



## Login

Username:   
 Password:

Login

- OpenAthens login
- Shibboleth login
- Forgot password?

Welcome:  
 Guest

## Product Information:-

- For Journals
  - eJournals
  - Backfiles
- For Books
- For Case Studies
- For Open Access
- Regional information

## Services

- Publishing Services

## Resources:

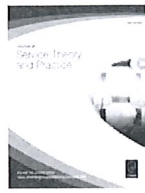
- Licensing Solutions
  - For Authors
  - For Editors
  - For Reviewers
  - For Librarians
- Research Zone
- Learning Zone
- Teaching Zone
- Multimedia Zone
- Subject Zones
- Emerald on Social Media



Need help with  
 your manuscript?



Home &gt; Emerald journals &gt; Journal of Service Theory and Practice Information



## Journal of Service Theory and Practice

ISSN: 2055-6225

Publish open access  
 in this journal

Full text online

Content: Table of Contents | Latest Issue RSS

Information: [Journal information](#) | [Editorial Team](#) | [Author Guidelines](#)Other: [Sample article](#) | [Recommend this journal](#)

2016 Impact Factor: **1.098\***  
 5-year Impact Factor (2016): **1.098\***



CiteScore 2016: **2.60**  
 CiteScoreTracker 2017: **1.90** (Updated Monthly)

Search in this title:

Search

## Journal history

Previously published as *Managing Service Quality*Follow the [Table of Contents](#) link above for previous content.

The journal changed its title to Journal of Service Theory and Practice (JSTP) from the 2015 volume (former title: *Managing Service Quality* (MSQ)). The 2016 Impact factor, therefore, covers papers published in 2015 only, so is in effect a 1-year Impact Factor (and so we expect this to be considerably lower than the 'full' impact factor for the journal). The current Impact Factor for MSQ covers papers published in 2014 only. In 2018 JSTP will receive a full 2017 Impact factor covering 2015 and 2016.

**Managing Service Quality** (covers citations in 2016 to papers published in 2014): **3.100**  
**Journal of Service Theory and Practice** (covers citations in 2016 to papers published in 2015): **1.098**

## Unique attributes

Formerly known as *Managing Service Quality* – Impact Factor: 1.286 (2015) – the *Journal of Service Theory and Practice (JSTP)* aims to publish research in the field of service management that not only makes a theoretical contribution to the service literature, but also scrutinizes and helps improve industry practices by offering specific recommendations and action plans to practitioners. Recognizing the importance of the service sector across the globe, the journal encourages submissions from and/or studying issues from around the world. *JSTP* gives prominence to research based on real world data, be it quantitative or qualitative. The journal also encourages the submission of strong conceptual and theoretical papers that make a substantive contribution to the scholarly literature in service management. *JSTP* publishes double-blind peer reviewed papers and encourages submissions from both academics and practitioners.

## Topicality

The changing social structures and values, as well as new developments in economic, political, and technological fields are creating sea-changes in the philosophy, strategic aims, operational practices, and structures of many organizations. These changes are particularly relevant to the service sector, as public demand for high standards increases, and organizations fight for both market share and public credibility. The journal specifically addresses solutions to these challenges from a global, multi-cultural, and multi-disciplinary perspective.

## Key benefits

To the readership, the journal offers latest service management research in a style appealing to both academic and practitioner audiences. Research published in *JSTP* not only helps generate and enrich theoretical frameworks, but also helps convert research results into practical recommendations and action plans to improve industry practices. To the contributors, the journal offers a short turnaround time that enables early publication of their research in an impactful journal.

## Key journal audiences

Service researchers, educators and students; practitioners of service management; policy makers in the service sector.

## Coverage

The journal covers a broad range of topics including: service quality; service innovation; customer satisfaction and loyalty; service marketing; service operations; service HRM; service information systems; international service management; Internet and digital services; service entrepreneurship; and sustainability management in services.

*Journal of Service Theory and Practice* is abstracted and indexed in:

ABI/INFORM, Business Source Alumni Edition/Complete/Corporate Plus/Elite/Premier, Cabell's Dictionary of Publishing Opportunities in Management and Marketing, Current Abstracts, ISI: [Social Sciences Citation Index](#), Materials Business File, Mechanical & Transportation Engineering Abstracts, METADEX, ProQuest, PsycINFO, ReadCube Discover, Scopus, TOC Premier, VHB-JOURQUAL 3

and ranked by:

NSD (Norway), The Publication Forum (Finland)

*Journal of Service Theory and Practice* is available as part of an online subscription to the Emerald Operations, Logistics & Quality eJournals Collection. For more information, please email [collections@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:collections@emeraldinsight.com) or visit the Emerald Operations, Logistics & Quality eJournals Collection page.



# Journal of Service Theory and Practice

**Country** United Kingdom

**Subject Area and Category** Business, Management and Accounting  
Strategy and Management

# 48

**Publisher** Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.

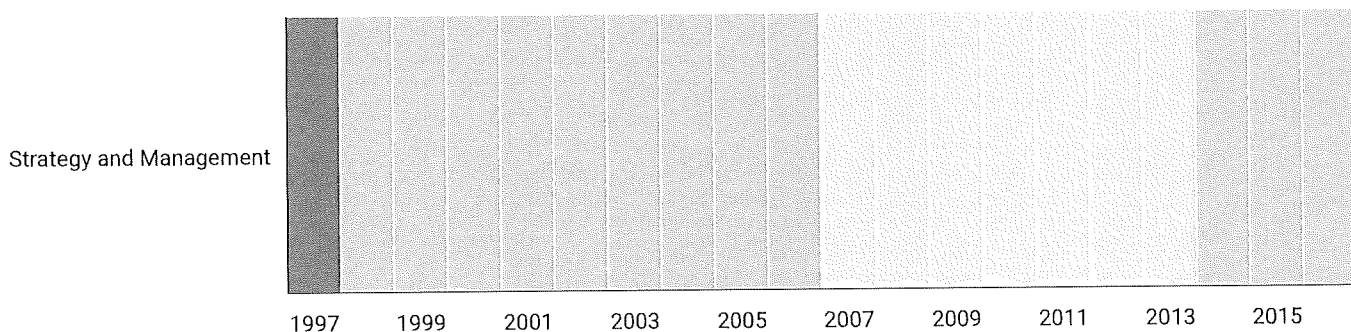
H Index

**Publication type** Journals

**ISSN** 20556225

**Coverage** 2015-ongoing

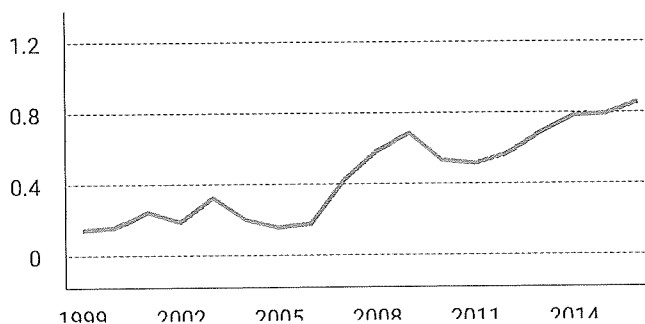
## Quartiles



## SJR



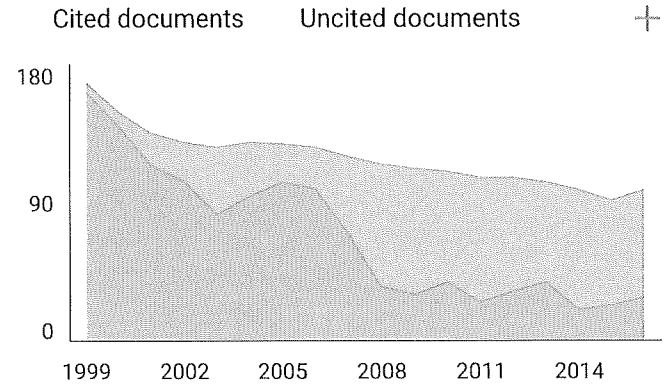
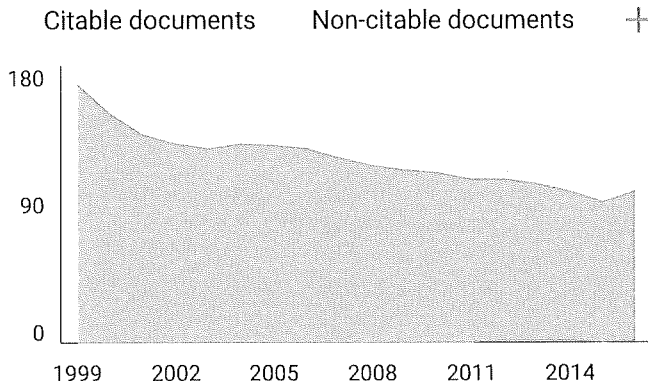
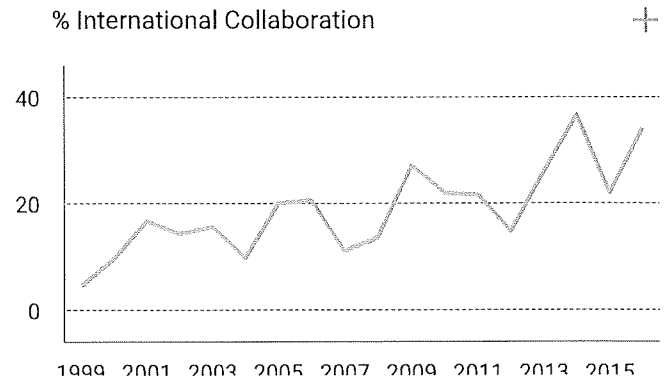
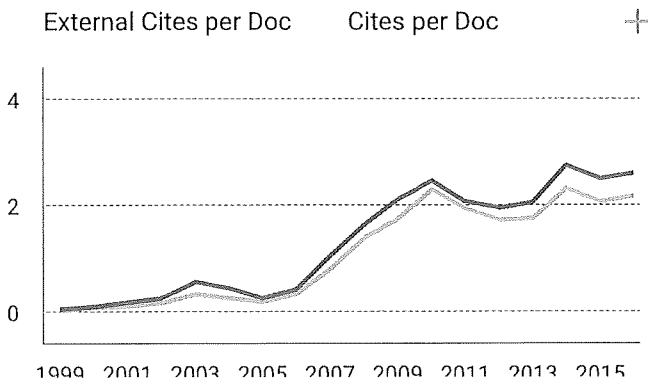
## Citations per document



## Total Cites

## Self-Cites





Journal of Service Theory and Practice

← Show this widget in your own website

Indicator	2009-2016	Value
SJR		0.86
Cites per doc		2.13
Total cites		252

www.scimagojr.com

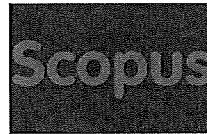
Just copy the code below and paste within your html code:

```
<a href="http://www.scimagr
```

Developed by:



Powered by:



Follow us on Twitter

Scimago Lab, Copyright 2007-2017. Data Source: Scopus®



# SOURCE PUBLICATION LIST FOR *WEB OF SCIENCE*

SOCIAL SCIENCE CITATION INDEX

Updated May 2017



Journal Title	Publisher	ISSN	E-ISSN	Country	Language
Journal of Service Management	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	1757-5818	1757-5826	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SERVICE RESEARCH	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	1094-6705	1552-7379	ENGLAND	English
Journal of Service Theory and Practice	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	2055-6225	2055-6225	ENGLAND	English
Journal of Services Marketing	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	0887-6045	0887-6045	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SEX & MARITAL THERAPY	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0092-623X	1521-0715	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0022-4499	1559-8519	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Sexual Aggression	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	1355-2600	1742-6545	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	WILEY	0047-2778	1540-627X	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY	GUILFORD PUBLICATIONS INC	0736-7236		UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	SAGE PUBLICATIONS LTD	0265-4075	1460-3608	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY	SAGE PUBLICATIONS LTD	1469-6053	1741-2951	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL HISTORY	OXFORD UNIV PRESS INC	0022-4529	1527-1897	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES	WILEY	0022-4537	1540-4560	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Social Marketing	EMERALD GROUP PUBLISHING LTD	2042-6763	2042-6771	ENGLAND	English
Journal of Social Philosophy	WILEY	0047-2786	1467-9833	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL POLICY	CAMBRIDGE UNIV PRESS	0047-2794	1469-7823	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0022-4545	1940-1183	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SERVICE RESEARCH	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0148-8376	1540-7314	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Social Work	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	1468-0173	1741-296X	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	1043-7797	2163-5811	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0265-0533	1465-3885	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS	WILEY	1360-6441	1467-9841	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY	SAGE PUBLICATIONS LTD	1440-7833	1741-2978	ENGLAND	English
Journal of South Asian Development	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INDIA PVT LTD	0973-1741	0973-1733	INDIA	English
JOURNAL OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES	CAMBRIDGE UNIV PRESS	0022-4634	1474-0680	SINGAPORE	English
JOURNAL OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN STUDIES	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0305-7070	1465-3893	ENGLAND	Multi-Language
Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	1463-6204	1469-9818	ENGLAND	Multi-Language
JOURNAL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	0022-4669	1538-4764	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SPEECH LANGUAGE AND HEARING RESEARCH	AMER SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOC	1092-4388	1558-9102	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SPORT & EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY	HUMAN KINETICS PUBL INC	0895-2779	1543-2904	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SPORT & SOCIAL ISSUES	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	0193-7235	1552-7638	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Sport and Health Science	SHANGHAI UNIV SPORT	2095-2546	2213-2961	PEOPLES R CHINA	English
JOURNAL OF SPORT MANAGEMENT	HUMAN KINETICS PUBL INC	0888-4773	1543-270X	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Sports Economics	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	1527-0025	1552-7794	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF STRATEGIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS	ELSEVIER SCIENCE BV	0963-8687	1873-1198	NETHERLANDS	English
JOURNAL OF STRATEGIC STUDIES	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0140-2390	1743-937X	ENGLAND	English
Journal of Studies in International Education	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	1028-3153	1552-7808	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs	ALCOHOL RES DOCUMENTATION INC CENT ALCOHOL STUD RUTGERS UNIV	1937-1888	1938-4114	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT	PERGAMON-ELSEVIER SCIENCE LTD	0740-5472		UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Substance Use	TAYLOR & FRANCIS INC	1465-9891	1475-9942	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Supply Chain Management	WILEY	1523-2409	1745-493X	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	CHANNEL VIEW PUBLICATIONS	0966-9582	1747-7646	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION	CORWIN PRESS INC A SAGE PUBLICATIONS CO	0022-4871	1552-7816	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION	HUMAN KINETICS PUBL INC	0273-5024	1543-2769	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER	SPRINGER	0892-9912	1573-7047	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF MARKETING SCIENCE	SPRINGER	0092-0703	1552-7824	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY	ELSEVIER SCIENCE INC	0890-8567	1527-5418	NETHERLANDS	English
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PSYCHIATRY AND THE LAW	AMER ACAD PSYCHIATRY & LAW	1093-6793	1943-3662	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners	WILEY	2327-6886	2327-6924	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY	WILEY	0002-8614	1532-5415	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL INFORMATICS ASSOCIATION	OXFORD UNIV PRESS	1067-5027	1527-974X	ENGLAND	English
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	0194-4363	1939-0130	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	1078-3903	1532-5725	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION	SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC	0003-0651	1941-2460	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy	ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD	1354-7860	1469-9648	ENGLAND	English
Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology	WILEY	2330-1635	2330-1643	UNITED STATES	English
Journal of the Association for Information Systems	ASSOC INFORMATION SYSTEMS	1536-9323	1558-3457	UNITED STATES	English
JOURNAL OF THE COPYRIGHT SOCIETY OF THE USA	COPYRIGHT SOC USA	0886-3520		UNITED STATES	English
Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient	BRILL ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS	0022-4995	1568-5209	NETHERLANDS	English
Journal of the European Economic Association	WILEY	1542-4766	1542-4774	ENGLAND	English

# A contingency model of “Face” loss in service encounters: an Eastern cultural context

1122

Chuanchuen Akkawanitcha

*Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University, Phetchaburi, Thailand, and*

Paul G. Patterson

*School of Marketing, UNSW Business School,*

*University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia and*

*Faculty of Business Administration,*

*Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand*

Received 27 April 2016  
Revised 5 September 2016  
13 November 2016  
23 February 2017  
5 May 2017  
Accepted 8 May 2017

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of a loss of face on the psychological well-being of frontline employees (FLEs) in an Eastern cultural context (Thailand) when subjected to customer aggression. Importantly, it adopts a contingency approach and examines moderating effects by which social status, a “customer is always right” organisational philosophy and a public/private context impact the nature of the association between customer aggression and loss of face. Finally, it examines the moderating effect of regulation of emotion on the association between loss of face on psychological well-being.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A survey, administered to 319 FLEs in retail stores in Thailand, asked them to recall a recent experience dealing with customer aggression. The data were analysed using structural equation modelling and a moderator regression.

**Findings** – Customer aggression expressions are associated with FLEs’ loss of face, which in turn affects FLEs’ emotional exhaustion and anxiety. FLEs social status and a “customer is always right” organisational philosophy moderate the association between customer aggression and loss of face, and FLEs’ loss of face is greater when their physical well-being is threatened publicly rather than in private. In addition, regulation of emotion was found to increase the negative impact of loss of face on emotional exhaustion.

**Practical implications** – The way FLEs respond to customer aggression during service encounters, as well as the FLEs’ status and the context, can intensify their loss of face and psychological well-being. This has implications for the extent to which organisations impose a “customer is always right” dictum on FLE, as well as the need for counselling and peer support immediately following customer aggression incidents.

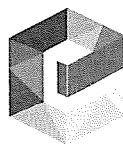
**Originality/value** – This study is the first to investigate the moderating effects of social status, a “customer is always right” philosophy and public/private context on the expression of customer aggression and FLEs’ accompanying loss of face. In other words, rather than simply examining what causes face loss, the authors shift the focus from the “Is” question to “When” – i.e., under what contingency condition is there more or less face loss?

**Keywords** Culture, Service encounter, Psychological well-being, Customer aggression, Loss of face

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Scholarly studies and industry reports in both Western and Eastern cultures indicate escalating incidents of customer aggression towards frontline employees (FLEs) (Fisk and Neville, 2011; Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Harris and Daunt, 2013; Patterson *et al.*, 2016), causing damage to both FLEs’ psychological well-being and the organisation overall (DeWitt and Brady, 2003; McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2010). When customer mistreatment subjugates FLEs, it can lead to feelings of degradation, humiliation and loss of face with consequent negative impact on one’s psychological well-being (anxiety, emotional exhaustion), diminished job performance and heightened turnover intentions (Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Karatepe *et al.*, 2009; Akkawanitcha *et al.*, 2015). The effects of customer aggression on FLEs’ face loss and consequent psychological well-being thus constitute a crucial point for consideration with Goussinsky (2012) calling it “the dark side” of customer service roles.



Most studies examining face loss take a customer perspective (e.g. Lee *et al.*, 2013) especially in a service failure and recovery context (Chan *et al.*, 2009; Du *et al.*, 2010; Patterson *et al.*, 2016). Rather than focussing on customers' loss of face, the present paper proposes that FLEs also risk loss of face, with notable impacts on their psychological well-being (emotional exhaustion and anxiety), and thus their job performance when subjected to customer aggression. We predict that this risk is particularly prevalent in Eastern, collectivist cultures where preserving "face" is a key socio-cultural norm. Employing face theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005) and culture theory (Triandis, 1995) as foundation theories, the current paper extends the research domain of face in service encounters. No previous study has investigated how customer abuse impacts employees' loss of face. Moreover, this research adds a contribution to the literature by examining two social conditions (public vs private context, and relative social status) and one organisational factor ("customer is always right" organisational philosophy) to determine when customer aggression results in greater or lesser loss of face. In other words, it shifts the focus from "what" causes face loss to "when" – i.e., under what contingency (moderator) conditions result in greater or lesser face loss. Finally, the study contributes by examining the moderating effect of emotion regulation on the association between loss of face and emotional exhaustion. The findings have notable implications for how service organisations hire and train their FLEs, as well as for designing policies to deal with aggressive customer behaviour.

## 2. Customer aggression context

Service encounters are, first and foremost, social exchanges, which makes them fertile ground for customer aggression. Factors that encourage customer aggression may originate with the organisation, FLEs or customers themselves. While the goal of any organisation is to provide customers with satisfying experiences, the notion that customers are always right has long been dispensed within developed economies. Yet the notion that "the customer is always right", still persists in many Eastern cultures, and can be taken to entitle customers to misbehave towards service employees (Yagil, 2008). Aggressive customer behaviour might be verbal, such as shouting, speaking in loud voices, sarcasm, screaming, intimidation, yelling or swearing; it also might be non-verbal, in the form of angry facial expressions, staring or other negative expressions through body language; and it can even escalate to physical threats, such as slamming down fists, shoving or slamming down a phone (Grove *et al.*, 2004; Huang *et al.*, 2010). McColl-Kennedy *et al.* (2009) classified customer angry expression into five forms; verbal, physical, constructive, displaced and non-verbal. The study based on 23 in-depth qualitative interviews with FLEs immediately prior to the quantitative stage strongly indicated that only the verbal and physical forms are aligned with this current study context. More specifically three forms of aggression consistently emerged from the interviews, namely offensive language, personally insulting remarks (verbal) and physical threats (physical form) and are therefore examined in the current study. Such behaviours tend to result in a considerable loss of face, such that FLEs experience emotional reactions including anger, depression, humiliation or dehumanisation. In addition, FLEs' attitudes towards their work are affected negatively, which might lead to reduced employee morale or absence from the workplace. Sometimes, employees even actively seek retaliation, which could have harmful effects on all parties concerned.

## 3. The concept of face

Face prevails to varying degrees across cultures. Hu (1944) describes Chinese face according to two categories, *lian* and *mian-tzu*. *Lian* refers to the moral character of a person, whereas *mian-tzu* indicates the prestige or reputation achieved by a person through her or his personal effort and success (Wan, 2013). Goffman (1967, p. 5) describe face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself", though this value, public image, reputation and status

cannot exist in isolation but instead depend on others. Ho's (1976) proposed concept distinguishes face from the closely related constructs of personality, self-esteem, dignity and authority by citing the element of status, such that face entails an individual's claim to respect and deference from others during social interactions. Drawing on research by Goffman (1955) and Brown and Levinson (1987), Ting-Toomey (1988) proposes face negotiation theory, in which face offers an explanatory mechanism for cultural conflict, because the goal of saving and negotiating face exists in all cultures and every time people communicate. Lim and Bowers (1991) suggest that individuals have three face needs – fellowship face involves the desire to be accepted as a group member; autonomy face is a sense of not to be imposed on, while competence face refers to the need for one's abilities be respected. It is particularly pertinent to consumer and organisational behaviour literature, such that threats to face influences the negotiation process and outcomes, in the forms of organisational behaviour (White *et al.*, 2004), conflict management (Oetzel *et al.*, 2008; Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998) and the outcome of service failure episodes (Chan *et al.*, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2013; Wan, 2013).

For this study, we conceive of face as an FLE's social reputation, or the positive social value that an FLE claims for him- or herself. Thus, face is both self-evaluated and situationally dependent, and it is a direct consequence of the manner in which the FLE is treated by a (aggressive) customer during a service encounter. It can be violated by a lack of basic courtesy and respect, inconsideration of feelings or being challenged (Lee *et al.*, 2013). This approach is consistent with previous studies that conceptualise face as a public self-image (Wee, 2001).

### 3.1 Face as a core cultural value

People in all cultures attach varying degrees of importance to face (Triandis, 1995). However, in Eastern, collectivist cultures, such as China, Malaysia, Thailand, Korea, Myanmar and Japan, face is a core social value (Browaeys and Price, 2011). In these cultures, face gives men and women a material pride valued above worldly possessions, such that "Death is better than humiliation" (Wee, 2001, p. 188). The concept of face is strongly embedded in Chinese culture (Du *et al.*, 2010), where it can be garnered through individual achievement (Hu, 1994). In Japan, face is the sense of social status achieved through lifelong attainment (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994). Aoki (2010) describes two aspects of face: quality and identity face. The latter is consistent with the concept of face in Thailand, where face refers to the self-image, reputation and social identity of an individual, so the more face a person possesses, the more respect and admiration he or she gains (Kitiyadisai, 2005). Thai people desire, above virtually anything else, that their social identity be acknowledged and upheld.

Furthermore, another central value of Thai culture is conflict avoidance, such that when they encounter difficult circumstances, Thais prefer to employ an unemotional strategy rather than confrontation. A confrontation by either side, incompatible with core social values, then may lead to a loss of face, or *sia-na*. Rather, in social interactions Thai people seek to maintain both self-face and other-face at all costs. If a loss of face occurs, their honour and self-respect suffer damage, and restoring face (*ku-na*) becomes essential.

### 3.2 Loss of face in a service encounter

When FLEs are subjected to customer aggression during a service encounter, they can lose face and thus suffer accompanying damage to their psychological well-being. In this sense, the social cost of a negotiation between two parties can be lost, increased or saved during the service encounter (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Consumers are frequently concerned about face during service failures and recovery situations (Du *et al.*, 2010; Wan, 2013), because a service failure, unless quickly remedied, can damage their social identity and create feelings of embarrassment (Lee and Sparks, 2007). For example, when ordering food from a restaurant, a customer might pronounce the name of a dish incorrectly. If the service employee corrects the mispronunciation loudly and in a condescending tone, the customer



likely experiences a loss of face. The extent of this loss likely is much greater when other customers are nearby and can hear the exchange (social exposure). We also consider the opposite situation, in which a customer humiliates a service employee. In hierarchical, high power distance cultures such as Thailand – where power, influence and social status are unequally distributed, and members know where they stand in the social “pecking order” – it is easy for high status persons (customers) to cause significant damage to low status FLEs’ sense of face. In particular, people with lower status tend to experience more damage to their self-esteem when interacting with people of higher status (Triandis, 1995). Displays of rude or aggressive customer behaviour also should provoke a greater loss of face when they occur in the presence of others (customers, family members, employees).

In summary, despite extensive research into the sociological and psychological aspects of face loss from a customer perspective (Cocroft and Ting-Toomey, 1994), we know less about the loss of face during service encounters for FLEs, or how such threats affect their psychological well-being and performance. More importantly perhaps, is the need to examine under what contingency conditions do various forms of customer aggression have greater or lesser impact on face loss. FLEs are boundary spanners and the primary contact point between the organisation and its customers, and as such are the public face of the organisation. Therefore, the physical and psychological well-being of FLEs should be a primary concern for managers.

#### 4. Hypotheses and conceptual model development

##### 4.1 Customer aggression and loss of face

Aggressive behaviour by customers threatens face and triggers stress in FLEs. People respond to stressful, negative life events through an appraisal and emotion process (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). They assess stressful situations as threats to their fundamental values (Patterson *et al.*, 2009; Surachartkumtonkun *et al.*, 2013), such as threats to goals at work, to a sense of fairness or to self-esteem or self-worth. An FLE’s face and self-worth are at stake when they are subject to customer aggression, especially because aggression towards an FLE often provokes feelings of dehumanisation (Fisk and Neville, 2011). In this sense, we distinguish between face and self-esteem. That is, self-esteem refers to people’s overall subjective emotional evaluation of their self-worth and attitude towards themselves. Psychologists regard self-esteem as an enduring personality characteristic and synonymous with self-worth and self-regard (Smith and Mackie, 2007). Whereas self-esteem is enduring, face depends on the situation and is temporal, focussed mainly on threats to (or the loss of) face. Face theory thus establishes that when people’s identity is questioned, their face comes under threat (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) suggest that face can be viewed as claims of favourable social self-worth in public, which may be lost or enhanced. As noted earlier three forms of aggression were found to be highly relevant to Thai FLEs’ face loss in a retail context – i.e., offensive language, insulting personal remarks and physical threats. More formally:

*H1.* Customers’ (a) use of offensive language, (b) insulting remarks and (c) physical threats are associated with FLEs’ loss of face.

We also consider the potential influences of social norms in Thai society. An ego orientation with “face” being identical with the sensitive “ego”, Komin (1990) asserts the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relationships are key, such that Thais generally exhibit a deep sense of independence, personal pride and consideration for others (*kreng jai*) (Komin, 1990; Triandis, 1995). Threats to, or violation of an ego self, or face, evokes strong emotional reactions, even though Thais are widely perceived as smiling, serene and affable. Komin (1990) asserts that preserving another person’s ego is the most fundamental norm in all Thai social encounters, and is at the root of face-saving value. He emphasises that saving

face is a mechanism to avoid violations of one's own ego. Thais typically communicate in indirect ways and use non-verbal language to mitigate potentially face-threatening situations. A personally directed insult to another would represent a massive violation of his or her ego and face (Komin, 1990). Therefore, in a Thai service setting, personally insulting remarks by customers may have a greater impact on FLEs' loss of face than other aggressive behaviours. Hence, we hypothesise:

*H2.* Personally insulting remarks by customers cause a greater loss of FLEs' face than customers' use of offensive language or physical threats.

#### *4.2 Loss of face and psychological well-being*

Having to deal with an aggressive customer is an extremely stressful situation, so it likely leads to unhealthy, negative emotions and invokes coping behaviours to relieve the stress and regain psychological equilibrium (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). This paper concentrates on two critical and relevant dimensions of psychological well-being, namely emotional exhaustion and anxiety. Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being overextended and the depletion of one's emotional and physical resources (Maslach and Leiter, 2008). Anxiety is defined as feelings of nervousness, tension as a result of dealing with a stressful situation. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) assert that people with a high level of concern for their face restrict their behaviour to conform with socio-cultural norms. In service settings, they are more likely to experience distress because they feel compelled to balance their work role performance with their desire to save face. Thus, FLEs who attempt to commit to their service roles even as their face is being threatened might find the situation extremely difficult, such that it consumes their emotional well-being at work but also harms their mental health in general (Ho, 1991). Empirical evidence affirms that a loss of face has significant influences on psychological well-being (Mak and Chen, 2006). For example, Chiu *et al.* (2015) find that a loss of face could predict mental disturbances among Chinese caregivers; the caregivers' anxiety also exhibited a partially mediated influence on their loss of face and general health. In addition, if an FLE's loss of face is not restored, her or his (coping) resources remain depleted. That is, when FLEs experience a greater loss of face, it becomes more likely that their emotional resources are depleted. Therefore, we hypothesise:

*H3.* Loss of face relates positively to (a) levels of anxiety and (b) emotional exhaustion in FLEs.

#### *4.3 Social status as a moderator*

Ting-Toomey's (2005) face negotiation theory suggests that higher power distance values, as are common in southeast Asian cultures (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1997), can shape face concerns. In Thai society, for example, people accept that power and influence are unequally distributed. As Kitiyadisai (2005) asserts, Thai values conform to a social hierarchy that clearly indicates "who's high, who's low". Those with low status are openly referred to as "lo-so", whereas high status people are "hi-so" (Akkawanitcha *et al.*, 2015). The latter are typically well-educated, wealthy, powerful and influential. In turn, lo-so people have imbalanced power (Pimpa, 2012), especially in commercial service encounters, and acquiesce to the preferences of hi-so people. On the other hand, people who have high status possess social power (Major *et al.*, 2002) and are confident in coping with problems. In social interactions, lower status people tend to experience low self-esteem, feelings of shame and loss of ground to the other party (Gruenewald *et al.*, 2006). FLEs jobs are viewed as subordinate service roles and they are expected to acquiesce to a customer's status (Bateson *et al.*, 2014). Prior research suggests that customers in collectivist cultures tend to behave opportunistically and so take advantage of towards to FLEs

(Vaerenbergh and Larivie're, 2014). For this study, customers are viewed as hi-so representatives, because they are patrons of firms, and a "customer is always right" mentality still persist in Thai organisations. Akkawanitcha *et al.* (2015) specify that when FLEs perceive themselves as inferior to a customer, their feelings of being threatened or intimidated are likely accentuated, especially when dealing with aggressive customers. Finally, because a person's status relates to respect and admiration (Kitiyadisai, 2005), those with lower status, when confronted with aggressive behaviour, likely suffer a loss of face due to dishonour, a lack of respect and public humiliation. However, customer aggression should have less impact if the FLE perceives that he or she has equal or higher, rather than lower, status relative to a customer. Thus:

- H4.* If an FLE perceives his or her social status to be lower than that of a (aggressive) customer, the effects of the customer's (a) offensive language, (b) insulting personal remarks and (c) physical threats on the FLE's loss of face is stronger, relative to when the FLE perceives his or her social status as equal to or higher than the customer's.

#### 4.4 *Public/private context as a moderator*

A public context implies that the customer aggression incidents happen in the presence of other customers or co-workers; a private context means that the incident is not witnessed by anyone else. Face is a public performance, in that it refers to self-image according to socially approved attributes (image, respect and honour) in a social or commercial (service encounter) interaction (Goffman, 1972). Because of their strong collectivist value orientation, Thais also tend to compare themselves implicitly to other people in social situations. Markus and Kitayama (1991) explain that collectivists are highly sensitive to others' empathy while also needing the attention of others. As a result, they remain constantly vigilant when they are in public. Kitiyadisai (2005) also notes that when Thais experience a loss of privacy, it causes them shame or concerns for their face; Lim (1994) and Chan *et al.* (2009) suggest that a loss of face in public is more damaging than a loss of face in private. Thus, FLEs likely experience a greater loss of face when customers exhibit aggressive behaviours in the presence of other customers or fellow employees (i.e. in public). Moreover, Thai values discourage interpersonal conflict in public (Triandis, 1995). Because FLEs typically perceive that they possess lower social status than their customers and tend to be submissive to protect their job security, physical threats might be viewed not only as potentially physically damaging but also invoking the FLE's sense of powerlessness and shame (Matsumoto, 2003), resulting in a loss of face. Because face loss should be exacerbated when aggressive customer behaviours take place in view of other customers, we hypothesise:

- H5.* If customer aggression is displayed publicly, the effects of customers' (a) offensive language, (b) insulting personal remarks and (c) physical threats on face loss are stronger than if it occurs in private.

#### 4.5 *"Customer is always right" philosophy as a moderator*

A "customer is always right" philosophy refers to the organisation maxim that a basic premise for delivering quality service consigns employees to do whatever it takes to please a customer, including subjugating themselves to customer abuse. Service organisations in East Asia countries still, by and large, adhere to this policy, as a means of satisfying and retaining customers. This premise encourages FLEs to please customers at any cost (Gettman and Gelfand, 2007). In other words, the true feelings and preferred ways of FLEs responding to abuse are constrained (Bishop and Hoel, 2008). Customer is always right philosophy also indicates the unequal power between customers and FLEs, and encourages customers to behave inappropriately (Karatepe *et al.*, 2009). Hence when FLEs are forced to adhere to this

philosophy when subject to customer aggression, it is likely to exacerbate the stress they perceive and accompanying damage to the well-being (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). Conversely, when FLEs are unencumbered they feel more empowered and so lessen the impact of cognitive appraisal of threats to their well-being. Thus it is hypothesised:

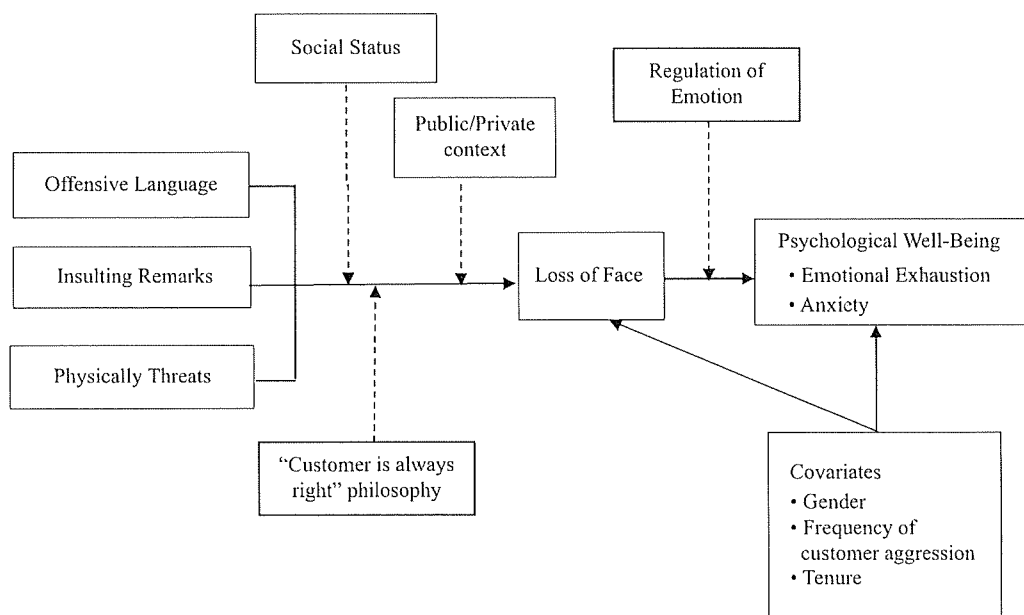
*H6.* A strong “customer is always right” philosophy positively moderates the effects of the customer’s (a) offensive language, (b) insulting personal remarks and (c) physical threats on the FLE’s loss of face.

*4.6 Regulation of emotion as a moderator*

With service work being universally recognised as emotional labour, FLEs are frequently required to regulate their emotions during service encounters in order to adhere to the firms display rules and retain customer relationships (Grandey *et al.*, 2004). This is especially the case when FLEs are confronted with a negative, stressful situation such a complaining or worse, an abusive customer. Regulation of emotion refers to the ability to regulate one’s emotion according to different circumstances (Davies *et al.*, 1998). Wong and Law (2002) noted that a person with an ability to regulate their emotions can recover and turn to a state of psychological equilibrium quickly when he/she must confront a stressful situation. However, Muraven and Baumeister (2000) argued that according to the ego-depletion model, regulating negative emotion requires self-control. Self-control draws upon one’s mental resources and such resources are limited. Thus, when FLEs use a regulation of emotion strategy in order to adhere to display rules, self-control resources are depleted. In sum, FLEs who have the efficacy to regulate their emotions, in the process of emotion regulation deplete their mental resources. Hence, FLEs who frequently regulate their emotions in response to customer aggression are more likely than their counterparts who exhibit low emotion regulation, to intensify the emotional exhaustion caused by loss of face. Thus, it is hypothesised:

*H7.* FLEs level of emotional regulation positively moderates the association between face loss and emotional exhaustion.

Our predictions and conceptual framework is summarised in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual framework



## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 *Sample and data collection*

For this research, we employ a critical incident technique (CIT) to understand the impact of customer aggression incidents (i.e. a critical incident) on FLEs' face and psychological well-being. This method facilitates investigations of significant incidents (Flanagan, 1954) and has been used previously to study cognitive appraisal processes and emotion elicitation (e.g. Weiner *et al.*, 1979). In service settings, CIT is useful for clarifying customers' cognition, emotion and behaviours (Bitner *et al.*, 1990; van Dolen *et al.*, 2001), because it provides deep insights, derived from respondents' own narratives of their thoughts and emotions. It also helps reduce interviewer bias, selective listening or inaccurate recording (Keaveney, 1995). Because the antecedents and consequences of customer aggression on FLEs' face and well-being are not well understood, we consider CIT an appropriate method to explore and refine some key themes and examine the nature of the resulting associations.

Frontline service employees in two major retail chains selling similar products/services in Thailand were selected as the sample for this research. In a retailing context, FLEs engage in frequent daily service encounters. Letters describing the purpose of the research project were sent to the personnel manager of each major retail store, seeking their participation. The authors then visited all research sites to explain the survey conditions to a store manager. Trained research assistants administered self-reported questionnaires to FLEs over a three-week period. Because the CIT supports purposive sampling, we targeted FLEs at checkout counters who had face-to-face experiences with customer aggression. Following Keaveney's (1995) procedure, FLEs were asked to recall a recent past experience in dealing with customer aggression (within the previous six months). They were asked a series of open-ended questions such as when did the incident occur? Describe what happened; how often were they subjected to customer aggression? The incident described was then used as the focal event to answer a series of closed end questions concerning: customer aggression behaviours, loss of face, psychological well-being and other factors affect impacting face loss and psychological well-being. An incentive of 100 Thai Baht (~US\$3) was offered as remuneration for each respondent. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed by the research assistants, 319 responses were complete, for a response rate of 79.8 per cent. With this high response rate, non-response bias is unlikely to be an issue. The final sample comprised responses from 319 FLEs, most of whom are women (72.4 per cent) aged between 18 and 54 years, with a substantial group between 25 and 34 years of age (48.9 per cent). As Table I reveals, 199 of these FLEs (62.4 per cent) had a certificate or Bachelor's degree.

### 5.2 *Measures*

Customer aggression was the extent to which FLEs reported that customers expressed offensive language, physical threats or insulting personal remarks. Single item measures were adapted from McColl-Kennedy *et al.* (2009) and reported on a five-point scale (1 = “not used at all” to 5 = “used a great deal”). Single item measures are preferable when the item captures the essence of the construct (Bergkvist and Rossitor, 2007; Rossitor, 2002). To capture the loss of face, we adapted five items from Patterson *et al.* (2009) that asked the respondents to indicate the extent to which the focal incident they recalled caused their loss of face, on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “not at all” to 5 = “a great deal”). We list these items in Table II. For social status, we used a single item that prompted respondents to compare their social status with that of the customer who was involved in the incident, again on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “much lower than the customer”, 3 = “about the same” and 5 = “much higher than the customer”). To operationalise the public/private context construct, we asked respondents to identify whether the incident happened in front of other customers (or employees) or in private. Incidents that happened in front of others were coded as 1, and those that happened privately were coded as 2.

JSTP  
27,6

1130

**Table I.**  
Sample demographics

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	231	72.4
Male	88	27.6
<i>Age (year)</i>		
Under 18	10	3.1
18-24	110	34.5
25-34	156	48.9
35-44	41	12.9
45-54	2	0.6
<i>Education</i>		
Secondary school	118	37.0
Certificate or Bachelor	199	62.4
Master	1	0.3
Other	1	0.3
Total	319	100.0

Scale items	Standardised loading	Composite reliability
<i>Loss of face</i>		0.89
I felt I was losing self-respect	0.91	
I was made to feel like I was unimportant	0.80	
I felt the customer was looking down on me	0.80	
I felt I was incompetent	0.63	
The customer showed me no respect	0.75	
<i>Emotional exhaustion</i>		0.90
I felt emotionally drained	0.74	
I felt dread getting up in the morning and having to face another day on this job	0.79	
I felt burned out	0.91	
I felt frustrated	0.89	
<i>Anxiety</i>		0.84
I lost much sleep over worrying about the incident	0.68	
I felt constantly under strain	0.76	
I felt unhappy	0.73	
I lost confidence in myself	0.72	
I thought of myself as worthless person	0.67	
<i>Regulation of emotion</i>		0.90
I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally	0.76	
I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions	0.81	
I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry	0.85	
I have good control of my own emotions	0.89	

**Table II.**  
Scale items, composite reliability, and confirmatory results

*Model fit statistics:*  $\chi^2 = 247.34$ ,  $df = 127$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 1.94$ , GFI = 0.918, NFI = 0.934, TLI = 0.960, CFI = 0.967, RMSEA = 0.055

**Note:** Each item was measured on a five-point scale

Regulation of emotion is one dimension of the broader emotional intelligence construct. This paper employs the regulation of emotion dimension since it reports on the ability of service employees in regulating their emotions when confronted with an aggressive customer. The measurement was assessed using a four-item developed by Wong and Law (2002). Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement

with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. A sample item is “I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions”.

“Customer is always right” philosophy was captured in the self-administered survey using a single item measure. Respondents indicated the degree that their companies have the policy of customer is always right measured on the five-point Likert scale ranging from not at all = 1, to a large extent = 5. The item is “To what extent does your company have a customer is always right philosophy”.

The six-item emotional exhaustion scale came from Wharton (1993), using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”), which asked questions such as “after the incident, I felt used up at the end of the day”. Anxiety is a dimension in the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ12; Goldberg, 1972). The five-item scale (e.g. “after the incident, I lost confidence in myself”) also relied on a five-point Likert agreement scale format.

As control variables for loss of face, we included gender, two attribution of blame (customer blame and FLE blame) and tenure in the current organisation. Previous research indicates that female employees are more likely to experience customer aggression than males (Findorff *et al.*, 2004). Attribution of blame is FLEs assignment of blame to either the customer or themselves. In a service interaction, when an individual is faced with negative consequences they seek to attribute the cause to themselves (Wong and Weiner, 1981) or protect their self-image and attribute the blame to the other party, or an uncontrollable situation (Kelley and Michela, 1980). Tenure was also included as prior research found that job tenure can reduce the effects of job stress on job performance (Sturman, 2003).

In estimating psychological well-being we controlled for gender, the frequency with which FLEs faced customer aggression and tenure. To measure the frequency of customer aggression, we asked about the number of aggressive incidents an FLE experienced during the preceding six months, noting that Barling *et al.* (2001) find that an employee who suffers a high frequency of customer aggression is more likely to be stressed and fearful at work. Grandey *et al.* (2004) concluded that call centre employees face customer aggression about ten times per day, and those encountering more are more likely to suffer from stress and depression. The inclusion of these control variables allowed us to provide a more robust test of our hypotheses.

### 5.3 Scale evaluations

We ran a confirmatory factor analysis, and the results revealed a good fit ( $\chi^2 = 247.34$ ,  $df = 127$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.94$ ; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.918, normed fit index (NFI) = 0.934, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.960, confirmatory fit index (CFI) = 0.967 and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.055) (see Table II). The composite reliabilities ranged from 0.84 to 0.90, above the recommended cut-off value (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012).

We also determined the average variance extracted (AVE) to check for construct validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend an AVE greater than 0.70, but a value above 0.5 is acceptable. According to the results in Table III, the AVE for our constructs ranges between 0.51 and 0.70, all above the acceptable cut-off value. As a test of discriminant validity, we also compared the AVE with the squared correlation between any two constructs. In each case, the square root of the AVE was in the range 0.71-0.84 and higher than the correlation of any pair of constructs, consistent with the criteria for discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Finally, because the data collection involved a single-respondent survey, common-method variance might be a concern. We conducted Harman’s one-factor test and found that a single factor accounted for 42.12 per cent which is disproportionately large variance. We also took several additional measures to mitigate any bias. That is, the independent variables were measured separately from FLE performance, because they appeared in

**Table III.**  
Correlation among  
constructs, AVE,  
means and standard  
deviations

Constructs	AVE	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Inappropriate language	-	3.13	1.40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Insulting remarks	-	3.05	1.53	0.599*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Physically threatening	-	3.10	1.49	0.679*	0.627*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Social status	-	2.90	0.95	0.023	-0.111**	-0.053	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Public context	-	1.25	0.43	-0.231*	-0.222*	-0.234*	-0.088	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Loss of face	0.61	3.04	1.21	0.621*	0.664*	0.601*	-0.111**	-0.184*	0.78	-	-	-	-
7. Anxiety	0.51	2.24	0.91	0.331*	0.345*	0.327*	-0.102	-0.141**	0.441*	0.71	-	-	-
8. Emotional exhaustion	0.70	2.63	1.32	0.393*	0.435*	0.395*	-0.112**	-0.195*	0.566*	0.685	0.84	-	-
9. Regulation of emotion	0.68	2.63	1.32	0.217*	0.160*	0.231*	-0.069	-0.068	0.206*	-0.014	0.131**	0.89	-
10. "Customer is always right" philosophy	-	4.42	0.95	0.128**	0.050	0.059	-0.002	-0.019	0.122**	0.064	0.131**	0.176*	-
11. Frequency of customer aggression	-	15.26	15.99	0.259*	0.284*	0.305*	-0.002	-0.159*	0.206*	0.124**	0.197*	-0.119**	0.155*

**Notes:** Constructs 1-5 are all single item measures. The italic values on the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE. \* $p < 0.00$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$



separate sections of the instrument. We also informed the FLEs that their anonymity was guaranteed, which should reduce evaluation apprehension and social desirability biases. Finally, we used the marker variable technique (Lindell and Whitney, 2001) in which an unrelated variable (would you say your organisation is a market leader in its industry? This was captured on a five-point Likert scale) was selected as the marker variable (having no theoretical relationship with the dependent variable) and which was non-significantly correlated ( $r=0.11$ ) with the dependent variable. After partialling out the effects of the marker variable the mean change in the correlations of the independent and moderator variables was only 0.063, and so indicating common-method bias was not an issue.

A contingency model of "Face" loss

#### 5.4 Hypotheses testing

To test our conceptual model, we undertook two analyses. First, we used structural equation modelling (SEM) to investigate the relationship of all constructs in the baseline paths of the conceptual model. Second, with a moderator regression, we tested the moderating hypotheses.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 SEM results

The baseline paths of the conceptual model were tested using SEM in AMOS 18, with maximum-likelihood estimation. The overall model fit statistics indicated that the model fit the data very well ( $\chi^2/df=2.34$ , GFI=0.91, TLI=0.94, NFI=0.92, CFI=0.95, RMSEA=0.07). The expressions of customer aggression accounted for 63 per cent of the variance in face loss; face loss in turn explained 23 per cent of the variance in FLEs' anxiety and 30 per cent of the variance in their emotional exhaustion. As the results in Table IV reveal, all the effects were significant, as hypothesised.

Specifically, in support of all three predictions in *H1*, customer aggression in the form of offensive language ( $\beta=0.211$ ), personally insulting remarks ( $\beta=0.369$ ) and physical threats ( $\beta=0.152$ ) was significantly associated with a loss of face ( $p < 0.00$ ). In addition, personally insulting remarks ( $\beta=0.369$ ) had, *prima facie*, a greater impact on loss of face than offensive language or physical threats (see Table IV). However, given that offensive language, personally insulting remarks and physical threats are correlated, the standardized beta coefficients are not a reliable measure of each variables impact on face loss. We therefore adopted Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) and Bobko's (1995) recommendations and calculated the partial correlation coefficients to assess each variables unique contribution to explaining the variance around face loss. After partialling out the contribution of offensive language and physical threats, the partial correlation between personal insulting remarks and face loss was 0.396 vs only 0.167 and 0.264 for physical treats and inappropriate language, respectively, thus providing support for *H2*. Here customer attribution of blame, FLE blame, tenure and gender were controlled. Only customer blame was significant with  $\beta=0.132$ ,  $p < 0.000$ . Thus, the other controls were omitted from the model.

FLEs' loss of face in turn was significantly associated with emotional exhaustion ( $\beta=0.530$ ) and anxiety ( $\beta=0.332$ ) ( $p < 0.00$ ), in support of *H3a* and *H3b*. Although we

Path	$\beta$	SE	CR	$p$
Inappropriate language → loss of face	0.211	0.046	4.59	0.000
Personal insulting remarks → loss of face	0.369	0.041	9.01	0.000
Physical threats → loss of face	0.152	0.044	3.43	0.000
Loss of face → emotional exhaustion	0.530	0.059	8.94	0.000
Loss of face → anxiety	0.332	0.046	7.25	0.000

Table IV.  
Hypotheses testing results

included gender and frequency of aggression and tenure as control variables, only tenure was significant in predicting the emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -0.041$   $p < 0.05$ ) and anxiety ( $\beta = -0.036$ ). Gender and frequency of customer aggression were shown to be not significant for predicting emotional exhaustion or anxiety, and so we omitted them from the model.

6.2 Moderator regression

In *H4*, we predicted that FLEs' social status moderates the relationship between a customer's aggressive behaviours and their loss of face. As we detail in Table V, the interactions of social status with offensive language ( $\beta = 0.102$ ), insulting remarks ( $\beta = -0.213$ ) and physical threats ( $\beta = 0.174$ ) were all significant at  $p < 0.05$ . However, the standardised  $\beta$  value of insulting remarks did not reflect the hypothesised direction, so we find support for *H4a* and *H4c* but not *H4b*. Additionally, in contrast with our prediction that incidents in public vs private settings moderate the focal relationships, the interaction terms of public contexts with customers' use of inappropriate language ( $\beta = -0.07$ ) and their use of personal insulting remarks ( $\beta = -0.04$ ) did not have significant effects on loss of face at a 5 per cent level. Accordingly, we must reject *H5a* and *H5b*. However, *H5c* is supported because when a customer issues a physical threat in front of other customers, the effect on the FLE's loss of face is stronger ( $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, *H6a-H6c* asserted that a customer is always right philosophy would moderate the association between various forms

Dependent variable: Loss of Face	Model 1: control variables			Model 2: independent variables			Model 3: interaction terms			
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	Sig.	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	Sig.	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	Sig.	
<i>(a) Control variables</i>										
Gender	0.116	2.10	0.018	0.027	0.67	0.248	0.014	0.357	0.360	
Frequency of aggression	0.192	3.49	0.000	-0.041	-0.99	0.322	-0.031	-0.780	0.218	
<i>(b) Main effects</i>										
Offensive language				0.273	4.858	0.000	0.271	4.97	0.000	
Physical threats				0.172	2.99	0.001	0.133	2.34	0.010	
Insulting remarks				0.388	7.28	0.000	0.404	7.73	0.000	
Social status				-0.068	-1.71	0.043	-0.076	-1.96	0.025	
Public context (customer)				-0.005	-0.115	0.454	-0.025	-0.60	0.272	
Customer is always right philosophy				0.060	1.519	0.065	0.079	2.05	0.020	
<i>(c) Interaction effects</i>										
OL $\times$ SS							0.102	2.12	0.017	
IR $\times$ SS							-0.213	-4.23	0.000	
PT $\times$ SS							0.174	3.31	0.000	
OL $\times$ PC							-0.069	-1.36	0.082	
IR $\times$ PC							-0.039	-0.82	0.205	
PT $\times$ PC							0.087	1.73	0.042	
OL $\times$ CP							0.101	1.83	0.034	
IR $\times$ CP							0.001	0.015	0.494	
PT $\times$ CP							-0.011	-0.192	0.434	
				$R^2 = 5\%$			$R^2 = 54\%$			$R^2 = 59\%$
				$F = 9.29$			$F = 51.75$			$F = 32.02$
							$\Delta R^2 = 5\% (59-54)$			

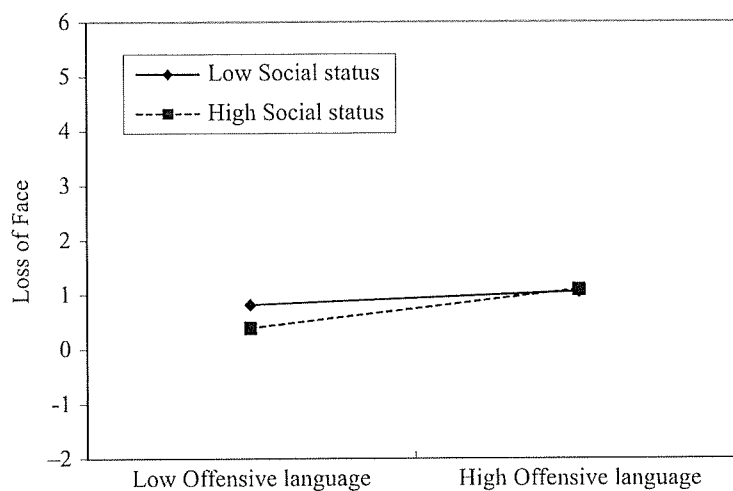
Table V. Regression results showing the moderation impact of social status, public context, customer is always right philosophy

Notes: OL, offensive language; PT, physical threats; IR, insulting remarks; SS, social status; PC, public context; CP, customer is always right philosophy. One-tailed tests of significance

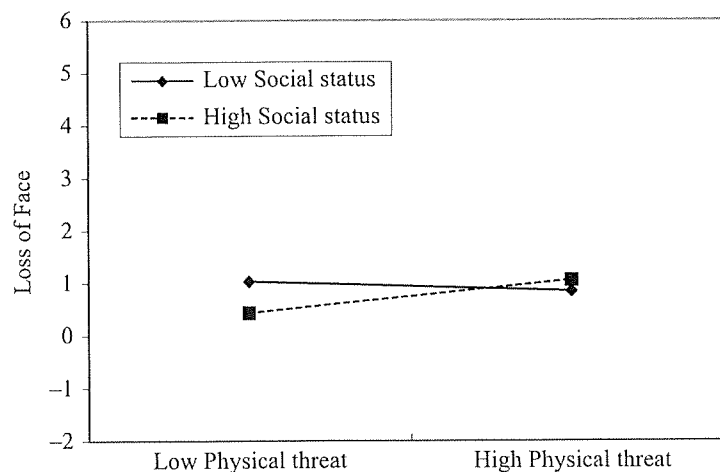
of customer aggression and loss of face. Only *H6a* ("customer is always is always right" mentality moderated the offensive behaviour-face loss linkage) was shown to be significant in predicting loss of face ( $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$ ). *H6b* and *H6c* are rejected at  $p > 0.05$ . Significant interaction effects results are shown graphically in Figures 2-5.

According to *H7*, it proposed that the relationship between loss of face and emotional exhaustion is stronger under the condition that the FLE has a high ability to regulate emotions. The result of interaction was shown to be significant ( $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.05$ ) thus supporting *H7* (refer Table VI). Such significant interaction effect result is shown graphically in Figure 6.

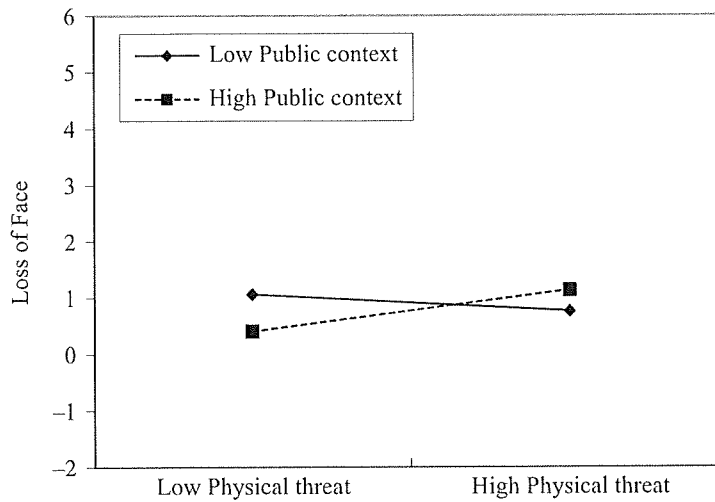
*Post hoc analysis.* *Post hoc* we examined the possibility that three moderators (social status, public/private context and customer is always right philosophy) might directly impact emotional exhaustion. To test this we added these three variables into the model displayed in Figure 6 as main effects. The results show that only public/private context was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) but its coefficient was extremely small and so having minimal impact ( $\beta = -0.096$ ). In other words, customer aggression in public (rather than private) exacerbates the damage to FLEs psychological well-being.



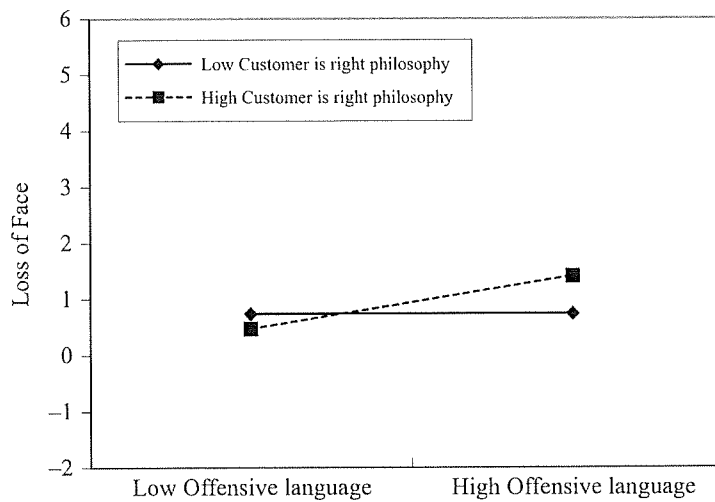
**Figure 2.** Moderating effect of social status on the relationship between offensive language and loss of face



**Figure 3.** Moderating effect of social status on the relationship between physical threat and loss of face



**Figure 4.** Moderating effect of public/private context on the relationship between physical threat and loss of face



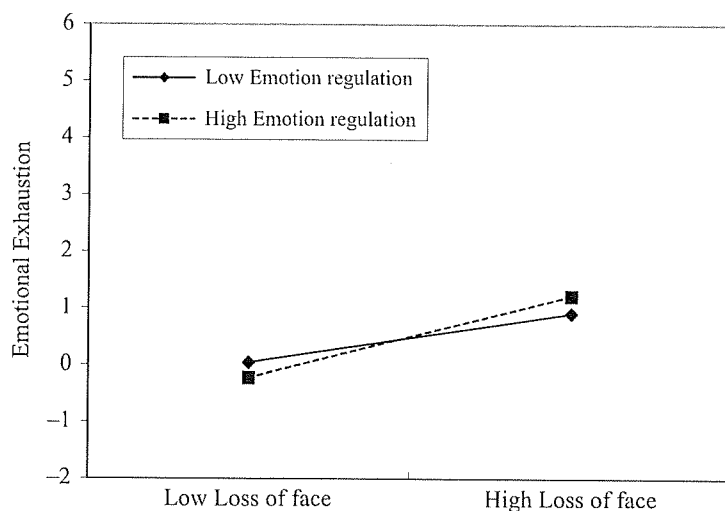
**Figure 5.** Moderating effect of "customer is always right" philosophy on the relationship between offensive language and loss of face

Dependent variable: emotional exhaustion	Model 1: control variables			Model 2: independent variables			Model 3: interaction terms		
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	Sig.	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	Sig.	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	Sig.
<i>(a) Control variables</i>									
Gender	0.120	2.18	0.015	0.058	1.23	0.108	0.049	1.050	0.147
Frequency of aggression	0.183	3.31	0.000	0.077	1.62	0.052	0.053	1.100	0.136
<i>(b) Main effects</i>									
Loss of face				0.540	11.15	0.000	0.533	11.06	0.000
Regulation of emotion				0.012	0.258	0.398	0.007	0.143	0.443
<i>(c) Interaction effects</i>									
LOF $\times$ ROE							0.109	2.293	0.012
				$R^2 = 4\%$			$R^2 = 32\%$		$R^2 = 33\%$
				$F = 8.83$			$F = 38.80$		$F = 32.51$
							$\Delta R^2 = 1\%$ (33-32)		

**Table VI.** Regulation of emotion as a moderator of the loss of face – emotional exhaustion linkage

Notes: LOF, loss of face; ROE, regulation of emotion. One-tailed tests of significance





A contingency model of “Face” loss

1137

Figure 6. Moderating effect of emotion regulation on the relationship between loss of face and emotional exhaustion

## 7. Discussion

Perhaps not surprisingly, our empirical analysis shows that customer aggressive behaviours, i.e., the use of inappropriate language, personally insulting remarks and physical threats, resulted in FLEs’ loss of face, and this loss of face in turn leads to emotional exhaustion and anxiety. While these results are consistent with previous studies from both a customer and employee perspective (Mak and Chen, 2006; Lee *et al.*, 2013) we extend prior work by responding to Hui and Bond’s (2014) call for social status to be considered when examining face loss or gain. Our results showed social status of FLEs and public exposure moderates the linkages between customer aggression and loss of face in the self-esteem-oriented context of Thailand (Komin, 1990). In particular, FLEs who perceive their social status to be lower relative to an aggressive customer are psychologically vulnerable, lack confidence and suffer greater face loss when forced to serve an aggressive customer. Specifically, social status was found to be significant in moderating the effects of inappropriate language and physical threats on face loss. However the impact of social status on the personally insulting remarks – face loss linkage was in the opposite direction to that predicted. This counter-intuitive result can be explained by Thai cultural values, whereby individuals accept the unequal distribution of power in society. Service workers in collectivist cultures know they are subordinate to a customer in a service encounter (Triandis, 1995). Thus, in the face of personally insulting remarks, their perceived lower social status propels them to acquiesce their status unconditionally and so not increase their loss of face.

For public/private context, our results show that it moderates only the effect of physical threats on the loss of face, not the effects of offensive language or insulting remarks. Perhaps the Thai FLEs in this study, who are largely collectivist in their attitudes and regard conflict avoidance and desire for harmony as core values, believe that physical threats represent extreme anti-social behaviour that conflicts with accepted social norms. These sorts of behaviour create embarrassment in face-to-face settings. The combination of social norms combined with the rigid display rules that are imposed on FLEs also prevent them from responding naturally to customers (Goldberg and Grandey, 2007). Thus, we reason that FLEs may feel more loss of face when they are physically threatened in the presence of other customers or employees (public exposure). In addition, the organisational maxim of “customer is always right” exhibits a moderating role only of the effect of offensive language (but not physical threats or insulting remarks) on loss of face. Yeh (2015)

suggested dealing with abusive customers, under the display rules imposed by firms often leads to reduce sense of self-confidence and well-being. Thus, FLEs working under such an organisational dictum, when confronted with offensive language and other threats from a customer, it is plausible to experience a heightened loss of face. Given the social norms in collectivist cultures such as Thailand personally insulting remark and physical threats are simply unacceptable behaviours, and customers who express such behaviours are frowned upon. In other words, it is socially unacceptable behaviour in such cultures and reflects poorly on the customer (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1997).

In accord with expectations, when FLEs exhibit high regulation of emotion the impact of loss of face following customer aggression are more likely to experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion. This result is consistent with the concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) (a form of emotion regulation) whereby high levels of emotional regulation require considerable self-control, which in turn deplete one's mental resources to cope. This however is a double-edged sword – i.e., FLEs who frequently regulate their emotions in order to deliver high levels of service and customer satisfaction, suffer higher levels of emotional exhaustion following face loss from being subject to customer aggression. Finally, although not hypothesised, customer attribution of blame was significant in explaining loss of face. When an FLE attributed the blame to the customer for the incident that triggered the customer aggression, then they are likely to lose more face than if they felt they were to blame.

In summary, this study extends the literature on face theory (Du *et al.*, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2013) and culture theory (Triandis, 1995) in two important ways. First, it calibrates the extent to which customer aggression in a collectivist culture has deleterious impacts on FLEs' loss of face and subsequent psychological well-being. Second, it demonstrates the extent to which social status, private/public contexts and "customer is always right" organisational philosophy are likely to buffer or exacerbate FLEs' loss of face, while regulation of emotion was found to aggravate the impact of face loss on emotional exhaustion.

### 7.1 Managerial implications

As boundary spanners and the face of the firm, frontline service employees must meet the demands of the organisation (e.g. adhere to display rules, meet KPIs) while at the same time deal with customer requests and demands for efficiency and service. Yet having to deal with customer aggression and accompanying face loss, especially in collectivist cultures, makes their roles even more stressful. Face is pervasive and exists in all cultures, but especially so in collectivist economies. Aggressive behaviours by customers, such as physical threats, inappropriate language and personal insults, cause FLEs a significant lose face with accompanying damage to psychological well-being which diminished their ability to deliver quality service. The challenges therefore are: how to minimise face loss, and what face gain strategies might be implemented? Considering the first challenge, human resource management should seek to recruit FLEs high in emotional intelligence and self-confidence (Patterson *et al.*, 2009), who have the mindset to cope with task-related problems (Lin and Lin, 2011). When FLEs possesses these abilities, organisations can further enhance them by offering training in dealing with aggressive customers. Next, in Eastern collectivist cultures (China, Thailand, Indonesia, etc.) in particular a "customer is always right" philosophy still prevails today. Such a philosophy only encourages customers to use it to their advantage and make unreasonable demands on FLEs as they feel they can do so with impunity. During our qualitative interviews that preceded the main study several FLEs commented on the fact when faced with customer aggression, they felt their supervisor would always take the side of the customer if there was a complaint, and so feared losing their job. The solution is for management to enshrine in their customer service culture that customer abuse will not be tolerated under any circumstances, even if it means losing some customers. Management must dispel the myth

of “the customer is always right” and communicate this to all staff. In doing so FLE facing aggression of any sort will have the confidence that they have the support of supervisors and the organisation at large. Furthermore, where customer abuse is frequent and excessive, signs might be erected stating that it will not be tolerated, and supervisors entrusted to intervene immediately any aggression occurs. Such strategies would relieve some of the anxiety currently experienced by FLEs by reinforcing that such abuse will not be tolerated by the organisation. Finally, our results show that customer aggression that takes place in public – in full view of other customers and/or fellow employees is particularly damaging to one’s face and psychological well-being. Where possible supervisors might be trained immediately intervene and guide the complaining customer a less public location where the issues can then be addressed.

Now turning to face gain strategies, unlike face gain for customers where sincere apologies by senior managers, an explanation, in public rather than private, and even compensation (Hui and Bond, 2014), it is considerably more problematic to restore face to employees as offending customers are, by and large, unlikely to apologise. One strategy is to provide social support. Akkawanitcha *et al.* (2015) propose that social support from colleagues, family members or supervisors offers an effective mental recovery strategy for Thai service employees who face customer aggression. In addition, Oetzel *et al.* (2008) find that collectivists tend to seek third-party help when their face is threatened. Seeking social support also relates negatively to psychological distress among Asian people in particular (Dalgard *et al.*, 1995). Therefore, service organisations should ensure that they are providing sufficient social support to help their FLEs cope with such situations.

Next, counselling must be considered to minimise the negative feelings related to coping with customer aggression (Benoit, 1997). The social psychology literature are ripe with various coping strategies (planned problem solving, emotion focussed coping, avoidance, etc.) that could be employed (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). For example, managers might convince FLEs that the incident is not very serious to help them restore their personal social image. Finally organisations should consider “decriminalising” customer complaints – that is, build a culture where employees need not fear customer complaints that accompany customer abuse, knowing that each case would be examined on its merits.

### 7.2 Limitations and further research

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for further research. First, the concept of face applies across cultures, to varying extents. Respect for and concerns about threats to face reflect different cultural norms and values. This study was conducted with Thai FLEs, who are categorised as collectivists. To enhance the generalisability of our results, further research might replicate this research in other cultures, in particular individualistic, Western ones. Second, our findings suggest that social status is a significant moderator of the use of inappropriate language and physical threats on the loss of face, but the direction was opposite what we predicted. Additional studies should seek to explain this surprising finding and test the proposed explanations we have offered. Third, we examined the loss of face that resulted from customer aggression, but it can arise in various service contexts and different types of service encounters. Both customers and service employees also tend to be affected. Considering how deeply face is embedded in collectivist (Asian) societies, a deeper understanding is needed. In particular, it would be helpful to investigate the face loss and face restoration phenomena, in a longitudinal study, i.e., both before and after a serious negative incident. Finally, it would be worthwhile capturing information of how many family members, employees and customers witnessed the aggression incident to examine the impact this had on face loss.

## References

- Akkawanitcha, C., Patterson, P., Buranapin, S. and Kantabutra, S. (2015), "Frontline employees' cognitive appraisals and well-being in the face of customer aggression in an Eastern, collectivist culture", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 268-279.
- Aoki, A. (2010), "Rapport management in Thailand and Japanese social talk during group discussions", *Pragmatics*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 289-313.
- Bagozzi, R.P. and Yi, Y. (2012), "Specification, evaluation, and interpretation of structural equation models", *Journal of the Academy Marketing Science*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 8-34.
- Barling, J., Roger, A.G. and Kelloway, E.K. (2001), "Behind closed doors: in-home workers' experience of sexual harassment and workplace violence", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 255-269.
- Bateson, J.E.G., Wirtz, J. and Vaughan, E.B.a.C. (2014), "Psychometric sifting to efficiently select the right service employees", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 24 No. 5, pp. 418-433.
- Benoit, W.L. (1997), "Image repair discourse and crisis communication", *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 177-186.
- Bergkvist, L. and Rossitor, J.R. (2007), "The predictive validity of multiple-item versus single-item measures of the same construct", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 175-184.
- Bishop, V. and Hoel, H. (2008), "The customer is always right? Exploring the concept of customer bullying in the British Employment Service", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 341-367.
- Bitner, M.J., Booms, B. and Tetreault, M.S. (1990), "The service encounter: diagnosing favorable and unfavorable incidents", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 71-84.
- Bobko, P. (1995), *Correlation and Regression: Principles and Applications for Organizational Psychology and Management*, McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, NY.
- Brotheridge, C.e.M. and Grandey, A.A. (2002), "Emotional labor and burnout: comparing two perspectives of 'people work'", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 60 No. 1, pp. 17-39.
- Browaeys, M.-J. and Price, R. (2011), *Understanding Cross-Cultural Management*, 2nd ed., Pearson Education Limited, Harlow.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S.C. (1978), "Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena", in Esther, N.G. (Ed.), *Question and Politeness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 56-311.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S.C. (1987), *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Chan, H., Wan, L.C. and Sin, L.Y.M. (2009), "The contrasting effects of culture on consumer tolerance: interpersonal face and impersonal fate", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 292-304.
- Chiu, M.Y.L., Yang, X., Wong, H.T. and Li, J.H. (2015), "The mediating effect of affective stigma between face concern and general mental health – the case of Chinese caregivers of children with intellectual disability", *Research in Development Disabilities*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 437-446.
- Cocroft, B.K. and Ting-Toomey, S. (1994), "Facework in Japan and the United States", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 469-506.
- Dalgard, O.S., Bjork, S. and Tambs, K. (1995), "Social support, negative life events and mental health", *British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 166 No. 1, pp. 29-34.
- Davies, M., Stankov, L. and Roberts, R.D. (1998), "Emotional intelligence: in search of an elusive construct", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 75 No. 4, pp. 989-1015.
- DeWitt, T. and Brady, M.K. (2003), "Rethinking service recovery strategies: the effect of rapport on consumer responses to service failure", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 193-207.
- Du, J., Fan, X. and Feng, T. (2010), "An experimental investigation of the role of face in service failure and recovery encounters", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 27 No. 7, pp. 584-593.



- Findorff, M.J., McGovern, P.M., Wall, M., Gerberich, S.G. and Alexander, B. (2004), "Care organization risk factors for work related violence in a health care organization", *Injury Prevention*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 296-302.
- Fisk, G.M. and Neville, L.B. (2011), "Effects of customer entitlement on service workers' physical and psychological wellbeing: a study of waitstaff employees", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 391-405.
- Flanagan, J.C. (1954), "The critical incident technique", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 51 No. 4, pp. 327-357.
- Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981), "Evaluating structure equation models with unobservable variables and measurement errors", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.
- Gettman, H.J. and Gelfand, M.J. (2007), "When the customer shouldn't be king: antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment by clients and customers", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92 No. 3, pp. 757-770.
- Goffman, E. (1955), "On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction", *Psychiatry*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 213-231.
- Goffman, E. (1967), *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Interaction*, Doubleday, Garden City, NY.
- Goffman, E. (1972), *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Goldberg, D.P. (1972), *The Detection of Psychiatric Illness by Questionnaire*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Goldberg, L.S. and Grandey, A.A. (2007), "Display rules versus display autonomy: emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and task performance in a call center simulation", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 301-318.
- Goussinsky, R. (2012), "Coping with customer aggression", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 170-196.
- Grandey, A.A., Dickter, D.N. and Sin, H.-P. (2004), "The customer is not always right: customer aggression and emotion regulation of service employees", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 397-418.
- Grove, S.J., Fisk, R.P. and John, J. (2004), "Surviving in the age of rage", *Marketing Management*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 41-46.
- Gruenewald, T.L., Kemeny, M.E. and Aziz, N. (2006), "Subjective social status moderates cortisol responses to social threat", *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 410-419.
- Gudykunst, W. and Nishida, T. (1994), *Bridging Japanese/North American Differences*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Harris, L.C. and Daunt, K. (2013), "Managing customer misbehavior: challenges and strategies", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 281-293.
- Harris, L.C. and Reynolds, K.L. (2003), "The consequences of dysfunctional customer behavior", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 144-161.
- Ho, D. (1976), "On the concept of face", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 81, pp. 867-884.
- Ho, D.Y.F. (1991), "The concept of face in Chinese-American interaction", in Hu, W.C. and Grove, C.L. (Eds), *Encountering the Chinese: A Guide for American*, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME, pp. 111-124.
- Hochschild, A.R. (1983), *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Holmes, H. and Tangtongtavy, S. (1997), *Working with the Thais*, White Lotus Press, Bangkok.
- Hu, H.C. (1944), "The Chinese concepts of 'face'", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 46 No. 1, pp. 45-64.
- Huang, W.-H., Lin, Y.-C. and Wen, Y.-C. (2010), "Attributions and outcomes of customer misbehavior", *Journal of Business Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 151-161.

- Hui, V.K. and Bond, M.H. (2014), "Target's face loss, motivations and forgiveness following a relational transgression: comparing Chinese and US cultures", *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Vol. 26 Nos 2/3, pp. 123-140.
- Karatepe, O.M., Yorganci, I. and Haktanir, M. (2009), "Outcomes of customer verbal aggression among hotel employees", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 21 No. 6, pp. 713-733.
- Keaveney, S.M. (1995), "Customer switching behavior in service industries: an exploratory study", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 59 No. 2, pp. 71-82.
- Kelley, H.H. and Michela, J.L. (1980), "Attribution theory and research", *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 31, pp. 457-501.
- Kitiyadisai, K. (2005), "Privacy rights and protection: foreign values in modern Thai context", *Ethics and Information Technology*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 17-26.
- Komin, S. (1990), "Culture and work-related values in Thai organizations", *International Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp. 681-704.
- Lazarus, R.S. and Folkman, S. (1984), *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*, Springer, New York, NY.
- Lee, Y.-L. and Sparks, B. (2007), "Appraising tourism and hospitality service failure events: a chinese perspective", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 504-552.
- Lee, Y.L., Sparks, B. and Butcher, K. (2013), "Service encounters and face loss: issues of failures, fairness, and context", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 34, pp. 384-393.
- Lim, T.S. (1994), "Facework and interpersonal relationships", in Ting-Toomey, S. (Ed.), *The Challenge of Facework*, State University of New York, Albany, NY, pp. 209-230.
- Lim, T.-S. and Bowers, J.W. (1991), "Facework: solidarity, approbation, and tact", *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 415-450.
- Lin, J.-S.C. and Lin, C.-Y. (2011), "What makes service employees and customers smile: antecedents and consequences of the employees' affective delivery in the service encounter", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 183-201.
- Lindell, M.K. and Whitney, D.J. (2001), "Accounting for common method variance in cross-sectional research designs", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86 No. 1, pp. 114-121.
- McCull-Kennedy, J.R., Sparks, B.A. and Nguyen, D.T. (2010), "Customer's angry voice: targeting employees or the organization?", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 64 No. 7, pp. 707-713.
- McCull-Kennedy, J.R., Patterson, P.G., Smith, A.K. and Brady, M.K. (2009), "Customer rage episodes: emotions, expressions and behaviors", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85 No. 2, pp. 222-237.
- Major, B., Gramzow, R.H., McCoy, S.K., Levin, S., Schmader, T. and Sidanius, J. (2002), "Perceiving personal discrimination: the role of group status and legitimizing ideology", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 82 No. 3, pp. 269-282.
- Mak, W.W.S. and Chen, S.X. (2006), "Face concern: its role on stress-distress relationships among Chinese Americans", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 143-153.
- Markus, H.R. and Kitayama, S. (1991), "Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 98 No. 2, pp. 224-253.
- Maslach, C. and Leiter, M.P. (2008), "Early predictors of job burnout and engagement", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 93 No. 3, pp. 498-512.
- Matsumoto, D. (2003), "Cross-cultural research", in Davis, S. (Ed.), *The Handbook of Research Methods in Experimental Psychology*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 189-208.
- Muraven, M. and Baumeister, R.F. (2000), "Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: does self-control resemble a muscle?", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 126 No. 2, pp. 247-259.
- Oetzel, J., Garcia, A.J. and Ting-Toomey, S. (2008), "An analysis of the relationships among face concerns and facework behaviors in perceived conflict situations: a four-culture investigation", *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 382-403.

- Patterson, P.G., Brady, M.K. and McColl-Kennedy, J.R. (2016), "Geysers or bubbling hot springs? A cross-cultural examination of customer rage from Eastern and Western perspectives", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 243-259.
- Patterson, P.G., McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Smith, A.K. and Lu, Z. (2009), "Customer rage: triggers, tipping points, and take-outs", *California Management Review*, Vol. 52 No. 1, pp. 1-23.
- Pimpa, N. (2012), "Amazing Thailand: organizational culture in the Thai public sector", *International Business Research*, Vol. 5 No. 11, pp. 35-42.
- Rossitor, J.R. (2002), "The C-OAR-SE procedure for scale development in marketing", *International Journal for Research in Marketing*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 305-335.
- Smith, E.R. and Mackie, D.M. (2007), *Social Psychology*, 3rd ed., Psychology Press, Hove.
- Sturman, M.C. (2003), "Searching for the inverted U-shaped relationship between time and performance: meta-analyses of the experience/performance, tenure/performance, and age/performance relationships", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 609-640.
- Surachartkumtonkun, J., Patterson, P.G. and McColl-Kennedy, J.R. (2013), "Customer rage back-story: linking needs-based cognitive appraisal to service failure type", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 89 No. 1, pp. 72-87.
- Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (2007), *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 5th ed., Pearson International, Boston, MA.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1988), "Intercultural conflict style: a face-negotiation theory", in Kim, Y.Y. and Gudykunst, W.B. (Eds), *Theories in Intercultural Communication*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, pp. 213-235.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (2005), "The matrix of face: an updated face-negotiation theory", in Gudykunst, W.B. (Ed.), *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 71-92.
- Ting-Toomey, S. and Kurogi, A. (1998), "Facework competence in intercultural conflict: an updated face-negotiation theory", *International Journal of Intercultural*, Vol. 22, pp. 187-225.
- Triandis, H.C. (1995), *Individualism & Collectivism*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Vaerenbergh, Y.V. and Larivière, A.B. (2014), "Customer intentions to invoke service guarantees: does excellence in service recovery, type of guarantee and cultural orientation matter?", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 45-62.
- van Dolen, W., Lemmink, J., Mattsson, J. and Rhoen, I. (2001), "Affective customer responses in service encounters: the emotional content in narratives of critical incidents", *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 359-76.
- Wan, L.C. (2013), "Culture's impact on consumer complaining responses to embarrassing service failure", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66 No. 3, pp. 298-305.
- Wee, C.H. (2001), *The Inspiration of Tao Zhu-gong – Modern Business Lessons From an Ancient Past*, Prentice Hall, Singapore.
- Weiner, B., Russell, D. and Lerman, D. (1979), "The cognition-emotion process in achievement-related contexts", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 37 No. 7, pp. 1211-1220.
- Weiss, H.M. and Cropanzano, R. (1996), "Affective events theory: a theoretical discussion of the structure causes and consequences of affective experiences at work", *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 18, pp. 1-74.
- Wharton, A.S. (1993), "The affective consequences of service work: managing emotions on the job", *Work and Occupations*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 205-232.
- White, J.B., Tynan, R., Galinsky, A.D. and Thompson, L. (2004), "Face threat sensitivity in negotiation: roadblock to agreement and joint gain", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 94 No. 2, pp. 102-124.
- Wong, C.-S. and Law, K.S. (2002), "The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: an exploratory study", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 243-274.

- Wong, P.T.P. and Weiner, B. (1981), "When people ask 'why' questions and the heuristics of attributional search", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 650-663.
- Yagil, D. (2008), "When the customer is wrong: a review of research on aggression and sexual harassment in service encounters", *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 141-152.
- Yeh, C.-W. (2015), "Linking customer verbal aggression and service sabotage", *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, Vol. 25 No. 6, pp. 877-896.

**Corresponding author**

Paul G. Patterson can be contacted at: [p.patterson@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.patterson@unsw.edu.au)