

EMPLOYEES' EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO CUSTOMER DEAL REQUESTS

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Customers are increasingly asking for discounts and deals while shopping in traditional retail stores. Using interviews and a survey of frontline employees, this article develops and tests a model that profiles the effect of customer deal requests on employees' emotional reactions. The findings show that employees' request self-efficacy and their positivity toward deal requesters increase their comfort with these deal requests. This comfort, along with the employee's perceptions of the dominance of the customer's approach style and the reasonableness of the request, impacts the employee's affective reactions following deal requests. Script theory and motivated reasoning are used to explain this process, while the importance of employee comfort in this process is emphasized. Implications for theory and management are discussed.

Customer bartering, bargaining, and haggling are mainstream practices in many cultures and for certain retail segments such as sales of automobiles, furniture, and electronics. The phenomena have been studied in the context of economics and game theory (Nash 1950; Binmore, Rubinstein, and Wolinsky 1986), B2B relationships (Hobbs 1996; Nagarajan and Bassok 2008), cross cultural differences of the focal behaviors (e.g., Lee 2000), and marketing (e.g., Otnes and McGrath 2001). However, the effect of customer bargaining and deal making on frontline employees in traditional retail segments, where these practices generally do not occur, has been virtually ignored in academic circles. In this study, we investigate the antecedents and nature of employee affective responses when customers attempt to ask for a deal or bargain with frontline employees in traditional retail settings. We call these bargaining attempts "customer deal requests." Customer deal requests are defined as customer requests in which the customer asks the frontline employee for a discount or a deal on the merchandise or service being purchased.

To study this phenomenon is important because in recent years customer deal requests have become more common in traditional retail settings (Peterson 2013). Retail employees are often not well-equipped or trained to handle these requests, which may produce uncomfortable or negative feelings and outcomes for the employee and customer, as well as inappropriate employee behaviors. Further, Bailey, Gremler, and McCollough (2001) argue that employee emotions are critical to the service experience, while employee job satisfaction has long had an *emotional* side to it and is of high importance relative to employee performance (Donovan, Brown, and Mowen 2004). Thus, focusing this research on employee affective reactions relative to customer deal requests is justified and timely.

Many consumers have been encouraged by news and media stories promoting the use of deal requests, such as stories on ABC's 20/20 (Chang 2013), *Consumer Reports* (2007, 2009, 2013), *Time* (White 2013), *The New York Times* (Stout 2013), and Business Insider (Peterson 2013). These consumers have begun making deal requests in contexts not typically associated with these practices, most notably in traditional retail settings (*Consumer Reports* 2009). The headlines alone ("Consumers Are Haggling Major Retailers for Better Prices-And Winning" [Peterson 2013]; "10 Tricks for Haggling Over Price-At Any Store" [White 2013]; "Yes, you can haggle at your favorite retailers-and you're getting ripped off if you don't" [Guilford 2013]) encourage consumers to make deal requests wherever they shop. The recently released book, *Bargain Fever: How to Shop in a Discounted World*, offers shoppers tips on

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ways to find the best deals while shopping, including how to negotiate price in retail stores even where this practice is not typically done (Ellwood 2013). In fact, a recent study by Gillison, Northington, and Beatty (2014) found that 55 percent of individuals surveyed had made a deal request while shopping in a traditional store in the previous 6 months. *Consumer Reports* (2009) reported that 66 percent of consumers had attempted to negotiate a better deal while shopping in the previous 6 months. While it may be beneficial to the customer to haggle over prices, this practice can be frustrating and emotionally exhausting for frontline employees not accustomed to handling such requests, and incorrect handling of such requests can negatively affect customer reactions.

Recently, Gillison, Northington, and Beatty (2014) examined customer deal requesting from the perspective of customers. They found that when the employee gives the customer the deal requested, the customer reacts favorably to the retailer with more positive post-purchase attitudes and behaviors. These researchers call for additional research aimed at investigating frontline employee responses to customer deal requests. Sharma and Krishnan (2001) also call for more research on customer deal requests (which they call customer bargaining). This article addresses these calls using script theory and motivated reasoning as theoretical rationales for the hypotheses and model, focusing on several antecedents and employee emotional reactions (comfort, positive affect, and negative affect), relative to customer deal requests. We first discuss existing research and theories, and then we provide a discussion of our qualitative research. This background is used to develop our hypotheses. Then the details and analysis of our survey of frontline retail employees are presented. Finally, our findings are revealed and explicated in a final discussion, along with implications, limitations, and future research directions.

BACKGROUND AND THEORY

Employees' Emotional Responses

While research in service and sales scripts, as well as employee-customer encounters and service quality issues, suggests the possibility of employee emotions during customer interactions (cf. Alford 1998; Leigh 1987; Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990), surprisingly

the research on employee emotions is light. For example, Bitner, Booms, and Mohr (1994) investigate service encounters from the employee perspective and highlight the negative experiences frontline employees can encounter with customers. Further, Bailey, Gremler, and McCollough (2001) suggest that employee emotions provide important guideposts for employees in their decision making and their behaviors.

On the other hand, customer emotional reactions in frontline settings have been heavily studied (cf. Mattila and Enz 2002; Price, Arnould, and Deibler 1995). In fact, one particularly interesting consumer emotion is customer comfort. As suggested by Spake et al. (2003), comfort is an important and central emotion. However, interestingly, in our literature review we found only minimal mention of the idea of employee comfort, while there is extensive coverage on customer comfort. For example, Dabholkar, Shepherd, and Thorpe (2000) reported that comfort was the most important factor for customers in determining service quality in their study of church customers of picture directory services. Further, Lloyd and Luk (2011) found that the frontline employee's positive service manner during the interaction increased customer comfort, which led to an increase in perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Increased customer comfort with the service provider relationship can also increase customer trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Spake et al. 2003). These findings indicate that because comfort is critically important for customers, employee comfort may also be important in customer-employee interactions and could be a factor in customer deal requests (also see Wang, Beatty, and Liu 2012). We now turn to several theories expected to be useful relative to employee emotional reactions in customer interactions.

Script Theory

According to script theory, events are organized into scripts, or structures, to describe a sequence of events (Schank and Abelson 1977). Scripts are developed based on memories of past similar experiences (Tomkins 1979). Scripts are incomplete rules and vary in their degree of accuracy (Tomkins 1979). Additionally, scripts are selective and tend to be more self-validating than self-fulfilling (Tomkins 1979). Scripts have been studied in a number of marketing contexts, including selling and service contexts,

and define the norms of behavior and expectations of both parties in employee-customer interactions (Alford 1998; Leigh 1987; Leigh and McGraw 1989).

Service firms work to ensure that frontline employees develop service scripts to help them handle customer interactions effectively (Mohr and Bitner 1991; Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994). These scripts may be learned through on-the-job experience, as well as through vicarious learning (e.g., modeling, observation, and role-playing) (Leigh 1987). Hartline and Ferrell (1996) address the high variance possible in customer requests, suggesting that employee reactions to customer requests may not be fully scripted.

Scripts have long been tied to affective reactions, both positive and negative (see Abelson 1976; Tomkins 2008). For example, Alford (1998) noted that the positive deviations of employees from an expected service delivery script resulted in greater customer satisfaction, while negative deviations produced lower levels of satisfaction. Responding to customer deal requests may produce either positive or negative emotional responses based on the employee's individual scripts regarding these requests. Thus, scripts serve as an important backdrop to the ideas developed in this paper.

Motivated Reasoning

Motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990) can also help us understand employee emotional reactions relative to customer deal requests. This emotion-based decision-making theory suggests that individuals (including employees) use various defense mechanisms to cope with the situations they face. That is, individuals will rely on selective information and heuristics in their decision making. Therefore, evaluations are not simply objective but are, in fact, highly subjective. Individuals tend to look for confirming information and will tend to reject information that disconfirms their preconceived notions, which is referred to as "goal-directed reasoning." See Wang, Beatty, and Liu (2012) for recent support of this theory in an employee decision-making context.

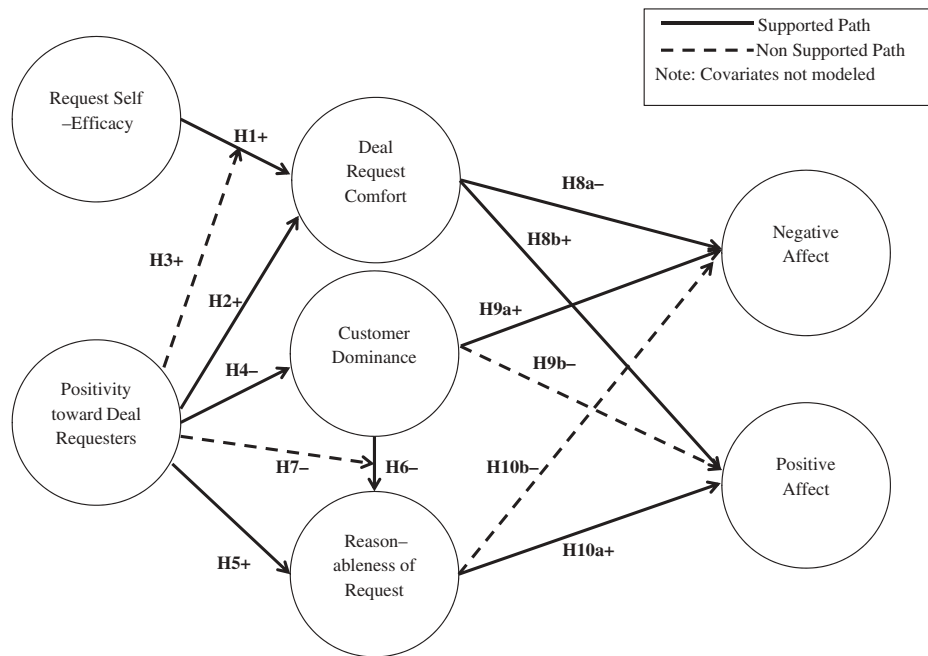
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

To aid in our understanding of the phenomenon of interest, we conducted exploratory interviews on the topic of employee emotional responses to customer

deal requests. Some of the topics covered in the interviews include the following: the company's policy on customer deal requests and its flexibility, the employee's opinion of the policy and of customers who make deal requests, how typical these requests are, and how employees feel about these requests. Interviews were conducted with individuals either currently or recently employed in retail stores in which customer deal requests are unusual. Respondents were students at a large southeastern university. Participants were recruited from marketing classes after indicating they had recent frontline retail experience and had encountered at least one customer making a deal request. Two of the researchers in this study, one female and one male, interviewed an approximately equal number of participants. Of the 17 participants, 11 were female, 22 was the average age, and 82 percent were Caucasian. Two respondents worked at discount retailers, 13 worked at apparel retailers, 1 at a home improvement retailer, 1 at a department store, and 3 at other types of retail stores (3 employees worked in multiple types of retail stores). Each interview was conducted face-to-face in a secure room with only 1 interviewer and 1 participant present. The interviews followed a semistructured format where an interview guide served as a starting point for discussion. Participants were allowed to set the course of the interview by telling stories of such past encounters (see Fournier 1998), with the researchers only speaking up to ensure that all relevant points were discussed.

The interviews ranged in length from 14 to 30 minutes and lasted, on average, 21 minutes. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The shorter interviews involved individuals who had encountered only minimal customer deal requests. Throughout the interview process, the researchers periodically met to identify emerging trends and to discuss any issues that arose. After all interviews were conducted and transcribed, the researchers used open coding in which they initially read and coded all interviews independently (Corbin and Strauss 2008) so as to develop a set of constructs of interest (Haytko and Baker 2004). Researchers then compared the constructs each developed, rectifying differences. Finally, the researchers used axial coding where the interviews were again analyzed and coded using the constructs that emerged. Thus, the interviews aided us in

Figure 1
Employees' Emotional Responses to Customer Deal Requests



developing an understanding of employee emotional reactions to customer deal requests and suggested the relevance of several theories (script theory and motivated reasoning). Then, combining our qualitative findings, with both a literature review and potentially important theories, we developed a model and hypotheses (See Figure 1). We identify 4 antecedents of employee emotions and 3 employee emotions that represent the framework of our study. Appendix 1 provides example quotes from the interviews relative to the constructs identified, and additional quotes are sprinkled throughout the hypothesis section to provide additional evidence of the relationships addressed.

HYPOTHESES

Deal Request Comfort and its Antecedents

A central construct of our model, derived from our interviews and the literature, is the idea of employee comfort with deal requests. Employee comfort is an employee emotion with strong potential explanatory power based on our preliminary work. It may be

particularly important when employees are addressing issues for which they do not have firm scripts developed, such as customer deal requests. For example, Tomkins (2008, p. 147) addresses "limitation-remediation scripts," which involve less than ideal situations that must, nevertheless, be confronted; these scripts seem to correspond to customer deal request situations. To provide specificity to the concept of comfort identified and studied here, we study *deal request comfort*, which is defined as an employee's feeling of ease relative to handling the customer deal request.

Further, individual variables evolved from our exploratory work that seemed relevant in explaining the employee's comfort with customer deal requests: request self-efficacy and employee positivity toward deal requesters. Self-efficacy reflects a person's belief that s/he can perform or attain certain job-related goals (Bandura 1977), and, in this case, the goal is handling customer requests. Therefore, we refer to this construct as *request self-efficacy*. *Employee positivity toward deal requesters* is defined as the employee's general level of positive attitudinal orientation toward customers who make these requests.

An employee's deal request comfort is likely to be affected by his or her perceived request self-efficacy. This ability could be innate or could result from training: "I feel like I had the right personality [to handle deal requests] ... sometimes you just have to tell the customer 'no'" (female, 22 years old). Self-efficacy has been shown to impact the quality of service provided by frontline service employees (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). Self-efficacy may be more effectively used as a contextual variable rather than as a general personality trait (see Hill and Beatty 2011); thus, we focus on request self-efficacy as a generalized level of confidence in handling customer requests. In the interviews, some respondents reported feeling well suited to handling customer deal requests (i.e., they had well-formed scripts), which represents request self-efficacy relative to the task at hand, while other respondents did not. With greater request self-efficacy, the employee should feel more comfortable handling the deal request. For example, during the interview, one female respondent (22 years old) expressed a general lack of request self-efficacy, which made her uncomfortable when customers asked for a discount: "I had this guy come in and he was looking for a CD and ... he was like 'that is way too expensive, I can't do that, can you cut me a deal?' ... he was like trying to sweet-talk me and stuff and I was not comfortable with it."

Script development for handling customer deal requests is supported in the interviews (i.e., "I've seen it so much that I'm used to it"). Additionally, the idea of script knowledge enhancing self-efficacy also comes from the sales literature (Leigh 1987), as well as from Bandura (1986) who suggested that both skills and self-beliefs of efficacy are needed for competent functioning. Thus, employees who have stronger, more well-formed scripts with regard to handling customer requests will feel more confident in their ability to handle customer deal requests and, hence, more comfortable in handling these requests.

Further in the interviews, many respondents expressed a strong general attitude, either positive or negative, toward deal requesters. For example, a negative attitude prevailed with some employees: "I hated the customers, I hated my job. ... [W]hen I started my job I loved it. ... but whenever I saw that kind of horrible customer, I wanted to quit my job ... that made me sad so ... finally I did quit the job" (female, 32 years old). However, a positive attitude prevailed with others: "I

mean I felt good because you knew that it [helping customers with requests] made them [customers] happy," (male, 27 years old). Our qualitative findings suggest that if employees have more positive attitudes toward deal requesters, then they tend to be more comfortable handling the request. Script theory is useful in thinking about the association of employee attitudes and their comfort. As Fiske (1982) noted, schemas (or organized scripts) involve an affective tag assessing one's attitude toward members of a category. Thus, a positive (negative) attitude toward deal requesters represents a more positive (negative) script and produces greater (lower) comfort in handling the request.

Finally, request self-efficacy and attitude toward deal requesters may have an interactive effect on comfort level. That is, while request self-efficacy implies a well-formed script and greater comfort relative to customer deal requests, the employee's level of positivity (or negativity) toward deal requesters could enhance (or reduce) the employee's motivation to handle effectively the request, thus producing an interactive effect. The above discussion produces the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Employee request self-efficacy is positively related to their level of deal request comfort

Hypothesis 2: Employee positivity toward deal requesters is positively related to their level of deal request comfort.

Hypothesis 3: Positivity toward deal requesters and employee self-efficacy will interact positively to influence the employee's deal request comfort, such that at higher (lower) levels of positivity, request self-efficacy will have a stronger (weaker) influence on deal request comfort.

Employee Positivity Toward Deal Requesters and Its Effects

Two additional variables arose in the interviews (see Appendix 1), as well as in the literature, as important factors relative to the employee's reactions to a deal request: the dominance of the customer's approach and reasonableness of the request. *Customer dominance* is the frontline employee's

perception that the customer is attempting to control the interaction. *Reasonableness of the request* reflects the degree to which the frontline employee perceives that the customer's deal request is sensible. Reasonableness of the request is similar to the notion of cognitive legitimacy, or the "appropriateness, interpretability, and comprehensibility of the...request," that is, does it make sense? (Wang, Beatty, and Liu 2012, p. 73).

The social interaction model (Ben-Sira 1980) identifies two major interaction styles: affiliation and dominance. We focus here on dominance as potentially more damaging during a request encounter because it goes against a positive and desired script on the employee's part. As part of the process of interpreting and responding to the request, especially in negative situations, the employee may use motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990). The employee may focus on selective information in the situation that will further his or her previously held view (or script) of the situation. Thus, if a frontline employee already has a negative attitude toward deal requesters, he or she may perceive the customer's request approach as more abrasive or dominant than an individual with a less negative attitude. Further, that employee may also discount the positive aspects of the customer's approach or request and focus on the negative aspects. This may provide justification to the employee to reduce his or her perceived reasonableness of the request based on preconceived views on deal requesters.

Additionally, consistent with the finding in Wang, Beatty, and Liu's (2012) study of return requests, if the employee perceives the customer's approach to be dominant, motivated reasoning may encourage the employee to discount selectively the reasonableness of the request. Finally, employee positivity could moderate the relationship between customer dominance and reasonableness of the request, such that when an employee feels positively (negatively) toward deal requesters this may reduce (enhance) the effect of customer dominance on the employee's perceptions of the request's reasonableness. The following 4 hypotheses are consistent with the above arguments.

Hypothesis 4: Employee positivity toward deal requesters is negatively related to the employee's perception of customer dominance.

Hypothesis 5: Employee positivity toward deal requesters is positively related to the employee's perceptions of the reasonableness of the request.

Hypothesis 6: Employee perceptions of customer dominance are negatively related to the perceptions of the reasonableness of the request.

Hypothesis 7: Employee positivity toward deal requesters will moderate the relationship between customer dominance perceptions and employee perceptions of the reasonableness of the request, such that at higher (lower) levels of positivity, customer dominance will have less (greater) influence on reasonableness.

Employee Comfort and Affect

Employee-customer encounters are charged with emotion, and these emotions are important factors in the ongoing relationships between employees and others (customers, fellow employees, supervisors, and the company) (cf. Bailey, Gremler, and McCollough 2001). The interviews confirmed the importance of employee affective reactions relative to customer deal requests. Besides comfort as an emotion, employees also tend to experience generalized positive or negative affect, or feelings, relative to customer deal requests. Positive and negative feelings relative to customer emotions have received considerably more attention in marketing than employee emotions (cf. Beatty and Ferrell 1998). While researchers do look at frontline retail and service employee emotions following a customer encounter, such as job satisfaction (e.g., Brown and Lam 2008; Van Dolen et al. 2002), job stress (e.g., Chan, Yim, and Lam 2010), and employee emotional labor (e.g., Reynolds and Harris 2006), employee felt positive and negative affect following a customer encounter has been relatively ignored. *Positive affect* represents the positive feelings or emotions felt by a frontline employee following a deal request encounter with a customer; *negative affect* represents the negative feelings or emotions felt by an employee following such an encounter. One factor influencing the degree of positive or negative affect the employee experiences following a deal-request encounter may be the employee's comfort with the deal request. For example, "At first it made me really, really uncomfortable

you know and I would ask other girls that I was working with and they would just be like ‘why are you *stressing* out?’” (female, 21 years old). Scripts and affect are tied together, such that positive scripts may result in positive affect relative to the situation and negative scripts can produce negative affect (Tomkins 2008, pp. 148–50). When employees are comfortable handling customer deal requests (because they have developed appropriate scripts for these requests), they may experience positive affect from the interaction because they feel more at ease with helping the customer get the deal they requested or even diplomatically refusing the request. However, when employees are uncomfortable handling the customer’s request (because they have not developed well-formed scripts for handling these requests or these scripts are negative in nature), they may experience negative affect because they may find the experience unpleasant or distressing.

Hypothesis 8a: Employee deal request comfort is negatively related to employee’s negative affect.

Hypothesis 8b: Employee deal request comfort is positively related to the employee’s positive affect.

Other Influences on Employee Affect

Two previously identified variables may also influence employee affect upon encountering a deal request: dominance of the customer’s approach and perceived reasonableness of the request. The interviews revealed that when customers approach the employee in an assertive or dominant manner, this approach may produce negative feelings in the employee. For example, “*Frustrated*. I mean I knew what she was saying but I also have to do my job as a cashier and follow policy and she was just like antagonizing me” (female, 22 years old). Similarly, “On the inside, I was so *angry* and I was trying to stay calm.... I had to go in the back and like take a minute. It just makes you feel like I’m already doing this for you what else do you want from me? I don’t make these rules. I’m just here. I’m just a person. Don’t sit here and argue with me while I have like ten other people in this store that I am trying to help,” (female, 28 years old).

Negative interactions with customers making deal requests in a dominating manner are likely to involve

strong, negative scripts, as well as produce motivated reasoning as addressed earlier. Thus, noting that negative scripts typically result in negative affect in the situation (Tomkins 2008, pp.148–50) and can encourage employees to experience greater negative reactions to the customer and the request, it seems logical to propose that when customers are dominant in their approach, frontline employees may feel greater negative affect and less positive affect.

Further, in the interviews, when customers made what the employees felt was a reasonable request, such as receiving a discount on damaged merchandise, the employees reported more positive feelings during the encounter because they could more easily meet the customer’s needs. For example, “One girl was trying on this dress and we were having problems because the lining was a lot tighter in the lower half and it was really tiny and it didn’t zip up properly and it could have been fixed fairly easily. And she really liked the dress so I called the owner and she said to take 20 % off and I did and she bought it. I think that getting something off made her feel more comfortable with it [damaged merchandise]” (female, 21 years old). Thus, employees are more likely to comply with a request that they perceive to be reasonable or legitimate, as found in several other studies (e.g., Gillison, Northington, and Beatty 2014; Wang, Beatty, and Liu 2012; Eesley and Lenox 2006; Hui, Au, and Fock 2004), with Krapfel (1988) finding a positive relationship between normative legitimacy and employee attitude toward the customer.

Similarly, the reasonableness of the request should affect the employee’s affect following the deal request. Reasonable requests are likely to correspond with strong, positive scripts for frontline employees because retail employees must often deal with customer questions and requests in general and generally strive to fulfill these requests, if possible. Thus, these interactions should result in more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions. On the other hand, if the request is perceived to be unreasonable, then both motivated reasoning and script theory would suggest that these situations would tend to generate negative scripts for the employee and be associated with more negative emotions and fewer positive emotions. The following four hypotheses address these issues.

Hypothesis 9a: Customer dominance perceptions are positively related to an employee’s negative affect.

Hypothesis 9b: Customer dominance perceptions are negatively related to an employee's positive affect.

Hypothesis 10a: Employee perception of the reasonableness of the request is positively related to the employee's positive affect.

Hypothesis 10b: Employee perception of the reasonableness of the request is negatively related to the employee's negative affect.

METHOD

In order to test the proposed hypotheses, a survey of frontline retail employees was conducted. Respondents in the survey were recruited by marketing students at a large southeastern university in return for extra credit in class. Students were asked to recruit respondents who were or had recently been frontline retail employees. Students only supplied the respondents with the survey URL. Respondents supplied their names and email addresses at the end of the survey. In order to validate the sample, 30 percent of respondents were contacted after the survey closed to verify that they had taken the survey themselves and that they fit the qualifications. This student recruiter and validation method has been used successfully in the past (e.g., Gremler and Gwinner 2008; Jones and Reynolds 2006; Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990).

In the survey, customer deal requests were described to respondents as follows: "Customers sometimes ask retail employees for discounts on the products they are purchasing or ask employees to provide them with special 'perks.' It may even feel like these customers are trying to bargain with you over the product. Some common customer requests may be asking for discounts off the total purchase because of the customer's loyalty to the store or because the merchandise is deemed damaged by the customer, asking for a coupon, asking for free merchandise, or asking for special terms to the sale such as free delivery or extended warranties." Respondents were asked to think of a time in the past 6 months when a customer had asked for a discount or other special deal. Respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions about this experience including the following: (1) to describe the event in as much detail as possible, (2) what specifically the customer asked for, (3) how the employee responded, (4) what the customer's reaction to the employee's response was, (5) if the

manager got involved and how, (6) what the end result was (did the customer get what they wanted), (7) how the employee felt about the customer's request, (8) how the employee felt about the way the request was handled, and (9) how the employee feels in general about deal requesters. Respondents were also asked questions about their company's policy regarding these types of requests and their thoughts on the policy. Asking detailed questions regarding the event served several purposes. First, this detailed recall allows for more vivid memory retrieval in order to answer questions regarding the variables of interest. Second, the detailed information also allowed for greater understanding of these requests and employee reactions.

Following the open-ended questions, respondents next completed scale questions regarding the request they had focused on. Then they responded to more generalized job-related scale questions (e.g., request self-efficacy). Finally, they answered personal and descriptive questions. Scale items were drawn from existing measures and adapted where appropriate except for employee positivity toward deal requesters. Employee positivity toward deal requesters was assessed based on the responses to the open-ended question mentioned earlier: "How do you feel in general about customers who make these types of requests?" Two of the researchers independently coded the responses on a 7-point scale ranging from "extremely negative" to "extremely positive." The coders had an 87 percent agreement rate, and the differing codes were combined to form an average of the 2 codes. Thus, this variable is measured with a 1-item, 7-point scale.

Deal request comfort was measured with a 2-item scale adapted from Butcher, Sparks, and O'Callaghan (2002). The authors used existing research related to comfort (i.e., Spake et al. 2003), as well as the definition of comfort to aid in the creation of these items. Request self-efficacy was measured with a 5-item scale adapted from G. Jones (1986). Customer dominance was measured with a 3-item scale from Wang, Beatty, and Liu (2012). Reasonableness of the request was measured with a 3-item scale developed for the current study. Last, positive and negative affect were measured with items from Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). All scales and items appear in Appendix 2. The scale means, standard deviations, and correlations appear in Table 1.

A number of employment- and retailer-related, as well as personal variables, could influence the proposed relationships. Therefore, several covariates are included

in the tested structural model. The longer the employee had been employed with the retailer (tenure with the retailer) and the employee's age could influence the employee's feelings and reactions to customer deal requests: longer employment and/or increased age may allow the employee to build stronger scripts regarding deal requests. The employee's tenure with the company was assessed using 2 questions on the survey: "How long have you been with your current employer: Years ____ Months ____," which was converted into total months and included as a 1-item scale in the analysis. The employee's age was assessed using one item: "Age: ____." The employee's hourly wage is also included as a covariate, as wage may be related to length of employment or managerial status, which may also increase the employee's detailed scripts relative to deal requests. The employee's wage was assessed using the question: "How much do you currently make per hour?" One hundred, eighty respondents answered this question, and mean substitution was used for the missing data. Because of the sensitivity of this question, 10 respondents did not choose to answer this question; 17 respondents answered with something that was not interpretable (i.e., "salary," "rate plus commission," or gave a yearly income without indication of the employee's full or part-time status). Finally, the type of retailer and the employee's gender were also included as covariates in the model. The 5 covariates were regressed onto employee's deal request comfort, employee positivity toward deal requesters, and request self-efficacy.

The sample began with 249 respondents but ended up at 207, with 42 respondents removed. Fifteen were disqualified because either they had not experienced a customer making a deal request in the past 6 months, could not remember a specific instance when this had occurred to them, or answered the questions in very general terms rather than relative to a specific instance. Seven individuals were removed because they did not answer the open-ended questions in the survey. The others were removed because their open-ended responses did not fit well with the instructions of the survey (customers asking for discounts or special deals).

Forty percent of the sample was male and 60 percent female. Respondents provided their specific age, and the sample's average age was 26.7 years old with 70 percent of the sample between the ages of 18 and 25, 9 percent between 26 and 30, 7 percent between 31 and 40, and 14 percent 41 years of age or older. The average tenure

with the retailer was 37.7 months, and the average wage was \$10.54. Ten percent of respondents had some high school or high school degree, 67.6 percent had completed some college, 18.8 percent had a college degree, and 3.4 percent had a graduate degree. Ten percent of the sample was or previously was employed at a large big box store, 40 percent at a clothing or specialty store chain, 32 percent at an independently owned store, and 18 percent in other types of retail stores.

It is important to understand how often frontline employees receive requests for discounts and other special deals. Almost 12 percent indicated that they received these requests daily; 15.5 percent, 2 to 3 times a week; 25 percent, about once a week; 29 percent once or twice a month; and 19 percent less than once a month. Therefore, answers to this question by our sample of frontline employees suggest that customer deal requests are quite common.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

Before testing the hypotheses, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using LISREL 9.1 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2013) on the items from the variables of interest. All items loaded significantly onto their intended factors. The analysis yields good overall fit for the hypothesized 6-factor model ($\chi^2 = 367.20$, $df = 215$, $p < 0.01$). While the overall χ^2 is significant, the $\chi^2/df = 1.71$, which is reasonable. The model shows acceptable levels of fit (RMSEA = 0.058, NNFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and SRMR = 0.057).

The discriminant validity of the measures was tested using the method proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). First, the average variance explained was determined using the factor loadings from the 6-factor measurement model. Next, the square roots of the average variance explained were placed on the diagonal of the correlation matrix in Table 1. The square root of the average variance explained was then compared to the correlations between each variable across both row and column. Discriminant validity is demonstrated when the square root of the average variance explained is greater than the correlation between variables across both row and column. As seen in Table 1, no scale correlation is greater than the corresponding square root of the average variance explained; thus

Table 1
Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Positivity Toward Deal Requesters	3.79	2.07	N/A						
2. Request Self-Efficacy	5.91	0.95	0.17	0.86					
3. Customer Dominance	4.12	1.58	-0.33**	-0.07	0.81				
4. Reasonableness of Request	4.41	1.82	0.51**	0.02	-0.46**	0.89			
5. Deal Request Comfort	5.34	1.44	0.25**	0.38**	-0.20*	0.36**	0.83		
6. Negative Affect	3.22	1.43	-0.27**	-0.31**	0.42**	-0.29**	-0.46**	0.82	
7. Positive Affect	3.18	1.34	0.26**	0.01	-0.20	0.41**	0.32**	-0.01	0.83

Square root of the average variance explained in bold on the diagonal
 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
 N = 207; all scales are 7-point scales.

discriminant validity is demonstrated for the measures in this study.

Because the independent and dependent variables in this study were measured in the same survey instrument and with the same respondents, common method variance (CMV) is a potential issue in this study (Podsakoff et al. 2003). However, Conway and Lance (2010) argue that providing evidence that CMV was proactively considered during the design of the study, a demonstration of why self-report data are the appropriate methodology to study, evidence of construct validity, and ensuring lack of overlap in items for different constructs are sufficient in dismissing the impact of CMV on the data.

Evidence of CMV minimization in the design of the study is provided using several techniques suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, the ambiguity of questions in the survey instrument was minimized by ensuring that each question was easy to comprehend and used common language. Second, the use of open-ended and scaled items should mitigate any length or item-type commonality. Finally, ensuring respondent confidentiality and reducing evaluation apprehension reduce common method variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Informing respondents that all responses were anonymous, that the survey could be quit at any time, and that there were no right or wrong answers satisfied this suggestion.

Addressing Conway and Lance's (2010) second point, self-report data are appropriate for this study because personal, evaluative judgments of a customer request incident and the emotions experienced by an employee during this incident were needed. Finally,

the use of pre-existing scales, the fit of the measurement model, and the discriminant validity of each construct satisfy Conway and Lance's (2010) third assertion of ensuring lack of construct overlap to demonstrate a lack of CMV in the data.

Further, statistically testing for CMV strengthens the argument that it is not present in the data even after designing the study for CMV mitigation (Craighead et al. 2011; Podsakoff et al. 2003). CMV was tested using the Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989) single-method-factor approach. Here, the measurement model (trait model) is compared to a model that includes all items loading onto 1-method factor, as well as the items loading onto their respective trait factors (trait-method model). The fit statistics for the measurement model (trait model), given above, indicate that the measurement model fit the data well. However, the fit statistics for the trait-method model do slightly improve the model fit ($\chi^2 = 272.13$, $df = 192$, $RMSEA = 0.045$, $NNFI = 0.98$, $CFI = 0.99$, $SRMR = 0.045$), which could indicate that common method bias might be an issue in the data. A χ^2 difference test of the 2 models also indicates that the 2 models differ ($\chi^2_{(diff)}(23) = 95.07$, $p < .01$). Therefore, calculating the variance explained by the method factor assesses the extent to which common method variance is present in the data. In this data, the method factor accounts for 7 percent of the variance in the model, which is well below the average of 25 percent reported by Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989). Therefore, statistically, common method variance does not appear to be a serious threat to the data and interpretation of the results can occur.

Structural Model

The hypotheses were tested with structural equation modeling using LISREL 9.1 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2013). The results of the model indicate a good overall fit for the hypothesized model ($\chi^2 = 940.24$, $df = 586$, $p < 0.01$, RMSEA = 0.054, NNFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96, and SRMR = 0.069). Overall, the analysis supports most of the hypothesized relationships (see Table 2). The model explains 48 percent of the variance in deal request comfort, 41 percent of the variance in reasonableness of the deal request, 42 percent of the variance in negative affect following the deal request, and 21 percent of the variance in positive affect following the deal request.

The employee's request self-efficacy positively influenced his or her deal request comfort ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .01$), supporting H1. The frontline employee's positivity toward customers making deal requests positively influenced his or her deal request comfort ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. In order to test the interaction of request self-efficacy and positivity toward deal requesters on deal request comfort, items for each independent construct were mean centered and then multiplied by each item across scales, as suggested by Iacobucci (2009) and Kline and Dunn (2000). The results indicate that request self-efficacy and positivity toward deal requesters do not interact to influence deal request comfort ($\beta = 0.04$, $p > .05$), therefore H3 is not supported.

The frontline employee's positivity toward deal requesters negatively influenced his or her perceptions of the customer's dominance ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < .001$), supporting H4. Additionally, the employee's positivity toward deal requesters positively influenced perceptions of the reasonableness of the request ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < .001$), supporting H5. In support of H6, the employee's perceptions of the customer's dominance reduced perceptions of the reasonableness of the request ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < .001$). In order to test the interaction of positivity toward deal requesters and customer dominance on reasonableness of the request, items for each independent construct were mean centered and then multiplied by each item across scales. The results indicate that an employee's positivity toward deal requesters and his or her perceptions of the customer's dominance do not interact to influence perceptions of the reasonableness of the request ($\beta = 0.06$, $p > .05$); therefore, H7 is not supported.

In turn, the deal request comfort of employees influenced their negative affect ($\beta = -0.50$, $p < .001$) and their positive affect ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .05$) following the deal request, supporting H8a and H8b. In addition, perceptions of customer dominance influenced the employee's negative affect ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .001$), but not his or her positive affect ($\beta = 0.05$, $p > .05$), supporting H9a, but not H9b. On the other hand, the reasonableness of the request influenced the positive affect ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$) of employees, but not their negative

Table 2
Structural Model Results

Hypothesized Relationship	Standardized Estimate	t-value	Supported
H1: Request self-efficacy → Deal request comfort	0.35	2.76**	Yes
H2: Positivity toward deal requesters → Deal request comfort	0.35	3.47***	Yes
H3: Positivity toward deal requesters X Request self-efficacy → Deal request comfort	0.04	0.41	No
H4: Positivity toward deal requesters → Customer dominance	-0.35	-4.59***	Yes
H5: Positivity toward deal requesters → Reasonableness of request	0.43	6.55***	Yes
H6: Customer dominance → Reasonableness of request	-0.34	-4.78***	Yes
H7: Positivity toward deal requesters X Customer dominance → Reasonableness of request	0.06	0.98	No
H8a: Deal request comfort → Negative affect	-0.50	-6.74***	Yes
H8b: Deal request comfort → Positive affect	0.17	2.27*	Yes
H9a: Customer dominance → Negative affect	0.38	4.74***	Yes
H9b: Customer dominance → Positive affect	0.05	0.53	No
H10a: Reasonableness of request → Positive affect	0.42	4.85***	Yes
H10b: Reasonableness of request → Negative affect	0.04	0.54	No

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

affect ($\beta = 0.04$, $p > .05$), supporting H10a, but not H10b. Interestingly the intervening variables of customer dominance and reasonableness of the request affected one or the other affect variables, but not both.

Of the 5 covariates included in the study, only 1 covariate (store type) had a significant effect, such that large box-store employees scored lower on request self-efficacy than did other retail employees ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$). This result may have been due to several reasons. These employees may simply experience these requests less often, which decrease their request self-efficacy. Alternatively, the policies at large box-stores for deal requests may be stricter, which lowers employee request self-efficacy because employees do not have the ability to build their confidence in handling these requests. None of the other covariates affected the variables of interest in this study at $p < .05$. The error variances of the 1-item measures were fixed to 0.20 (Kline 2005, pp. 230–31).

DISCUSSION

To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate retail frontline employee's emotional responses to customer deal requests. The result of this study is a broadening of our understanding of the effects of this practice on frontline retail employees. This study builds on previous customer request, script, and service quality research (i.e., Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994; Gillison, Northington, and Beatty 2014; Sharma and Krishnan 2001; Wang, Beatty, and Liu 2012) and extends our understanding of the impact of deal requests on frontline employees by investigating the antecedents of employee's emotional reactions to customer deal requests.

Customer deal requests can result in many employee responses, from negative to positive, based on the individual employee and the customer's approach and request. The results of our analyses indicate that when employees have positive feelings toward deal requesters and higher self-efficacy regarding these requests, they are more comfortable handling deal requests. Both self-efficacy and employee positivity toward deal requesters are important variables that can be used and measured by management. Further, deal request comfort reduces negative affect and increases positive affect following the deal request interaction.

The results show that when a customer uses a dominant approach, the employee may feel negative affect

regarding the request. However, the more reasonable the request is perceived to be, the more positively the employee will react to the request. These findings are consistent with previous research; however, previous research did not specifically address employee affect or emotions on this topic. Interestingly, very little research seems to address employee affect versus customer affect, and yet employees are walking around with all the same emotions that customers have. It is time to consider employee emotions—other than emotional labor, employee stress, and employee satisfaction—more fully in our study of customer-employee interactions. For example, here we see that differing emotional responses (both comfort and positive or negative affect) of employees are influenced by both personal- and customer-related factors.

These linkages are rooted in script theory. When frontline employees have a well-defined script to handle deal requests effectively, their request self-efficacy is higher and, thus, their comfort levels are higher. However, when that script is more positive (negative) based on the employee's general attitude toward deal requesters, then their comfort with the deal request is greater (lower). While self-efficacy and attitude did not interact in this study, they both exerted significant influences on the employee's deal request comfort.

While the notion of employee comfort during interactions is important (as shown in the current study), most research in this area has focused on consumer comfort rather than on employee comfort. However, this study is the first to our knowledge to look at employee comfort during customer interactions. Here we see that employee comfort with the deal request was a key component in employee interpretations of the deal requests and the subsequent emotions of the employee. This important variable warrants further investigation into its role in employee-customer interactions. In this study, we offer a measure of employee comfort that future researchers can use to further investigate the concept.

Some of the above relationships appear to be the result of motivated reasoning, which as Kunda (1990) suggests, allows an individual to focus on that information in the situation that will solidify his or her biased view. Thus, while none of the interactions hypothesized materialized, motivated reasoning can still be observed when the employee's positivity toward deal requesters affected his or her view of how dominant the customer was or how reasonable the request was

(H4 and H5), as well as how much the customer's dominant style influenced the employee's perceptions of the request's reasonableness (H7). Further, with the reasonableness of the request and the customer's dominance also affecting an employee's affective reactions, it is clear that employee perceptions and emotions are immersed in and arise from a milieu of subjective biases (such as stereotypical attitudes toward deal requesters), many of which the employee is not even aware. Thus, motivated reasoning appears to be a very useful theory in employee decision making, perhaps being somewhat in competition with the more widely used emotional contagion theory (cf. Mattila and Enz 2002).

Finally, several linkages hypothesized relative to affect did not prove significant. Interestingly, our model supported the most logical associations—customer dominance to negative affect and reasonableness to positive affect. However, the predicted negative effects of customer dominance to positive affect and reasonableness of the request to negative affect were not supported; although the indirect effect of customer dominance on positive affect through reasonableness of the request was significant with a Sobel test statistic of -3.40, $p < 0.001$. This lack of effects is consistent with findings from Jones et al. (2007) that did not find support for a number of emotional connections when they involved negatively valenced relationships (e.g., calculative commitment to positive emotions and positive emotions to negative word of mouth). Additionally, the lack of support between negatively valenced relationships may be indicative of positively valenced relationships (customer dominance to negative affect and reasonableness to positive affect) overriding an assessment of the negatively valenced relationships (higher customer dominance to positive affect and lower reasonableness to negative affect) by respondents. However, as noted by Jones and his colleagues (Jones et al. 2007), having both negative and positive affect in the model produces a better model because both positive and negative affects were relevant and both were affected by deal request comfort. Further, the lack of effect of the two interactions hypothesized could be due to the lack of power, given the relatively small sample size, as well as the strong main effects of the relevant variables.

Managerial Implications

This research provides several important managerial insights. First, the results of this study indicate that

finding, selecting, and hiring frontline employees with personalities that match the company's policies and philosophies relative to the customer-employee interface are critical for the retailer. This is especially true relative to customer deal requests, which are likely to continue to grow exponentially in the future. The results of this study indicate that some employees have higher request self-efficacy (based on firmer scripts) and more positive attitudes toward deal requesters (based on more positive scripts) than others, which produce increased comfort in handling deal requests and, in turn, affects their positive and negative emotions of the moment. Therefore, finding employees with the right qualities through the selection process would be beneficial for retailers, especially for retailers with flexible policies toward deal requests (i.e., retailers that empower their employees to handle these requests). Retailers can use screening techniques during the application process to identify potential employees. The interview process could incorporate tools, such as scripts and role playing, to gauge potential employee abilities to handle these requests.

In our survey, 52.2 percent of employees indicated receiving deal requests at least once a week, with 11.6 percent of the employees receiving deal requests daily. Given that 37 percent of people under the age of 34 "always or often" ask for a discount and more than two thirds of Americans try to gain better deals (*Consumer Reports* 2009), retailers would be wise to train their frontline employees on how to deal with these requests. Managers should carefully explain the retailer's policy with regard to customer deal requests and how to handle specific customer requests. Training that involves encouraging employees to develop their own methods (and scripts) to handle these requests so that employees are comfortable engaging these customers may also be beneficial. By training their employees, retailers may better combat the negative emotions employees may feel relative to customer deal requests. Increased and more hands-on training is critical as increasingly more customers engage in these requests, with increasing numbers of retailers needing to adopt more flexible policies regarding customer deal requests.

Retailers should consider and identify the many different types of deal requests frontline employees may face and the different tactics customers may use to make these requests. It is important for retailers to understand and incorporate these techniques into

their policies regarding deal requests. Additionally, retailers should use these techniques in their training of frontline employees as varying techniques used by customers may make it more difficult for the frontline employee to accommodate or refuse the request gracefully. This training should make use of role-playing exercises so that employees can develop clear, consistent scripts to deal with these requests, which may help to increase employee comfort in handling the requests and their subsequent affect. Retailers should also encourage and help employees to develop strategies with which they are comfortable in order to deal with these customers quickly but considerately.

Finally, retailers need to be sure that they have a clear policy relative to how they want employees to handle customer deal requests. Retailers would also be wise to keep themselves updated on changing competitive practices and changing customer expectations, relative to this topic. For example, some retailers, such as Staples, have begun matching prices to other retail stores or online providers when a customer shows them a lower price elsewhere to combat these issues more effectively. Additionally, other companies have refund programs geared at price matching after purchasing, such as Walmart Savings Catcher at Walmart.

Limitations and Future Research

Based on the results of our qualitative interviews, theory, and past research, a model of some important antecedents influencing employee reactions to customer deal requests in traditional retail settings is proposed and tested. However, this model is certainly not exhaustive. A broader range of antecedent and outcome variables (such as actual compliance) could be captured. Furthermore, potential boundary conditions to this framework need to be determined and tested. Based on some of the findings here, there may be additional moderators that could change the level of the impact customer deal requests may have on the variables and issues studied here. For instance, the employee/customer gender match (employee/customer same gender versus different gender); the retail setting (large/small store and type of merchandise sold); full versus part time status of the employee; the employee's personality, level of training, and the clarity of the company's policy may all impact the model tested here. It is also possible that these moderators are not exhaustive, and future research should identify and test

additional boundary conditions. Future research could also explore how past retail experience affects an employee's positivity toward deal requesters, deal request self-efficacy, and affect following the deal request. Research might also investigate why large box store employees felt lower request self-efficacy compared to employees at other types of retail stores. Finally, the level of employee empowerment to handle deal requests and the employee's interpretation of the company's policy regarding deal requests were not investigated here but should be in future studies.

Several methodological limitations exist in this study. This study uses a recall method. While techniques to minimize recall effects were used, such as having respondents describe the event in detail before answering the scaled variables, future research might have employees keep diaries of deal request incidents so as to minimize recall effects. Second, a survey is used to test the proposed model; however, true causality cannot be ascertained from these results given this method. Future research may use experiments to test the proposed relationships to assess causality more clearly. Additionally, in order to best capture some of the variables of interest in this study (i.e., customer dominance, reasonableness of the request, deal request comfort, positive and negative affect), respondents were asked to recall one specific deal request encounter. Future research might look at deal requests using a more general approach or across more occasions per employee to assess this issue. Employee positivity toward deal requesters was operationalized as a coded variable based on employee responses to an open-ended question in the survey. Future research might develop a scaled measure for this construct. Finally, the survey sample was not very large and skewed younger and more educated employees than what may be typical for retail workers, while the qualitative research was composed only of students. Future research should use a larger and more representative sample of retail employees.

The context of this study is customer deal requests in traditional retail settings. Future research might explore this phenomenon in service settings, where price may be perceived as less *sticky* and customers may be more likely to negotiate over price or other terms of the sale. In addition, future research might compare and contrast our findings to retail contexts where customer deal requests are more customary, such as automobile, electronic, and durable goods purchases. This research might highlight

interesting similarities and differences in employee-customer deal request interactions across these different retail contexts. Also, studying those market segments that are more likely to engage in deal requests versus less likely and how these segments evolve over time is a viable topic. Further, studying this issue in other cultures, cross-culturally, or in different geographic areas would be useful.

This research suggests many questions that future research might address: (1) What are the long-term consequences on the frontline employee resulting from these deal request encounters? What is the potential for job stress? (2) What company policy is best in order to maximize profits, as well as satisfy customers (who want fairness) and employees (who want a stress-free environment)? (3) How much should management empower employees and how much flexibility should they be given? (4) Under what conditions should management encourage employees to offer discounts and how much should they be allowed to offer? (5) How should retailers handle the fact that some employees enjoy empowerment and others do not? (6) What are store managers' perceptions on deal requests and their company's policy regarding these requests given that they often make the decision? (7) How can retailers train employees to make the best decisions possible with regard to handling customer deal requests? (8) How widespread is the use of employee scripts for these issues and how effective are they? (9) How is the issue of deal requests evolving, especially with the rapid increase in price matching requests, using mobile technology, and the numerous apps available to price match while shopping and showrooming?

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the emotional effect of customer deal requests on frontline retail employees. This topic is extremely important in this competitive marketplace but has received little scholarly attention. Customer deal requests are an important and growing phenomenon in traditional retail settings and, thus, important to examine. We find that employee self-efficacy regarding deal requests and their positivity toward deal requesters impact employee comfort relative to the deal requests. Frontline employee positivity toward deal requesters also impacts how the employee perceives the request encounter (i.e., the customer's dominance and the reasonableness of the request). Then deal request comfort, the customer's dominance during the request, and the

reasonableness of the request impact the employee's emotions following the request. This research expands our understanding of employee emotions during customer interactions involving customer deal requests, and we encourage further study of this emerging topic.

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APPENDIX 1

Construct	Example Quotes
Request Self- Efficacy	“I’m pretty good at handling awkward situations. I don’t like them necessarily but I do well on my feet.” – Female, 21
Employee Positivity Toward Deal Requesters	“Um, I don’t think I have the patience, I don’t have the right patience for it.” – Male, 20 “Honestly some people are really nasty about it and then you don’t want to help out.” – Female, 28 “People would come in and they’d order 5 pairs of boots special order and I would always try to [give them a discount], they’d ask me first and then I’d try to go talk to my manager. . . I always thought it would be better if they were ordering a lot to give them a deal, but they [the manager] wouldn’t.” – Male, 22
Deal Request Comfort	“You know, we get it so much that it’s just like whatever. . .” – Male, 24 “So at first it made me really, really uncomfortable you know.” – Female, 21
Customer Dominance	“I mean I knew what she was saying but I also have to do my job as a cashier and follow policy and she was just like antagonizing me.” – Female, 22 “This one woman brought in two pairs of jeans and sat and argued with me for 6 minutes about why she couldn’t get 60% one pair of jeans because she brought in 2 pair. And I was like you can get 30% off one and 30% off another but she was like no I want 60% off of one.” – Female, 28
Reasonableness of the Request	“She said to me this dress has been here for a while and do you know when it’s going to go on sale. You know that kind of signaled to me well when we put it on sale it’s probably going to go to 50% off. So I might as well give her 20% now and get it out of the store instead of taking the 50% discount which is how we usually start with sales. So I said ‘Well, actually we are about to have this sale’ and she needed the dress like you know that weekend or something before the sale was going to start so I went ahead and just gave it to her because she was a really good customer and I thought that was a good idea so I just did that.” – Female, 22 “Oh, it depends on the request. . . I kind of broke them down into reasonable and unreasonable requests.” – Male, 25
Negative Affect	“I would ask other girls that I was working with [about deal requests] and they would just be like ‘why are you stressing out?’” – Female, 21 “[I felt] frustrated.” – Female, 22 “I would get stressed out easily when people did that, it would put me in a different mood, and I’m generally a pretty happy person and I’m generally pretty efficient when I’m doing a job and I, when people come in and try to bother you and hassle you, it just puts you in a different mood, a different mindset.” – Female, 21
Positive Affect	“I mean I felt good because you knew that it made her happy and it’s really exciting if you come in and you had been looking at this one thing for a while and the employee says well you know I’ll give you a discount on it and you know that’s something she didn’t expect when she walked into the store so it’s kind of exciting to hear that and it makes you want to buy it even more.” – Female, 22 “With the good experience, for example, like you feel really good that you helped somebody and it makes you feel like you helped somebody out so you are in a good mood. It puts you in a good place.” – Female, 28

APPENDIX 2

Source/ Adapted From	Scale/Items ^a	CFA Factor Loading
Butcher, Sparks, and O'Callaghan (2002)	Deal Request Comfort (CA = 0.81; AVE = 0.68; CR = 0.81) I felt very comfortable handling this request. I felt completely at ease handling this request.	0.82 0.84
Jones (1986)	Employee Request Self-Efficacy (CA = 0.93; AVE = 0.74; CR = 0.93) I am fully capable of handling customer requests. I am confident in my ability to handle customer requests. Handling customer requests is well within the scope of my abilities. I do feel I am qualified for the task of handling customer requests. My past experiences increase my confidence that I will be able to successfully handle customer requests.	0.87 0.90 0.87 0.84 0.81
Wang, Beatty, and Liu (2012)	Customer Dominance (CA = 0.85; AVE = 0.59; CR = 0.81) When making this request, the customer seemed aggressive. When making this request, the customer seemed too assertive. When making this request, the customer seemed to want to control the situation.	0.86 0.83 0.74
New	Reasonableness of Request (CA = 0.92; AVE = 0.79; CR = 0.92) This customer's request was reasonable. I thought the customer's request was fair. The customer's request seemed sensible to me.	0.91 0.90 0.86
Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988)	Negative Affect (CA = 0.93; AVE = 0.67; CR = 0.92) The customer's request made me feel: upset nervous worried uncomfortable uneasy tense	0.77 0.79 0.78 0.89 0.88 0.81
Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988)	Positive Affect (CA = 0.90; AVE = 0.69; CR = 0.90) The customer's request made me feel: enthusiastic excited inspired proud	0.80 0.84 0.85 0.82

^a(CA = Coefficient Alpha/Correlation; AVE = Average Variance Explained; CR = Composite Reliability)

All scales were 7-point Likert scales anchored by "Strongly Disagree" "Strongly Agree"

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