

Causality between employee engagement and customer experience within the context of organisational climate and culture

ABSTRACT

This paper describes employee engagement as the amount of energy in an organisational system to perform business activities. Positive levels of engagements will result in organisational benefits. The pre-requisites of creating engagement in organisations are explored as it has direct correlations with business measurements such as customer centricity. Further, customer experience is described as an imperative and distinguishing business factor. The pre-requisites of a positive customer experience are presented.

Dr Adri Drotskie contributes research and theory on customer experience and Dr Rica Viljoen focuses on employee engagement research and theory. The two researchers argue that there is a critical causality between employee engagement and customer centricity and present an Integrated Systemic Customer centricity Framework that deals with the pre-requisites of both constructs.

Through grounded theory methodology the framework that is presented in this paper emerged. Engagement determined by factors on individual, group and organisational level, translates into customer experience. The higher the level of engagement of the employees, the more positive impact the experience is in the world of the customer.

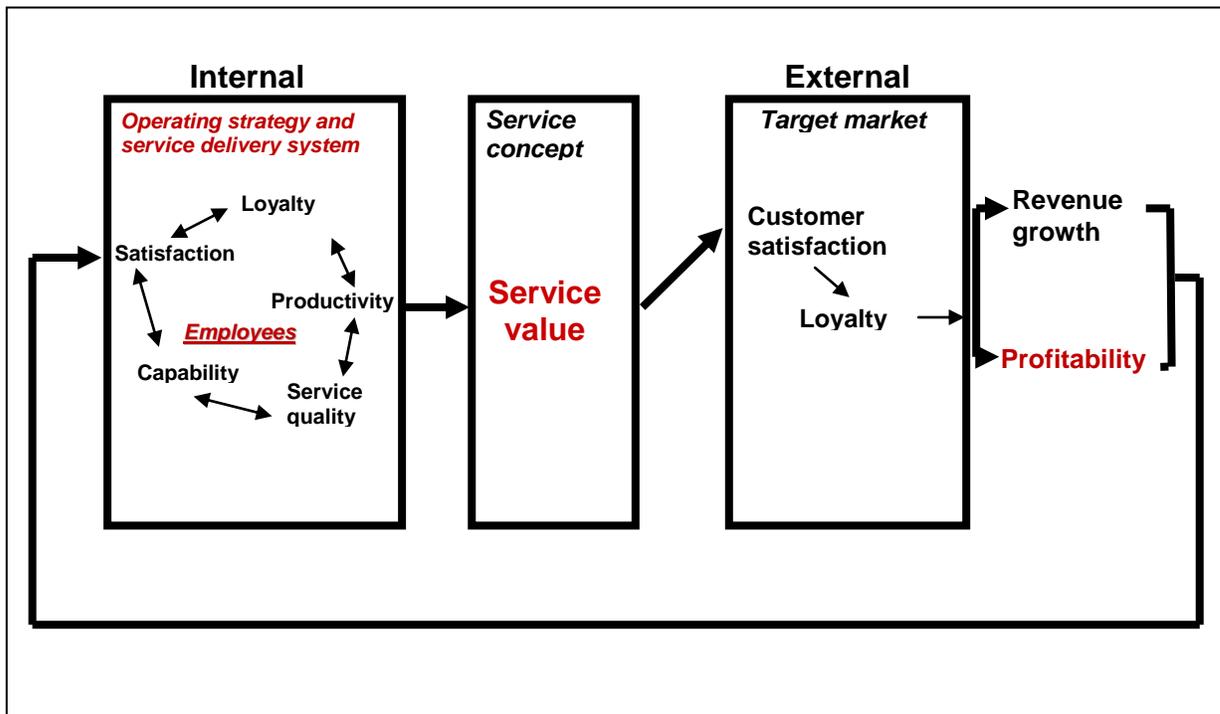
INTRODUCTION

Customer experience is seen as a strategic differentiator in organisations interacting with customers, leading to a competitive advantage and changes in profitability. The customer experience however is the effect of the employee engagement approach within the

organisation (Drotskie, 2009). Therefore, the employee experience leads to the customer experience. As the customer experience is the effect of something it cannot be directly changed in itself. The root cause leading to the effect of a change in customer experience is the employee experience, which comprises employee engagement. Employee engagement is determined by the interplay of perceptions on individual, group and organisational level (Viljoen, 2009).

In Figure 1 below, Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger (1997) depict the customer service profit chain which indicates that the changes inside the organisation (people, processes and systems) leads to a certain value proposition which leads to a change in the customer experience which leads to profitability.

Figure 1: The service profit chain



Source: Adapted from Heskett, Sasser & Schlesinger, 1997: 19

It is clear from figure 1 above that employee satisfaction will impact on the service value that will directly impact on customer satisfaction. Since 1997, the field of employee satisfaction developed and employee engagement is currently view as significant contributor to organisational success. Similarly customer satisfaction developed into a

much more refined construct namely customer centricity. The interplay between employee engagement, and customer centricity will be explored next.

PROBLEM INVESTIGATED

The impact of climate and culture

An awareness of underlying mental models and assumptions becomes increasingly important. Intra-personal skills, as defined by Bar-On (2005), become critical. This is confirmed by the following statement by Smircich and Calas (1989: 228), “The imagery of the global village fosters a somewhat less ethnocentric posture ... one that promotes introspection”. It makes sense to become aware of the culture and climate in organisations and the conscious and unconscious dynamics that it creates.

Good organisational improvement begins with good diagnosis (Howard, 1994). Tagiuri stated as early as 1968 that one dimension only of climate is often addressed and that this has negative effects (Viljoen, 2009). Mills (1993) identified three crucial factors that should be reflected in studies on organisational culture, namely, the relationship between societal values and organisational behaviour, the importance of powerful factors in the development of this value system, and the significance of the organisation as a subjective experience.

Deal (1986) and Schein (1986) were of the belief that culture should be analysed by means of qualitative methods. The researchers of this paper is in strong agreement with this view as the unique story of each organisation and the way in which members present this story, is critical in the understanding of the culture.

Cooke and Rousseau (1988) and Ouchi and Wilkons (1985) also contributed to the argument and discussed the appropriateness of quantitative research on culture. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders (1990), Rousseau (1990) and Denison and Mishra (1995) argued that both qualitative and quantitative methods could be used in the measurement

of culture. Botha and Schutte (2003) developed two models, namely, the customer excellence survey (CES) and the SafeHuman. The constructs of the two models are similar, but the outcomes are adapted for two different environments, namely, the service environment and the production environment. According to the CES, climate and culture should be studied simultaneously in order to gain a better understanding of organisational dynamics (Botha & Schutte, 2003).

Linking organisational culture and climate to customer experience

An understanding of the external environment (in this case the world of the customer) may assist in creating insights, reawakening instincts and cultivating organisational change. Schutte (2004) explored the impact of happenings in the internal environment on the external environment. Jung (1953) years ago held similar beliefs and based his insights on the age-old alchemy paradox - "*as within so without*". If a person or an organisation would like to address something in the external environment, the real work must happen internally. Mutwa, Teish and Larsen (2003) described the same duality, namely, if people treat each other with trust within the internal environment then they will also treat customers in the same way. Customers appreciate an organisation that encourages the truth through customer feedback and then addressing all customer problems honestly (McKenna, 1991).

This paper therefore investigates the causality between measuring and understanding the organisational culture and climate and measuring and understanding the customer experience. As employee engagement within the context of organisational culture and climate causes the customer experience to change, this causality is of utmost importance for management understanding.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are:

- Explore the pre-requisites for improved employee engagement
- Explore the pre-requisites for a changed customer experience
- Determine the causality between employee engagement and customer experience

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section of the paper, employee engagement within the context of organisational culture and climate and the customer experience are reviewed as two separate concepts.

Organisational culture and climate

“If the leadership dimension isn’t properly in place, a company simply cannot be successful. Organisations do not run by themselves. They need people – the right people in leadership positions to make them perform.”

Kets de Vries, 1984: unknown

It is assumed that organisations are social systems (French & Bell, 1999). Different employees often see the same thing but interpret it differently based on their own unique way of thinking (Salisbury, 1999). Therefore, in order to understand the way in which decisions are made and strategies implemented within an organisation, one would need to acknowledge and understand how employees within the organisation view the system and what constitutes their worldviews. It thus becomes critical for the leadership within an organisation to firstly value diversity and secondly ensure that all employees contribute significantly to the implementation of the organisational strategy thereby ensuring enhanced shared understanding and alignment (Viljoen, 2009). **A culture, thus a system of shared meanings**, may guide the way in which organisations act and the way in which individuals view and interpret the corporate world (Novinger, 2001). Schein (1985), Meek (1988) and others believed that a leader creates culture.

Wheatly (1992) stated that, in order to change a culture, the new ideas and beliefs should be communicated to all the members. Schein (1985, 1992) believed that leaders both create and are able to change the culture of both their team and their organisation. Although the changing of a culture requires a systemic approach Meek (1988) argued that the leader is the appropriate person to introduce a new direction. Gershon, Stone, Bakken and Larson (2004) maintained that organisational cultural aspects should be communicated, and stressed the importance of congruent behaviour. Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak (2005) passionately argued that through conversation the realities of life could be transformed and pleaded for leaders to engage in dialogue on strategic matters.

The way in which things are done in an organisation will contribute to how employees experience the workplace (Viljoen, 2009). **A climate (a shared set of attitude in human affairs)** conducive for engagement, involvement and participation should be engendered by leadership within the organisation (Botha and Schutte, 2003) to customer satisfaction. Organisational benefits will materialise from such a climate.

The philosophy of engagement

Benson (1999) described the true meaning of commitment as the ability to commit with passion to a noble pursuit. Engagement can be described as “*the act of committing, pledging or engaging oneself*” or “*the state of being bound emotionally or intellectually to a course of action or to another person or persons*” (Macey & Schneider, 2008:3).

Macey and Schneider (2008) offers a comprehensive description of engagement and describes it as discretionary willingness. An engaged employee is a person who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about, his and her work. Viljoen (2009) defined engaged commitment as “*the trait of sincere and steadfast fixity of purpose, a man of energy and commitment*” and “*the act of binding oneself to a course of action*”.

In the model that will be presented in figure 2, commitment is viewed as the emotional experience of the phenomenon engagement. Employee engagement, thus, is a concept

that is generally viewed as managing discretionary effort, that is, when employees have choices, they will act in a way that furthers their organisation's interests.

Statistics have shown that only 29% of employees are actively engaged in their jobs (Leadership Council, 2004). These engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. People that are actively engaged help move the organisation forward. A total of 84% highly engaged employees believe they can positively impact the quality of their organisation's products, compared with only 31% of the disengaged. 72% of highly engaged employees believe they can positively affect customer service, versus 27% of the disengaged. 68% of highly engaged employees believe they can positively impact costs in their job or unit, compared with just 19% of the disengaged. It is clear that in employee engagement has positive impacts on business results such as customer service.

Engaged employees feel a strong emotional bond to the organisation that employs them (Viljoen, 2009). This is associated with people demonstrating willingness to recommend the organisation to others and commit time and effort to help the organisation succeed. It suggests that people are motivated by intrinsic factors (e.g. personal growth), working to a common purpose, being part of a larger process) rather than simply focusing on extrinsic factors (e.g., pay/reward) (Leadership Council, 2004).

High correlations were found between talent retention and levels of engagement. The Leadership Council (2004) provided a quantitative analysis of effective engagement strategies in a report on driving performance and retention through employee engagement. Employee engagement is defined in this report (Leadership Council, 2004) as the “*positive emotional connection to an employee's work, thus affective, normative and continuance commitment*”. According to this report engaged employees are inspired to go above and beyond the normal call of duty in order to exceed organisational goals and that engagement can contribute to an increase in total share holder return of up to 47% through the reduction of absenteeism, enhanced customer feedback, less shrinkage of inventory and higher sales achievements (Leadership Council, 2004).

Except for limited efforts on the part of Jackson (2004), Katz and Miller (2003) and LeBaron (2005) no academic research could be found that either positions the concept of inclusivity as a radical transformational strategy as proposed by Viljoen (2009). This paper aims to contribute to the emergence of insights on engagement and inclusivity and how it manifests in organisational success indicators such as customer centricity. In specific pre-requisites for engagement are identified.

Customer experience

Over the past few years, there has been an increasing trend towards creating “experiences” for customers, particularly for those in the services sector. Because of this trend, authors such as Pine and Gilmore (1999:ix-x) are of the opinion that the service economy has been transformed into an attention economy, an entertainment economy, a dream society, an emotion economy or an experience economy. As the commoditisation of many service offerings continues, organisations have to devise new ways to achieve a competitive advantage, and in particular by focusing on the design and management of customers’ experiences. Experiences are inherently emotional and personal (Pullman & Gross, 2003:215).

To compete successfully in the customer experience territory, a growing number of organisations are systematically applying the principles and tools of total customer experience (TCE) to generate, strengthen and sustain enduring customer loyalty. Marketers today believe that engineering TCE and lasting customer loyalty are important in maintaining a customer focus and in creating customer preference (Mascarenhas, Kesavan & Bernacchi, 2006:397).

Organisations that apply total customer experience principles have the following features in common (Mascarenhas, et al., 2006:398-399):

- Anticipating and fulfilling customer needs and wants better than competitors do.
- Providing real customer experiences.
- Providing a real emotional experience.

- Providing experience as a distinct market offering.
- Utilising experiences as interaction.
- Changing experiences into engaging memories.

These principles listed above imply the customer experience is applied throughout the organisation. The customer experience is in the DNA of the organisation – its people, processes and architecture, thus the organisational culture.

It is clear from the many definitions of customer experience (Drotskie, 2009) formulated over time that the total customer experience is a concept that evolved over time to become a systemic and holistic concept focused on the customer. It is about a “human” interaction and therefore the emotions of customers are a vital part of an experience.

Drotskie (2009) accepts the definition by Seybold (2002:108) namely “a total customer experience is a consistent representation and flawless execution, across distribution channels and interaction points, of the emotional connection and relationship you want your customers to have with your brand” encompasses all the most important aspects of the total customer experience and is therefore adopted for this paper.

The customer experience is felt in all interactions with an organisation and therefore it is important to understand that customers interact with an organisation through various means and the experience must always be the same. This is true for any services organisation, for example financial services.

From the definition of total customer experience given above it is clear that a total customer experience consists of a variety of elements.

The following key elements of customer experience are entrenched across the organisation (Shaw, 2005: xix), namely strategy, culture, customer expectations, processes, channel approach, marketing and brand, systems, people and measurement.

According to Shaw (2005:xix), each of these elements represents an area in the organisation that has an extensive effect on customer experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of research applied in this paper is grounded theory.

The methodology of grounded theory was originally developed by Glaser (1978, 1992) and Strauss (1987) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss (1987) who was influenced by Hughes (1956) and Blumer (1969), contributed to the methodology by highlighting the need for field research in order to develop a discipline as the basis for social action, and to acknowledge the complexity and variability of both phenomena and of human action. He stressed the belief that individuals are actors who assume roles in response to problems and that they act from a basis of meaning. The importance of an awareness of the interrelationships between conditions, actions and consequences was highlighted. Glaser (1978, 1992) identifies the need for comparisons of data in order to identify, develop and relate concepts.

Strauss (1990) and Corbin (1991), describe an axial coding process for the development of **grounded theory**. This approach may be used during theory construction to "*think systematically about data and to relate them in very complex ways*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 99). During axial coding the researcher attempts to identify which types of phenomena, contexts, and causal and intervening conditions and consequences are relevant for the domain under study. Axial coding may be viewed as evolving out of the work of Strauss and Glaser (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 12) describe grounded theory as "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another". Charmaz (2006: 2) states that grounded theory "consists of "systemic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in

the data themselves". The methodology followed in this study was strongly influenced by both the approaches of Stauss (1990) and of Charmaz (2006) in respect of building emergent theory.

Kelle (2005) stresses the importance of the integration of previous knowledge and new empirical observations during any scientific discovery process. It is important that "this style of inquiry should be supplemented by strategies of further corroboration of the empirically contentful categories and propositions developed in the ongoing course of theory building" (Kelle, 2005: 15).

Typically, research content is sorted into clusters depending on the type of content. Themes are defined as units, which are derived from patterns such as "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or sayings and proverbs" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984: 131). Themes are identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985: 60). Themes that emerge from the informants' stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. The "coherence of ideas rests with the analyst (who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together)" (Leininger, 1985: 60). Constan (1992: 258) reiterated this point and stated that the "interpretative approach should be considered as a distinct point of origination".

Two frameworks emerged from the grounded theory approach, applied by the researchers to determine a measurement approach to explore employee engagement and customer experience.

Pre-requisite of employee engagement

The next step in content analysis involves combining and cataloguing related patterns into sub-themes. Patterns emerge when sub-themes are gathered in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the information. These patterns may be tested with the interviewees. In this research stories emerged that had influenced the researcher's

understanding of the phenomenon of inclusivity and, throughout the research process; the questions had been adapted slightly in order to test for new insights.

The researcher adapted a technique of Strauss and Corbin (1998, xiii) to classify data. Usually a coding scheme is then devised in basic terms such as frequency (amount of content), direction (to whom the content is directed), intensity (power of content), and space (size of content). According to Strauss et al (1998) in the case of grounded theory the focus is on open coding – the analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions discovered in the data – then axial coding – “the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed axial because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss et al: 123); and, ultimately, selective coding – the process of integrating and refining the theory.

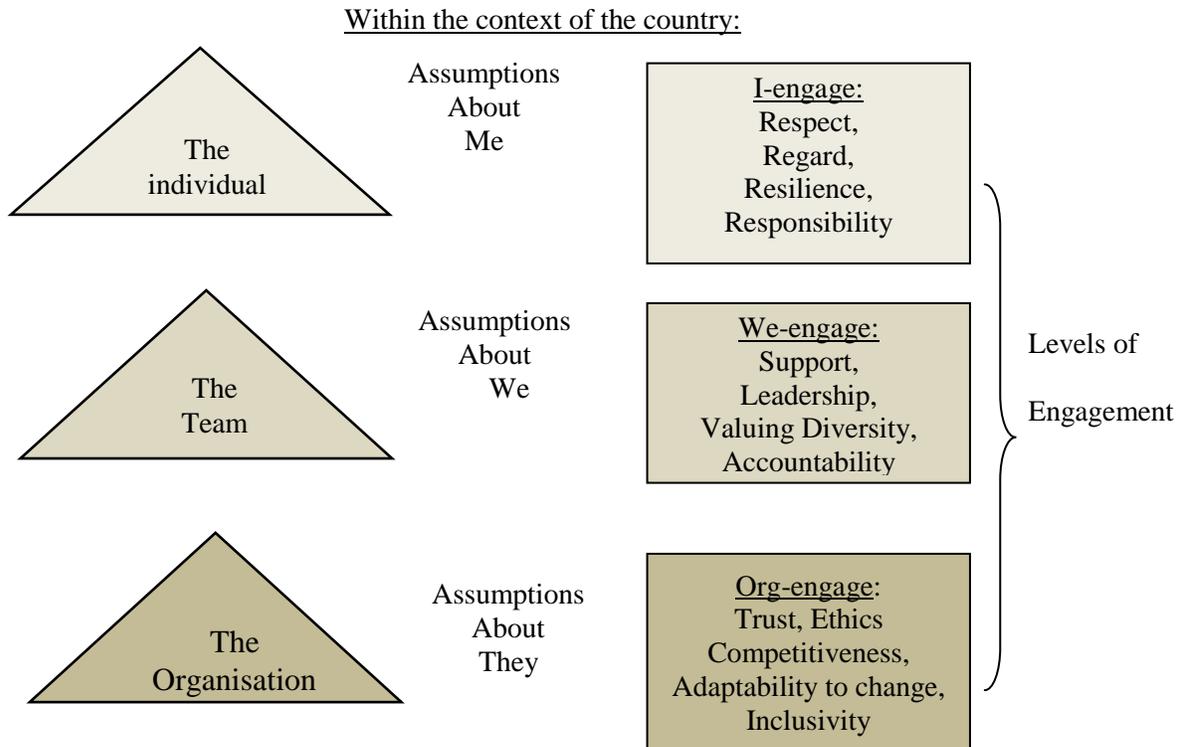
Categories are considered to be saturated when new data gathered no longer leads to new theoretical insights, neither does it reveal new properties in respect of the core theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). Ultimately, the insights gained are tested against, integrated into and presented in the Engagement Framework.

A valid argument is then constructed for the choice of the themes. This is carried out by studying relevant literature. By referring back to the literature the interviewer amasses valuable information that allows inferences from the interview to be drawn. Once the themes have been collected and the literature studied the researcher is ready to formulate the theme statements with which to develop a story line. In common with Charmaz (2006) and Guba and Lincoln (1982) the researcher assumed that this paper, like any other theoretical effort, offers an interpretive portrayal of the world in question and not an exact portrayal of this world. In terms of the grounded theory, which was utilised priority was given to the phenomenon of engagement and customer centricity, rather than to the setting itself.

The themes that emerged as pre-requisites of engagement are clustered on individual, group and organisational domain through grounded theory methodology. It was clustered

as I-engage factors – factors needed on individual level to engage; We-engage factors – factors needed on group domain to engage; and Org-engage factors – factors on organisational level needed to engage (Viljoen, 2009). These pre-requisites are displayed in figure 2.

Figure 2: Pre-requisites of Engagement



Source: Viljoen, 2009

It is not the intent the intent of this paper to define the different factors as described in this figure. What are important is how employees in the organisation experience and describe the factors and not how the researchers define it. Individuals and groups in organisations should engage around these factors and identify what is important for that specific system, and plan around it.

As depicted in figure 2 above, the pre-requisites of employee engagement can be described as and synthesis between the following constructs:

- **Respect** refers to an assumption/showing of good faith and value towards another person.
- **Regard** refers to having a positive self-view and self-awareness. It further refers to both the perceived weak and strong points of an individual and how he or she deals with it.
- **Responsibly** refers to the extent to which an individual takes accountability for his or her behaviour.
- **Support** refers to the extent that individuals feel encouraged, cared for and assisted by others.
- **Supervisor leadership** refers to the leadership capability that is needed by managers to effectively manage and lead employees. It also specifically applies to the depth of leadership on supervisory level as effectiveness on this level has a direct impact on the achieving of organisational goals.
- **Diversity** refers to the degree to which diversity of thought; race, gender, age, language and nationalities are valued.
- **Accountability** refers to the degree to which an individual is held responsible for his or her contribution and behaviour by their team.
- **Trust** refers to the degree to which the intent of others is believed to be authentic and pure.
- **Alignment** refers to the degree to which teams have shared understanding of the values of the organisation and the strategy of the organisation.
- **Change resilience** refers to the ability of the organization and individuals to deal with change effectively
- **Inclusivity** refers to the degree to which an individual feel that they are been made part of the organisation. The practice of co-creating plans and strategies are utilised.
- **Ethics** refers to the sense of the individual that the right things are done in the organisation

The descriptions above crystallised from the Grounded Theory approach.

Leaders in organisations must create a space in which the wisdom, insights and gifts – the skills for which the individual was employed in the first place – are brought to the organisational table in order to create an environment in which diverse views, paradigms and perspectives may create a synergistic, sustainable outcome that manifests in organisational benefits such as optimal customer experience (Viljoen, 2009).

A climate of **inclusivity** in which differences are not only allowed, but are valued and promoted, becomes imperative. The concept of inclusivity is still relatively ill described and has not been well documented or researched (Viljoen, 2009). Should the views of Senge (1993) be integrated with those of Beck and Cohen (1996). Beck and Cohen (1996) argued convincingly that high quality of leadership is needed in both South Africa and Africa as a continent to unleash the potential of the diversity of the continent. Through inclusivity the benefits of diversity can materialise and organisational realities such as diverse customer needs, can be met.

Some definitions in respect of the concept of Inclusion as it pertains to diversity may be found in educational theory, gender studies and the field of religion. Almost no literature was found on the topic of inclusivity as organisational transformational methodology. Except for the definition found in the online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia (academic reputation still questionable), no other definition for the concept of inclusivity could be found (Viljoen, 2009). Viljoen (2009: 16) defined inclusivity as:

“A radical organisational transformational methodology which aligns the doing and the being side of the organisation around commonly defined principles and values, co-created by all.”

In this paper the researchers argue that through a process of inclusivity, employees can co-create strategies on customer experience and on values that will manifest in employee engagement and ultimately a positive customer experience.

Inclusivity releases **energy in a system**, which may then be used for performance. Energy, according to scientific laws, may be classified as positive, neutral or negative. Einstein taught that it is not possible to destroy energy, although, friction may cause energy to decrease – the principle of entropy. Energy may, however, be transformed from one form to another (Oxtoby & Nachtrieb, 1996). Emotions may be described as forms of energy (Middelton-Moz, 2000). In a climate of inclusivity the energy in the system may be perceived as positive.

If there is a climate of inclusivity in an organisation engagement is optimal (Viljoen (2009). Everybody is involved and shares their different viewpoints, non-performance is not tolerated and employees assume personal authority. There are high levels of support, trust and respect. Leadership may be humane and vulnerable as mistakes may be shared and speedily resolved. The energy in the system is in a virtuous cycle and all the emotions mentioned in this context again reinforce the climate of inclusivity. This will result in a positive customer experience.

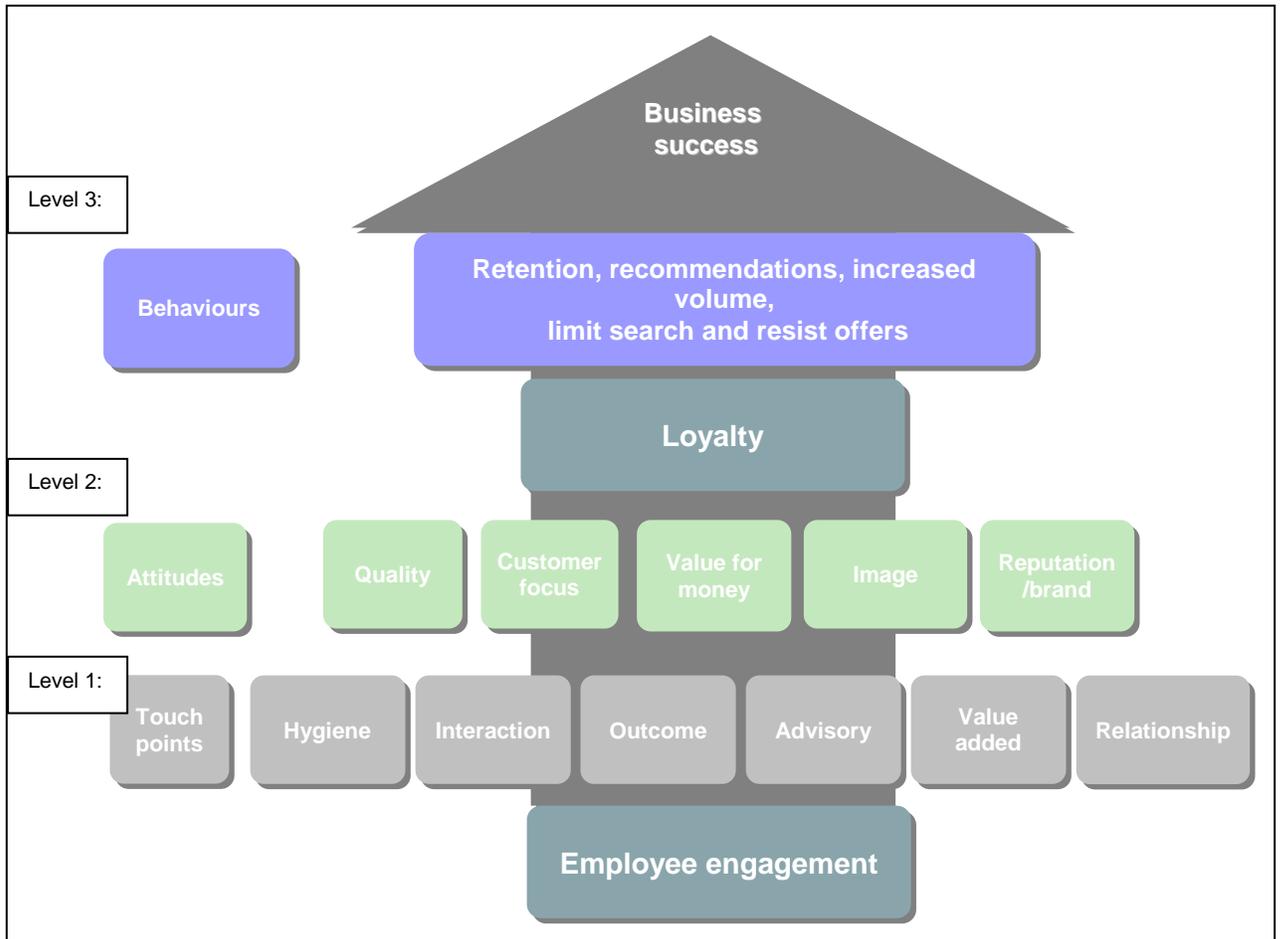
In a system in which the energy to perform is negative a vicious cycle will exist. People will not feel that they are trusted, supported and respected. Therefore, individual defence mechanisms will come into play and group dynamics will become destructive. In fighting will take place, people will withdraw and power plays and political gamesmanship will be commonplace. It will not be possible to share personal emotions without penalties being exacted and nobody will admit to mistakes in order to protect him or herself. People will tend to blame others for whatever goes wrong (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). Ultimately, customer experience will be impacted (Schutte, 2003). Customer experience will be impacted.

If a system is neutral the system will be indifferent or apathetic – either does not care anymore, could not care less or has tried too often without any reaction to implement change. Voices are not brought to the organisational table and people do just enough in order to survive. The customer will experience an indifferent service offering.

Pre-requisites of customer experience

The researchers developed a framework to determine the pre-requisites of a total customer experience, namely the Integrated Services Measurement (ISM) framework presented in figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Integrated Services Measurement Framework



Source: Adapted from Markinor (2004). Copyright: Walker Information.

The ISM framework as depicted in figure 3 indicates measurement of the customer experience on three levels, namely a touch point level, an attitudinal level and a behavioural level. To align customer experience being defined, as more than customer service, but including service, the basic service needs of customers were included in the framework. Customer experience is also defined as including the emotions and behaviour of customers and therefore the framework includes a measurement on an attitudinal and on a behavioural level as well as loyalty of customers towards an organisation.

Level 1: Service needs. This level describes the interaction between the customer and the organisation (i.e. the touch point). It represents the entire customer experience during interaction, fulfilling all service needs as described in the elements of the total customer

experience. In customer-measurement terms, the touch point may be summarised in terms of attributes to provide the most comprehensive definition of the interaction (e.g. look and feel, timeliness, outcome [accuracy and speed], professionalism, communication [understanding, language, clarity during interaction]).

Level 2: Attitudes as emotional and intellectual dispositions caused by customer experience during interaction to meet service needs. These are the “feelings” customers have that will in turn affect their behaviour towards the service provider. Elements of the attitudinal level are quality of the organisation, customer focus, reputation and brand.

Level 3: Behaviours. These are intended actions that will make money for the service provider. Behaviours are initiated in response to and caused by customer attitudes.

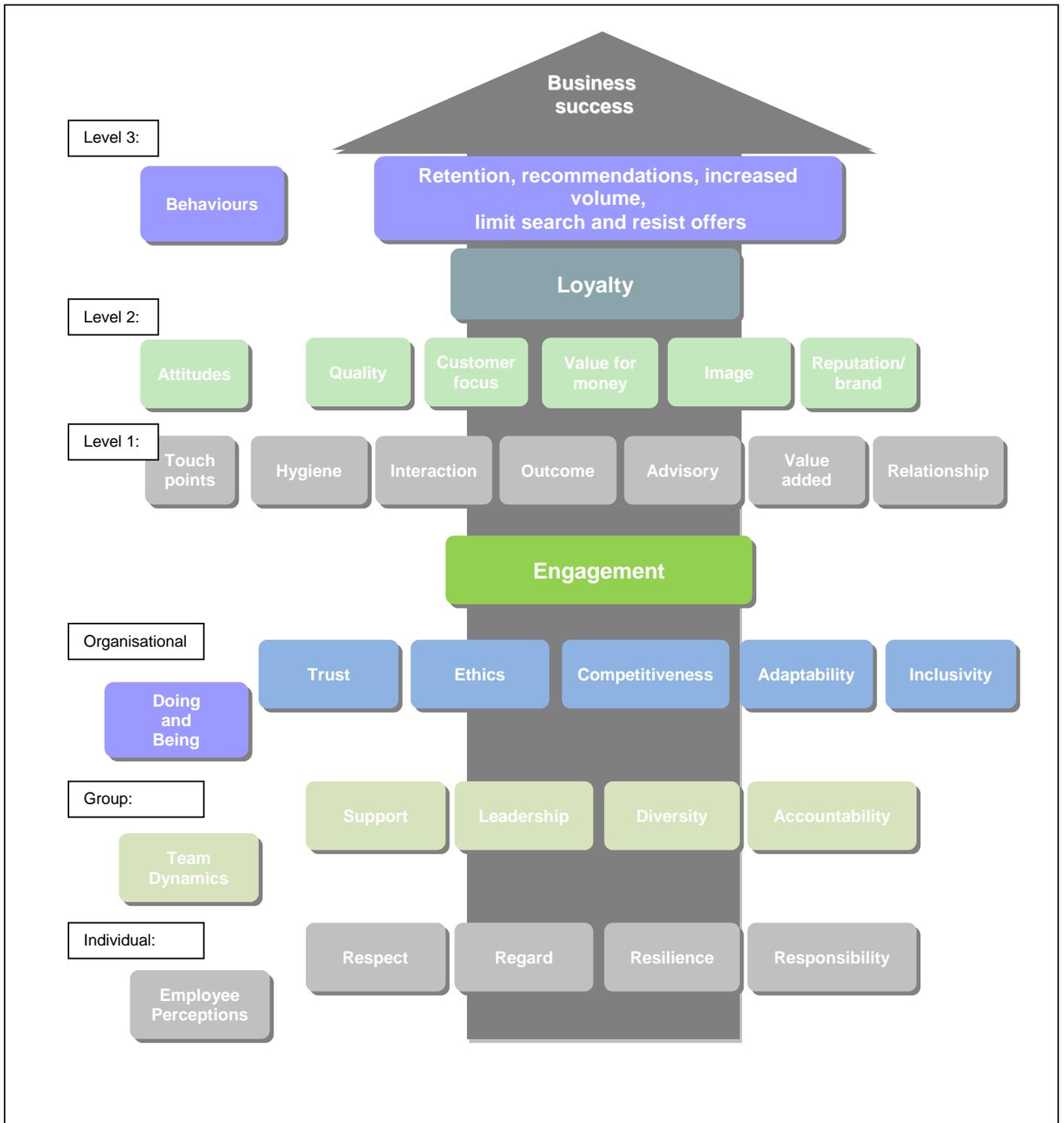
RESULTS / FINDINGS

Through grounded theory methodology the pre-requisites of employee engagement crystallised (see figure 2). The pre-requisites for a changed customer experience are described in figure 3. Viljoen (2009) argues that employee engagement will result in a positive customer experience. Drotskie (2009) argues that a positive customer experience is reliant on employee engagement.

The researchers of this paper argue that focusing on external factors in the world of the customer cannot change customer experience. To influence the customer experience, the employee engagement within the organisation should be optimized. Jung (1959) stated years ago that what happens inside, would manifest outside. The researchers agree with this philosophy and argue that an integrated approach towards optimising customer experiences should be followed.

The causality between employee engagement and customer experience are displayed in figure 4, where a synthesis of the two frameworks discussed earlier is presented.

Figure 4: Integrated Systemic Framework of Customer Experience



Source: Adapted from Viljoen (2009) and Markinor (2004)

The Integrated Systemic Customer Experience Framework in figure 4 above indicate that through rewiring the perceptions of the individual, the group and the team through a process of inclusivity, around the Doing and the Being – thus, the Strategy which includes customer experience factors and the values of the organisation – virtuous energy is released in the system that will impact on customer experience. Through optimising the customer experience at the touch points, the customer attitudes and behaviours can manifest in organisational benefits and ultimately in organisational success and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Culture, climate and customer experience should be studied simultaneously and systemically in order to gain a better understanding of causalities between these dynamics.

An understanding of the external environment (in this case the world of the customer) may assist in creating insights, reawakening instincts and cultivating organisational change.

To summarise leadership in the global community should acquire the skill to translate strategy, which include customer experience focuses (the Doing) and the values of the organisation (the Being) through a process of inclusivity.

Optimising employee engagement can optimise customer experience. The enhanced customer experience will directly impact on business success.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisations need to create a space in which the wisdom, insights and gifts – the skills for which the individual was employed in the first place – are brought to the organisational table in order to create an environment in which diverse views, paradigms and perspectives may create a synergistic, sustainable outcome. Through a process of inclusivity, a climate or behavioural framework, is created by leadership (Viljoen, 2009). The benefits of engagement may then be unleashed. The task of leadership is to make sense of the nonsense, to make music out of the noise, and to facilitate growth in individuals, in groups and, ultimately, in organisations by enhancing the wisdom and unleashing the potential contained in the workforce.

Customers will experience this energy through behaviour of the employees when interacting with an organisation. Ultimately, it will lead to a real emotional, mutually satisfying, experience for both the employee and the customer.

If management can get insight into the causality between employee engagement and customer experience, their effort to optimise both the internal and the external world can be simplified.

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