0.134	0.256	0.279	0.362	0.232
EI1	0.108	0.514	0.767	0.212	0.216	0.273	0.296	0.454	0.250
EI2	0.162	0.370	0.607	0.149	0.194	0.155	0.176	0.283	0.152
EI3	0.075	0.482	0.727	0.174	0.232	0.221	0.224	0.362	0.186
EI4	0.159	0.410	0.678	0.141	0.195	0.156	0.224	0.327	0.181
EM1	0.263	0.341	0.270	0.934	0.201	0.256	0.232	0.438	0.319
EM2	0.131	0.256	0.172	0.734	0.107	0.107	0.150	0.287	0.246
EM3	0.236	0.210	0.184	0.765	0.141	0.127	0.147	0.322	0.202
EM4	0.152	0.132	0.131	0.737	0.100	0.174	0.152	0.268	0.166
SE1	0.222	0.255	0.251	0.104	0.724	0.199	0.195	0.319	0.236
SE2	0.170	0.250	0.192	0.129	0.714	0.173	0.194	0.327	0.226
SE3	0.479	0.184	0.159	0.172	0.443	0.028	0.176	0.224	0.171
SE4	0.074	0.165	0.154	0.047	0.661	0.131	0.164	0.167	0.121
AL1	0.216	0.411	0.307	0.236	0.270	0.924	0.244	0.469	0.247
AL2	0.173	0.282	0.251	0.115	0.180	0.769	0.178	0.372	0.108
AL3	0.176	0.238	0.217	0.193	0.125	0.813	0.187	0.319	0.194
AL4	0.102	0.217	0.169	0.154	0.073	0.750	0.141	0.254	0.142
C.S1	0.257	0.405	0.328	0.226	0.304	0.248	0.932	0.493	0.356
C.S2	0.201	0.354	0.318	0.185	0.215	0.208	0.783	0.351	0.277
C.S3	0.151	0.278	0.215	0.090	0.145	0.166	0.695	0.297	0.270

C.S4	0.241	0.264	0.203	0.185	0.232	0.116	0.782	0.343	0.270
RES1	0.259	0.350	0.277	0.337	0.322	0.239	0.385	0.553	0.938
RES2	0.183	0.239	0.242	0.214	0.232	0.157	0.237	0.356	0.780
RES3	0.139	0.267	0.223	0.216	0.213	0.138	0.326	0.348	0.805
RES4	0.153	0.254	0.163	0.175	0.185	0.158	0.220	0.337	0.718

c) Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

It is again used to establish the discriminant validity with the help of estimation of correlation between constructs used in the study. Ideally, HTMT ratio should be less than 0.9. Table 7 shows that HTMT ratio is less than 0.9 in all cases.

Therefore, we establish discriminant validity.

Table 7: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	COU	FA	EI	EM	SE	AL	C.S	C.L	RI
COU	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
FA	0.318	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
EI	0.256	0.863	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
EM	0.298	0.398	0.324	.	.	.	.	.	.
SE	0.566	0.528	0.516	0.268	.	.	.	.	.
AL	0.246	0.448	0.381	0.249	0.310	.	.	.	.
C.S	0.311	0.492	0.447	0.259	0.436	0.274	.	.	.
C.L	0.483	0.847	0.738	0.544	0.664	0.555	0.608	.	.
RI	0.275	0.424	0.370	0.347	0.445	0.249	0.436	0.631	.

E) Model Fitness

The goodness of fit for the model is measured in terms of R and F values in Table 8

Table 8: R Values

	C.S	C.L	RI
R ²	0.22	0.22	0.27
	2	3	7
2 Adj	0.20	0.22	0.27
R	9	1	3

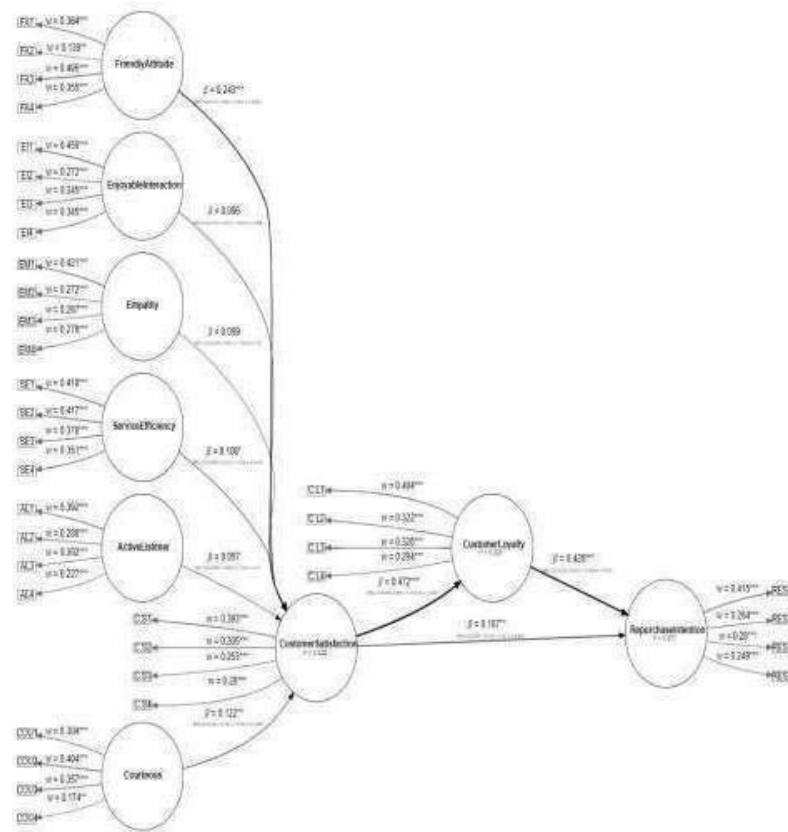
From Table 8, it is observed that, approx. 22% variation in Customer satisfaction (CS) is explained by the variables Friendly Attitude, Enjoyable Interaction, Empathy, Service Efficiency, Active Listener and Courteous. Similarly, 22% variation in Customer Loyalty (CL) is explained by Customer Satisfaction and 28% variation in Repurchase Intention (RI) is explained by Customer Satisfaction.

Table 9: F Values

	C.S	C.L	RI
COU	0.015	0.000	0.000
FA	0.039	0.000	0.000
EI	0.007	0.000	0.000
EM	0.004	0.000	0.000
SE	0.012	0.000	0.000
AL	0.004	0.000	0.000

Table 9 shows the F2 values which is used to study the effect size of removing an exogenous variable on dependent variables. In this study, the effect size is small.

Structural Model



2) Hypothesis Testing

Refer to Table 10, where structural model is shown in Figure

Table 10: Decision on Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Impact Studied	Original Estimate	T Stat.	P-Value	Decision
H1	COU -> C.S	0.122	2.543	0.008	Accepted
H2	FA ->C.S	0.243	3.967	0.001	Accepted
H3	EI ->C.S	0.096	1.572	0.058	Rejected
H4	EM ->C.S	0.059	1.183	0.120	Rejected
H5	SE ->C.S	0.108	2.106	0.018	Accepted
H6	AL ->C.S	0.057	1.220	0.110	Rejected

H7	C.S ->C.L	0.472	12.473	0.001	Accepted
H8	C.S -> RI	0.167	2.870	0.002	Accepted
H9	C.L -> RI	0.426	8.256	0.001	Accepted

H1. There is a significant impact of courtesy on customer satisfaction.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.122, with T stat of 2.543 and p-value of 0.008, which is statistically significant. Therefore, we can say that courtesy has a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H2. There is a significant impact of friendly attitude on customer satisfaction.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.243, with T stat of 3.967 and p-value of 0.001, which is statistically significant. Therefore, we can say that friendly attitude has a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H3. There is a significant impact of enjoyable interaction on customer satisfaction.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.096, with T stat of 1.572 and p-value of 0.058, which is statistically insignificant. Therefore, we can say that enjoyable interaction doesn't have significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H4. There is a significant impact of empathy on customer satisfaction.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.059, with T stat of 1.183 and p-value of 0.12, which is statistically insignificant. Therefore, we can say that empathy doesn't have significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H5: There is a significant impact of service efficiency on customer satisfaction.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.108, with T stat of 2.106

and p-value of 0.018, which is statistically significant. Therefore, we can say that service efficiency has a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H6. There is a significant impact of active listener on customer satisfaction.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.057, with T stat of 1.220 and p-value of 0.11, which is statistically insignificant. Therefore, we can say that active listener doesn't have significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H7. There is a significant impact of customer satisfaction on the customer loyalty.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.472, with T stat of 12.473 and p-value of 0.001, which is statistically significant. Therefore, we can say that customer satisfaction has significant impact on customer loyalty.

H8. There is a significant impact of customer satisfaction on the repurchase intention.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.167, with T stat of 2.870 and p-value of 0.002, which is statistically significant. Therefore, we can say that customer satisfaction has significant impact on repurchase intention.

H9. There is a significant impact of customer loyalty on the repurchase intention.

The results from PLS-SEM show that the original estimate of β is 0.426, with T stat of 8.256 and p-value of 0.001, which is statistically significant as in Figure 2. Therefore, we can say that customer loyalty has significant impact on repurchase intention.

Findings

1. Positive Impact of Gestures on Customer Satisfaction

- Courtesy (COU) and Friendly Attitude (FA) were discovered to have a crucial impact on Customer Satisfaction (CS), contributing to enhanced overall customer perceptions.
- Customer Satisfaction (CS) was found to be significantly positively influenced by Service Efficiency (SE), demonstrating the significance of

prompt and effective service.

2. Limited Impact of Certain Gestures

- Customer satisfaction (CS) was not significantly impacted by enjoyable interactions (EI), empathy (EM), or active listening (AL). Their effects, however, could appear via other channels or interactions.

3. The strong influence of Customer Satisfaction

- Customer Loyalty (CL) and Repurchase Intention (RI) both showed substantial correlations with customer satisfaction (CS), underscoring the importance of this factor in fostering long-lasting client connections.

4. Implications for Businesses

- Due to the considerable influence these actions have on customer satisfaction, businesses should give priority to service recovery.
- Enhancing customer satisfaction levels with a service efficiency emphasis might help foster good attitudes in general.
- Even though some actions, such as engaging in pleasant conversation, showing empathy, and actively listening, did not show direct effects, they may nonetheless indirectly boost pleasure by means of other mechanisms.
- Businesses may establish effective assistance recovery methods with the help of a comprehensive understanding of the crucial role that customer satisfaction plays.

5. Future Research and Recommendations

- Future research should examine additional factors that affect service recovery and customer impressions as the study's focus was only on a few gestures.
- Future research might take into account qualitative research techniques to acquire a deeper understanding of consumer opinions and observations during service recovery as conclusions are dependent on survey responses.

Conclusion

This study examines how gestures play a part in service recovery tactics, highlighting the value of addressing customer happiness, loyalty, and good brand impression. Key findings

show that specific actions may have a big influence on customer happiness, which improves the whole service recovery experience. According to the survey, politeness and pleasant interactions are important factors that influence consumer happiness. The importance of prompt and effective service delivery was highlighted as a key aspect in positively impacting customer satisfaction.

Even though some actions, such as having fun while interacting, showing empathy, and actively listening, did not directly affect customer satisfaction, it is important to consider their possible indirect effects. The most important aspect is customer satisfaction since it is a key component of the interaction between actions, customer loyalty, and repurchase intentions. A happy client is more likely to stick with the company and endorse it in online reviews and word-of-mouth referrals.

These discoveries have important business ramifications. By educating staff members to exhibit politeness, uphold a positive attitude, and place a priority on service effectiveness, organizations may successfully adjust their service recovery tactics. Companies may concentrate on continual service quality improvements by acknowledging that customer happiness is the cornerstone of loyalty and future intents to repurchase.

This study provides organizations with a map for managing service recovery difficulties and strengthening client connections. It encourages further investigation of other factors leading to efficient service recovery and acts as a jumping-off point for future investigations. Organizations can encourage themselves to bounce back from service failures and prosper in the competitive market by providing great customer experiences by creating a deeper knowledge of the function of gestures.

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESEARCH PAPER

Examining the Role of Employees' Gesture of Goodwill on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty

- A Study of Select Apparel Retail Stores in Punjab

Dear Respondents

I am a Research student, at Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, India. This questionnaire has been prepared as part of my research in the domain of **“Examining the role of employees' gesture of Goodwill on customers' satisfaction and loyalty - A study of select apparel retail stores in Punjab”**. I request you to spare some of your valuable time and fill up the questionnaire. The information provided by you will be used for research purpose only.

Section –I

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name:

Email:

City:

Gender: 1. ☐ Male 2. ☐ Female 3. ☐ Others

Age (Years): 1. ☐ 18-25 2. ☐ 25-32 3. ☐ 32-39
 4. ☐ 39-46 5. ☐ 46-53 6. ☐ 53-60
 7. ☐ 60 & above

Education: 1. ☐ Matric 2. ☐ Secondary 3. ☐ Under-graduate
 4. ☐ Postgraduate 5. ☐ Doctorate 6. ☐ Other

Occupation: 1. ☐ Government 2. ☐ Semi-government 3. ☐ Public
 4. ☐ Private 5. ☐ Self-occupied 6. ☐ Other

Marital Status: 1. ☐ Unmarried 2. ☐ Married 3. ☐ Divorcee
 4. ☐ Widow/widower

Monthly Income: 1. ☐ Less than 20000 2. ☐ 20000-40000 3. ☐ 40000-60000
 4. ☐ 60000-80000 5. ☐ 80000-100000 6. ☐ 100000 &
 Above

Section –II

I. How frequently you buy from same apparel store?

1. Very Frequently
2. Occasionally
3. Rarely

II. On what time do you prefer to buy your apparels?

1. On Festivals
2. On wedding
3. On Sales Offer
4. On season ending/starting
5. All of the above

III. What is your main reason of buying apparels from stores?

1. To check the new collection in market
2. It makes you to feel happy when you go outside.
3. To check the product personally
4. To check how the outfit looks on you (size)
5. All of the above

IV. How long you travel to visit the store?

1. 1 to less than 5km
2. 5km to less than 10km
3. 10km to less than 15km
4. 15km and above

V. Which retail store do you visit more frequently?

1. Reliance Trends
2. Shoppers Stop
3. Vishal Mega Mart
4. Pantaloons
5. Lifestyle Stores
6. Others

V. Do you check employees' behavior while buying from apparel store?

1.Yes 2. No 3.Maybe

Section –III

(A) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Service Efficiency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees of this apparel store are always willing to help me.					
2. This apparel store's employees give me individual attention.					
3. Buying from this apparel store is an efficient way to manage my time.					
4. When I think of this apparel store, I think of service excellence.					
5. Their employees provided prompt and quick service.					
6. Waiting time at the cash counter is short.					
7. In general, the service of this apparel store is much better than I expected.					

(B) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stand for strongly agree.

Enjoyable Interaction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. In thinking about my interaction, I have a comfortable interaction with Employees on my every visit.					
2. Employees create a feeling of “warmth” in our relationship.					
3. Behavior of Employees instils confidence in me.					
4. Employees enjoyed assisting me with solving my problems.					
5. I got along well with the Employees.					
6. Employees make me feel delighted with their services at the store.					
7. Employees tell customers exactly what will be performed					

(C) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Empathy	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees are willing to take my perspective and to understand my needs.					
2. Employees make you to feel special as you enter this apparel store.					
3. Employees of this apparel store do not					

pressurize me to buy a productin which I am not interested.					
4. Employees of this apparel store are always willing to handle my returnand exchange.					
5. Employees of this apparel store make a good eye contact withcustomers.					
6. Employees are always ready to welcome feedback from customers in a positive manner.					

(D) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands forstrongly agree.

Responsiveness	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees are willing and enthusiastic to respond to my request.					
2. Employees handle customers' complaint directly and immediately.					
3. Employees in this apparel store quickly corrected anything that was wrong.					
4. Employees have the required knowledge to answer customers' questions.					
5. Employees respond to customers' needs in a timely manner.					
6. Employees in this apparel store are never too busy to respond tocustomer's request.					

7. Employees in this store explain about refund policy very clearly to the customers.					
8. Employees in this apparel store sends email and messages for special offers frequently.					

(E) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Active Listener	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees of this apparel store are always ready to listen to me carefully.					
2. Employees give me indications that they seriously consider my opinion.					
3. Employees encourage me to clarify a problem.					
4. I feel that Employees listen to me even when we disagree.					
5. Employees understand for more than just the spoken words.					
6. Employees are careful not to interrupt me while I speak.					
7. Employees use (comfortable) silences in the conversation.					
8. Employees prefer to hear facts and evidence.					

(F) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Courteous	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employees of this apparel store welcome me with smile.					
2. Employees of this apparel store apologize when mistakes are made.					
3. Employees of this apparel store exhibit proper etiquette when dealing with customers.					
4. Employees of this apparel store are trustworthy, believable and honest.					
5. Employees of this apparel store deal with customers in a caring and polite manner.					
6. Employees in this apparel store meet the special needs of handicapped customers.					
7. Employees of this store place a high value on customer service.					
8. Employees of this store consider the culture values of the area.					

(G) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Friendly Attitude	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Conducive environment for conversation with Employees of this apparel store.					
2. The Employees are friendly communicator.					
3. Employees of this apparel store greet customers with a friendly welcome and big smile.					
4. The Employees tend to be tactful and encouraging to customers.					
5. The employees made broadband list of their regular customers to provide additional benefits to them.					
6. The employees of this store have extensive social skills.					
7. The employees of this store know how to treat a customer well.					

(H) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Customer satisfaction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I'm satisfied with the employees' goodwill gesture.					
2. I'm satisfied with the service efficiency of employees.					
3. Employee exhibit proper etiquette when dealing with customers.					
4. Employees listen to the customers with empathy and responds in a good manner.					
5. I'm satisfied with employee's responsive behavior about dealing my needs.					
6. The employees fulfilled my expectations.					
7. On an overall basis, my experience with employees has been positive.					

(I) To what extent you agree to the following statements where 1 stand for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Customer loyalty - Repurchase intention	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. When I need to make a purchase, this apparel store will be my first choice.					
2. I am ready to travel extra miles to buy from this apparel store					
3. My choice to purchase from this apparel store was a wise one					
4. I expect to stay with this apparel store for a long period of time					
5. This apparel store stimulates me to buy repeatedly.					
6. I plan to increase my frequency of visits to this apparel store.					
7. I would classify myself as a loyal customer of this apparel store.					

PAPER 2

**A STUDY ON ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN RETAIL SECTOR IN PUNJAB**

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Abstract

Customers are one of the most valuable assets for any organization. They are the brand ambassadors representing the company. Their thinking, attitude and behaviour have direct impact on satisfaction and retention. The present study aims to identify the major socio-demographic factors of retail customers and how they influence the satisfaction levels. The study is carried out in Punjab state of India. The personality traits have great influence on customers in terms of decision-making process, sense of conviction, priorities, product attributes, pricing etc. Age, gender, marital status, experience, level of education, employment status, language preferences, body language, communication competency have been taken into consideration under socio-demographic factors of customers. The study is significant as it deals with the competition management, people management, customer satisfaction and overall sustainable business growth in retail sector in Punjab.

Keywords: Retail, Customer Satisfaction, Demographics, Employee Behaviour, Competition Management, Punjab

1. INTRODUCTION

The retail sector in Punjab plays a crucial role in bolstering the state's economy. Comprehending client happiness is vital for merchants to enhance their offers and maintain competitiveness. This research investigates the possible correlation between socio-demographic characteristics and consumer satisfaction in the retail industry in Punjab. Customer satisfaction is a metric that measures the extent to which a company is meeting the needs and desires of its customers. The success of this firm relies heavily on consumer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is a clear and concise notion that refers to the extent to which a customer's expectations about the quality of service provided by a merchant are met. Customer service encompasses a series of actions aimed at enhancing satisfaction, indicating that the products or services have fulfilled the customer's expected requirements (Verma, et. al, 2020). Customer happiness is an essential determinant of the success of any retail business. An in-depth comprehension of the aspects that impact consumer happiness may assist merchants in formulating strategies to enhance the shopping experience and eventually augment profitability. Socio-demographic characteristics, including age, income, education, gender, and employment, are often mentioned as possible factors that might affect customer satisfaction in different research (Lenka, et. al, 2009). However, the exact nature of these associations can change depending on the unique retail sectors and situations.

1.1. Retailing

From the French term "retailer," the English word "retail" was developed. To either take off a portion or to split up a mass is what it signifies. One definition of a retailer is a merchant or trader who sells products

in tiny amounts, or one who repeats or refers these items to other people. The last step in the process of delivering products or services to end users is the retail transaction. It is thus possible to define retailing as the collection of all of these actions that are engaged in the marketing of products and services directly to the customer. There are a variety of commercial operations that fall under the category of retailing (Mishra, & Prasad, 2014). These activities include selling products and services to customers for their own personal, family, or home use. It encompasses every single transaction that is made to the end user, which might include everything from automobiles to clothing to meals at restaurants to movie tickets. The distribution process is completed with the retailing stage as the last step. The goal of Target shops is to satisfy its clients in a genuine and long-term manner. This is accomplished by the use of a customer-centric and forthright approach to the creation and execution of strategy; it is value-driven; and it has well-defined objectives (Brar, & Kumar, 2017). These four guiding principles come together to create the retailing philosophy, which is something that every single retailer need to comprehend and put into practice:

- Customer orientation
- Coordinated effort
- Value-driven
- Goal orientation

1.2. Customer Satisfaction

"A person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that result from comparing the perceived performance (or outcome) of a product to his or her expectations is what we mean when we talk about satisfaction." According to this definition, contentment is a result of perceived performance and expectations. This is made abundantly evident by the definition. Customer dissatisfaction occurs when the performance does not live up to the expectations of the customer. A client is said to be satisfied if the performance meets or surpasses their expectations (Wiles, 2007). On the other hand, if the performance exceeds their expectations, the consumer is either very happy or thrilled.

When the value and customer service that are delivered via a retailing experience match or surpass the expectations of the consumer, this is the instance in which customer satisfaction happens (Kattara, et al. 2015). The client will be unsatisfied if the expectations of value and customer service are not reached, as the following examples demonstrate: "There are three components that make up retail satisfaction: "shopping systems satisfaction, which encompasses the selection and actual purchase of items; and customer happiness that is derived from the usage of the product." It is possible that dissatisfaction with any one of these three factors might result in a loss of consumer loyalty, a reduction in sales, and a reduction in market share.

1.3. Customer Satisfaction in retail store

Ensuring customer satisfaction is crucial for the success of a retail firm. It has a direct influence on client retention, loyalty, and eventually, profitability (Ajay, & Mani, 2016). Gaining insight into the factors that influence customer satisfaction is essential for retailers to develop strategies that improve the shopping experience and fulfil consumer expectations.

1.4. Key factors influencing customer satisfaction

- Product quality and value: Customers anticipate that items will perform as described and provide a favourable cost-benefit ratio. Substandard or excessively expensive items immediately result in discontentment.
- Customer service: The presence of amiable, well-informed, and supportive personnel greatly enhances the overall satisfaction of the shopping process. Efficiency, promptness, and quick response to requests are essential.

- Retail ambiance: A pristine, orderly, and meticulously-maintained retail environment fosters a hospitable mood and elevates the shopping experience (Gupta, & Singh, 2012). Optimal illumination, agreeable ambient temperature, and enjoyable music all contribute to a favourable perception.
- Pricing and promotions: Offering competitive pricing and appealing promos may effectively entice consumers and stimulate sales. Transparent pricing plans and clear communication of promotions are crucial to prevent misunderstanding and dissatisfaction.
- Product availability and selection: Customers want a prompt and extensive assortment of items to meet their needs. Customer satisfaction relies heavily on the availability of a diverse range of items and enough stock levels.
- Convenience and simplicity of purchasing: Streamlined checkout procedures, easy payment alternatives, and a well-organized store arrangement enhance a seamless and trouble-free buying encounter (Lee, 2010).
- Returns and exchanges: An adaptable and customer-centric refund and exchange policy fosters confidence and incentivizes consumers to make purchases with assurance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Soujanya and Pilli, (2022) studied on an effort to investigate the interaction impact of a number of demographic factors on the level of satisfaction that customers have with regard to a number of characteristics of organised retailing. The retail commerce sector in India is undergoing revolutionary transformations at the moment. The need for organised retailing is increasing at a consistent rate. This demand has been fueled by a variety of factors, including an increasing number of people who want to enter the middle class, favourable demographics, an expanding urbanisation rate, an increasing number of nuclear families, rising levels of income among customers, and a growing taste for branded items. When it comes to the current state of the corporate world, the old adage that "the customer is always right" is absolutely accurate. In light of this, it can be deduced that the satisfaction of customers is the most important factor in the success of any commercial organisation. The demographic characteristics of the consumers have a considerable influence on the level of satisfaction experienced by the customers. Dhanya and Velmurugan, (2021) investigated the impact of selected demographic parameters on customer value, satisfaction, trust, and measures of the quality of Internet banking services. The emergence of technology driven by financial liberalization and heightened competition is causing a substantial transformation in the operational and customer service approaches of Indian banks. Banks are progressively entering an age of fantastic technological banking in order to provide improved client loyalty and functional excellence. Utilizing technology to provide banking services is costly and time-consuming, therefore it's important to assess if advancements in technology really increase client satisfaction levels. This research aimed to investigate the relationship between the perception of service quality, service value, and overall performance in electronic banking, as well as the impact of demographic characteristics on several customer fulfilment drivers in the Indian banking sector. The required information was gathered via a customer survey (N=290) conducted by Indian public sector banks in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram area, including Canara Bank, Punjab National Bank, and Indian Overseas Bank. The study's conclusions demonstrated that customers with greater incomes and levels of education who use online banking for the majority of their financial needs and who have done so for a long time seem to have much more favourable opinions and impressions of the services. Customers' opinions of the effectiveness, value, contentment, and loyalty of the online banking service were all that determined gender and age.

Ali, (2021) determined how various service quality dimensions—TAN, RES, REL, ASSUR, and EMP—

affect customer satisfaction. Additionally, it aims to assess how service quality affects customer satisfaction using a range of demographic factors related to Kuwait's retail medical industry. Using a logical methodology and a positivist research mindset, a quantitative research technique was used. The research examined the hypotheses and came to the conclusion that there are no significant differences in how males and females perceive the SQ variables and CS, or how various age groups perceive these factors and CS in the Kuwait Medical Retail Business. The findings also show that the dimensions of SQ and CS within Kuwait's retail medical industry have a very significant link, and respondents' perceptions of various SQ variables vary depending on their cluster. In the Kuwaiti medical retail industry, the factors that are most important are EMP, ASSUR, REL, and RES. The research offers conclusions that managers in organizations may find useful for strategically planning based on consumer demographics in Kuwaiti medical retail. The study advances the field of business organization by shedding light on how to interact with clients in a way that maintains the primary goal of increasing profit and lowering expenses for the company.

Sandra, (2017) focused on the most important aspects of the core of marketing strategies for businesses is the maintenance of long-term profitable connections with different types of clients. Recently, relationship marketing has taken the role of transaction marketing as the dominant marketing strategy. The importance and necessity of targeting cooperation with a customer on the basis of business activity has been increasingly recognized by businesses. This involves shifting the focus away from achieving short-term sales and profit, as well as from "sales closure" and individual, single transactions, and instead concentrating on the development and maintenance of long-term relationships based on trust and respect. By doing so, the suppliers cease to be aggressive buy stimulators in order to sell one more thing, but rather they aid clients in the process of decision making, issue solving, and obtaining value over the long term. The aforementioned should be a means by which the firm may generate profits, not in terms of a present, short-term rise in sales, but rather in terms of attracting loyal customers and, as a result, ensuring that the company will benefit in the long run.

Siddiqui and Khan, (2017) investigated how the demographics of online shoppers affect e-satisfaction and the factors that influence it in the Indian e-retailing market. In compliance with the literature, a theoretical model was developed and put to the test experimentally. A convenient sampling strategy was used. An online and personal structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data. First, a demographic profile of the internet clients was developed by a descriptive study. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the structure of determinants and their factor scores, as well as to consolidate the underlying constructs in order to investigate any potential effects of these demographic characteristics on e-satisfaction and its determinants. After the underlying constructs were identified, the appropriate t-test or ANOVA was used to evaluate the influence of each demographic on e-satisfaction and each of its determinants independently. The e-satisfaction and its determinants may be consolidated into six underlying constructs or components, according to the findings of the exploratory factor analysis. The majority of the variables are unaffected by the demographics of online shoppers, according to the t-test and ANOVA findings. Gender, education, age, and income were shown to have a substantial influence on perceived value, financial transactions, e-satisfaction and retailing, convenience, and each of these criteria separately.

Deshwal (2016) investigated whether or not there are differences in the quality of customer experience across different demographic groups, specifically with regard to age, gender, education level, and family income, and to determine the extent to which these differences exist. Arrangement, methodology, and strategy Retail store consumers were given a 23-item instrument to use in their shopping experiences. Age, gender, level of education, and family income were the demographic characteristics that were

considered. In conclusion, the analysis was carried out on a total of 346 replies. On the basis of demographic characteristics, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out in order to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of the components of customer experience quality in the context of Indian retail stores. The results upon doing an analysis, it was discovered that some categories of demographic characteristics exhibit differences with regard to the quality of customer experience aspects in the setting of Indian retail stores. The value of originality According to the authors, this is the first research that puts the EXQ model into practise in the context of retail in India.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim objectives of the study are –

1. To discuss the Customer satisfaction with the service offered at retail stores
2. To assess the impact of employee behaviors on customer satisfaction
3. To examine the association between Demographic Profile and Customer Satisfaction

Research Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0A): There is no significant association among age, gender, marital status, and experience and customer satisfaction with retail stores.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1A): There is a significant association among age, gender, marital status, and experience and customer satisfaction with retail stores.

Null Hypothesis (H0B): There is no significant association between level of education, Employment Status, Language Preferences and customer satisfaction with retail stores.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1B): There is a significant association between level of education, Employment Status, Language Preferences and customer satisfaction with retail stores.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An explanation of how a researcher plans to carry out their investigation is what is meant by the term "research methodology." A rational and methodical strategy for resolving a research issue is under question here. In order to guarantee accurate and valid findings that are in line with the researcher's goals and objectives, a methodology provides specifics about the researcher's approach to the study. What data they are going to acquire and where they are going to get it from, as well as how they are going to collect and analyze it, are all included in this.

- a. Research Design: Within the Punjab area, descriptive research was carried out with the purpose of determining the customer satisfaction that consumers had with regard to retail.
- b. Region of Study: Punjab district has been selected as the area of study.
- c. Sources of data collection

The data have been collected through the primary and secondary sources which is as follows –

- Primary data – The primary data have been selected from the questionnaire distributed to customers who visit retail stores.
- Secondary data – The secondary data have been selected through the internet, magazines, books, theses, dissertations, research papers, journals, etc.

- d. Sample Size

The overall sample of the study is 230 customers from retail stores (male and female).

- e. Variables

– Customers Demographic Factors: Age, gender, marital status, experience, level of education, employment status, language preferences

– Customer Satisfaction: Employee Behaviour with Customers, Employee Communication with

Customers, Employee treatment with Customers, Customer Caring Ability

f. Data analysis

The collected data have been analyzed using frequency, percentages, and graphs. The chi-square test was used to assess the association between socio-demographic factors and customer satisfaction.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

a. Demographic profile of customers

An examination of the demographic features of the customer was carried out, and the findings are provided in Table1.

Table 1: Demographic

Particulars	Classification	F	%
Age	<25 yrs	46	20%
	25-40 yrs	145	63%
	>40 yrs	39	17%
Gender	Male	117	51%
	Female	113	49%
Marital Status	Married	51	22%
	Unmarried	179	78%
Experience	Up 1 years	74	32%
	2-3 years	78	34%
	4-5 years	53	23%
	5+ years	25	11%
Level of Education	Up to 10th Standard	18	8%
	12 th standard	39	17%
	Diploma	14	6%
	Degree	60	26%
	Post Graduate	83	36%
	Professional	16	7%
Employment Status	Salaried	83	36%
	Business	46	20%
	Retired	11	5%
	Housewife	58	25%
	Student	32	14%
Language Preferences	English	80	35%
	Hindi	115	50%
	Others	35	15%

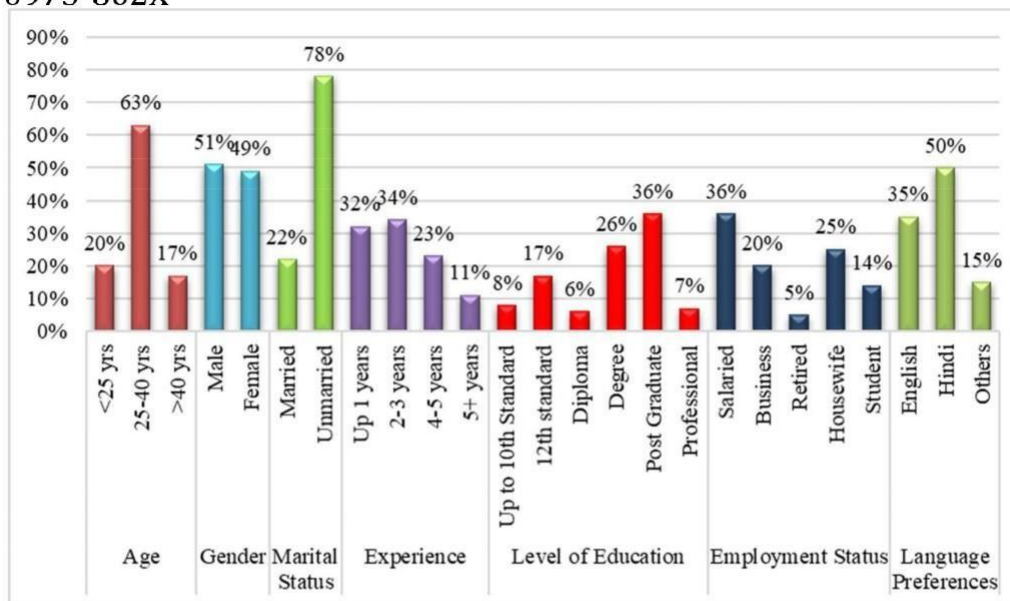


Figure 1: Demographic profile

According to the findings of the description, the sample is made up of male clients to the extent of 51%, while female customers make up 49%. The majority of the clients and responses, or 63%, were in the age range of 25 to 40 years old. More over three-quarters of the clients were postgraduates. Of those who participated in the survey, the salaried class comprised 36% of the total. The respondents had a higher proportion of consumers who were not married, which was 78%, compared to the customers who were married. The majority of responders, which accounts for 34% of the total, had experience ranging from two to three years. The majority of respondents, fifty percent, prefer the Hindi language.

b. Stores prior to making purchases from Retail stores

Table 2 Stores prior to making purchases from Retail stores

Shop	F	%
Neighbourhood Store	25	11%
Wholesale Market	41	18%
Convenient Store	149	65%
Other Stores	15	6%
Total	230	100%

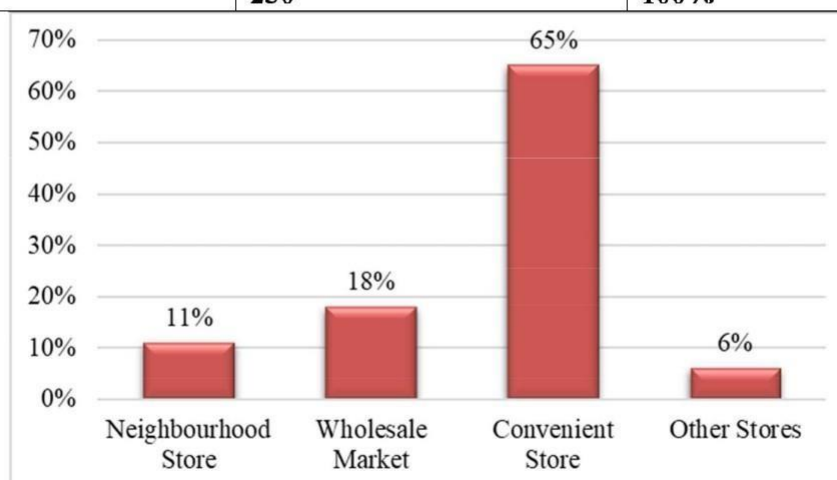


Figure 2: Stores prior to making purchases from Retail stores

The data shown in the table above makes it abundantly evident that the majority of respondents, which accounts for 65% of the total, made their purchases from convenience shops prior to transitioning to retail locations.

c. **Impact of employee behaviors on customer satisfaction**

Table 3: The impact of positive and negative employee behaviors on customer satisfaction
Overall satisfaction

	Overall satisfaction		
	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied
Behaviors demonstrating reliability			
Consistently treats all customers	97%	3%	0%
Performs the billing function accurately.	82%	18%	0%
Responds to your requirements as soon as possible	90%	10%	0%
Keep you waiting for a demand for a longer period of time than is required.	0%	16%	84%
Does not actively seek or promote feedback from consumers.	3%	12%	85%
Declines to modify orders that have already been placed	1%	2%	97%
Consistently experience incorrect and inaccurate billing protocols	0%	6%	94%
Behaviors demonstrating responsiveness			
Addresses consumers using their given names	39%	58%	3%
Speaks in a friendly tone while answering your phones.	96%	4%	0%
Meet the unique requirements of clients with disabilities	93%	5%	2%
Makes every attempt to address and resolve your concerns about the situation	98%	2%	0%
Responds to your grievances in a rude and unprofessional manner.	1%	4%	95%
In the midst of all the activity, you may feel ignored.	0%	3%	97%
Displays bad emotions at work.	2%	2%	96%
Refuses to fulfil unique demands and says it's not their responsibility.	1%	5%	94%
Behaviors demonstrating assurance			
Displays etiquette manners while interacting with you	80%	20%	0%
Has the ability to build cordial connections with customers	85%	15%	0%
Demonstrates an extensive understanding of all goods and services	79%	21%	0%
Fails to keep records stocks and raw materialetc.	2%	11%	87%
At the point of sale, there is a lack of information.	1%	11%	88%
While standing in front of him, the manager may be seen giving you, his back.	0%	13%	87%
Behaviors demonstrating empathy			
Gives you a warm greeting and a big smile.	97%	3%	0%
Talks to you gently	97%	2%	1%
Maintains eye contact with consumers.	87%	13%	0%

Listens to you with empathy and replies appropriately.	99%	1%	0%
Makes you feel unique as you go inside the store.	95%	5%	0%
Capable of dealing with people of many nationalities (multilingual).	86%	14%	0%
Stays away from reading or sitting at his workstation	79%	21%	0%
Basic verbal and customer service abilities are lacking.	1%	10%	89%
Doesn't look you in the eye while speaking.	1%	14%	85%
Uses cool, brief handshakes with you	3%	39%	58%
Never chase them until they make their choice	2%	33%	65%
Allows the smile to lose in the shuffle of getting things done.	1%	18%	81%
Behaviors demonstrating tangibles			
Actively Presenting Products.	98%	2%	0%
Creating Visual Displays.	62%	37%	2%
Maintaining a Clean and Organized Environment	82%	17%	1%
Providing Relevant Information.	1%	9%	90%
Emphasizing Quality and Durability	1%	2%	97%
Creating a Sensory Experience.	0%	5%	95%

At the same time that the lowest record was calculated for behaviour (Uses cool, brief handshakes with you) in the empathy category, where 57.7% of customers indicated that they were dissatisfied, the results of the current study, which are illustrated in table 11, revealed that all negative behaviours recorded a high negative effect on the overall satisfaction of customers. Despite the fact that behaviour (Refuses to make changes in orders that have been placed) in the reliability category, which is concerned with employees' refusal to make changes to orders that have been placed, indicated the highest negative effect on customers' overall satisfaction, approximately nearly all customers (97%) indicated a dissatisfaction effect. It is possible to attribute the high negative impact of these behaviours to the fact that customers intend to stay in a hotel in which they are spending their money, and in exchange, they anticipate receiving services that are comparable to what they have anticipated. Dissatisfaction arises directly after a failure in the process of service delivery. Berry (1999) provided evidence that supports this finding. He stated that service has a tendency to fail, regardless of the quality associated with it, in situations in which the customer believes that little attention was given to him or her, such as when service staff behaves in an impolite manner. This makes it impossible for the customer to recover from an unsatisfactory service experience. With the exception of the behaviour (Refers to customers by their names) in the responsiveness category, the results for the positive group of behaviours illustrated in table 11 also indicated a high positive effect on customers' overall satisfaction. However, a significant number of customers (58%) indicated that this behaviour had a neutral effect on their satisfaction. After "allowing check-in procedures to run quickly" (98%), "making every possible effort to resolve customer complaints" (98%), "listening to customers with empathy in responding to their needs in a good manner" (99%) received the highest score regarding the positive impact on customer satisfaction. This was followed by "making every possible effort to resolve customer complaints."

d. Association between Demographic Profile and Customer Satisfaction

Table 4: Association between Demographic Profile and Customer Satisfaction

H	Demographic variable	Chi-square value	P value	Result
HA	Age	39.698	.000	Significant

HB	Gender	12.42	.060	Not Significant
	Marital Status	14.557	.024	Significant
	Experience	63.329	.000	Significant
	Level of Education	51.176	.000	Significant
	Employment Status	38.159	.000	Significant
	Language Preferences	51.944	.000	Significant

According to the chi-square analysis shown in Table 4, it can be deduced that the demographic profile, which includes factors such as age, marital status, level of education, level of experience, job status, and language preference, has a positive link with the degree of satisfaction that customers have with retail stores. Because of this, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the demographic profile of respondents, which includes factors such as age, marital status, experience, level of education, job status, and language preference with retail store, has a connection with customer satisfaction; however gender does not have any association with the same. As a result, the retail business needs to design the appropriate methods in order to attract the various segments of consumers who vary in terms of age, marital status, degree of experience, level of education, work position, and language preference. Since youthful clients are more acquainted with all of the most recent offerings, they often anticipate receiving a higher level of service from retail stores.

6. CONCLUSION

The retail sector is an extremely important component of the Indian economy. One of the components of the retail industry is the retail store. Retail stores are becoming an integral element of the human population in today's world. Specifically, it secures the prosperity of the country in terms of the development of job opportunities and the distribution of resources. Additionally, it is elevating the people's quality of life to a higher level. They provide a wide variety of cutting-edge services to their clientele, such as delivering services such as all things under one roof, desired items, accessible pricing, and ambiance facilities, among other things. The results of this investigation highlight the significance of providing employees with opportunities for training and development in order to encourage great customer service conduct. Retail stores have the power to improve staff performance and promote customer satisfaction by investing in training programmes that emphasise customer service skills, product knowledge, and problem-solving abilities. This, in turn, may eventually lead to greater sales and profitability. It is possible to dramatically improve the overall customer experience and happiness in retail stores by making investments in training programmes that provide personnel with the competencies necessary for successful communication. Staff members have the ability to establish trust and rapport with consumers by placing an emphasis on clear greetings, active listening, open-ended questioning, and excitement. This may ultimately result in greater sales and loyalty to the brand. Retail organisations that place a high priority on staff training programmes that are focused on building customer care skills may gain major rewards in the form of greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as a competitive edge. Businesses have the ability to cultivate a great experience for their customers and boost their long-term success by establishing a culture of caring inside their organisation. From the findings of the present research, it was shown that the total happiness of customers is closely connected with the behaviours of all workers, regardless of whether such behaviours are good or bad.

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ISSN : 0975-802X

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