CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS BOUNDARY SPANNER IN-STORE (BAKHALA): A SAUDI PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Those managing unit retails sectors in Saudi Arabia face the challenge of adapting to varied and often uncertain task environments. Unit retail sectors in Saudi Arabia are changing by increasing their linkages with the external environment to boost their sales and also to ensure viability in the current shifting environments, especially the Saudi vision 2030. Given the emerging research interest in the boundary spanning role played by expatriates in supporting unit retails adaptation which is as similar as international settings. This exploratory research article tries to explore the nature of the expatriate boundary role and to explore the conditions for individual effectiveness in the role. The objective was to examine the role of boundary spanner concerning language known, food habits, product familiarization, and cultural awareness & confidence to obtain the richest data possible, the study was based on primary data collected through structured questionnaires on a sample of 350 retail customers from two cities of Saudi, namely Riyadh and AlBaha. The sample was divided into 175 each.

The role of an expatriate in Saudi Arabia dates back to the time of the silk trade route; various people in business with their caravans would pass through Saudi Arabia bringing in the spices and musk from India, silk cookery and pickles from China and various other commodities. In the modern world, the flow of expatriates in huge numbers was in 1938 after the discovery of oil. Findings recommended that language known, food habits, product familiarization, and cultural awareness & confidence had a significant impact on boundary spanners and boundary spanner plays a significant role in increasing sales. Further interpersonal working relationships in the retail unit sector comprised a central dimension of the local as well as the expatriate boundary spanning role and were the cornerstones and enablers of other resource exchanges. Familiarity with the local context, in terms of the likes and dislikes of the local as well as the expatriate's customers are the expectations for the boundary role currently in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Boundary Spanning, Unit Retail Sectors, Saudi Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about boundary spanning it happens in those firms that are operating in international markets. But here in Saudi, the work of boundary spanning is everywhere from small retail units to the biggest MNC's. In today's competitive world of globalization, more and more organizations are increasing in size and scope. Many of these organizations depend on expatriates' workforce to work and for knowledge transfer. Research suggests that many of these enterprises, both public and private, encounter challenges operating in unfamiliar environments, including difficulties in dealing with foreign governments and local partners, managing local

staff, or in tailoring products and services to local tastes cultures, and business systems (Lord & Ranft, 2000).

Open systems theory indicates that under conditions of uncertainty, organizations adapt by increasing their linkages with the external environment to support the inward flow of information and to exert outward control over clients, suppliers, partners, and other organizations in their task environment (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Thompson, 1967).

Saudi Arabia is very young as a country with a total population of 28.7 million, of which 20 million were Saudi nationals and 8 million were foreigners. After the discovery of petrol in 1938 the Saudis began to build their countries' infrastructures with it came in the skilled workers from different countries. Most of the expatriates came in from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Srilanka, Burma, and the Philippines. There are more from other countries, but these have a sizable population in Saudi Arabia. With the flow of expatriates came in the role of the boundary spanning. Williams (2002) Inter-organizational outlines of interference control the determination of multifaceted societal problems facing the UK and other countries. Strategic alliances, joint working arrangements, networks, partnerships, and many other forms of cooperation across sectoral and organizational boundaries presently flourish across the policy landscape. However, the homily is situated at an institutional and organizational level, and reasonably little care is given to the essential role of distinct actors in the management of inter-organizational relationships. Traditional speaking a boundary spanner is

"Individuals within an innovation system who have, or adopt, the role of linking the organization's internal networks with external sources of information."

Most of the major business of Saudi Arabia is owned by the Saudis themselves. On the ground level like the bakhala (a unit retails outlet) are owned by the expatriates. Williams (2011) Boundary spanners have a different role to play in handling the extremely dependent and collaborative fields that are intended to manage social care, and they assume this by organizing a variety of capabilities, braced by relevant knowledge, experience and personal qualities. The treasured role that boundary spanners play must be imitated in inappropriate investment in their training and development (Hult, 2011).

Mostly Indians Pakistanis and Burmese and Egypt. The owner of the unit retail outlet is mostly accompanied by a servant; both of them take care of this business. In some of the cases, the owner is the sole person to look after his bakhala. The bakhala owner has to play the role of boundary spanner for selling his goods to the numerous customers coming in and out of his bakhala. A unit retail outlet (Bakhala) consist of FMCG as it is around the world but the complexity is the owner has to know the various taste of the various expatriates coming to his bakhala and has to keep those products, example: if in his locality there are expats from India, Burma, Bangladesh and off course the Saudis he has to maintain the likes of all these customers. For selling his product, he has to be innovative and also know the basics of the languages, customs, and celebration and the eating habits of the various expatriates coming from different countries plus the language, customs and celebrations and the eating habits of the Saudis. Hashmi (2018), highlight the requirement to acclimate the religious organization's role as a boundary spanner and the methods they must be presented to the society's actual appearances. This can be attained by using suitable marketing tools and approaches; however, the discriminations of religion must be engaged in justification in order not to alter its faith values. Therefore to survive the competition these bakhala owners and the bakhala boys has to play the

role of boundary spanner in term of the various languages used by the expats plus their eating habits, their cultural, customs and celebrations (Adams, 1976).

Theoretical Background

Boundary spanning started at the movement the humans started interacting with. In ancient times traders were the ones who played the role of boundary spanner. The better he was in interacting with consumers, he was considered to be a good businessman. Leaders also play an important role as a boundary spanner. In various religion across the globe the prophets use to do the work of boundary spanners between the humans and God, In Greek mythology, Hermes was considered to be an emissary between humans and the gods.

Ursula & Anna (2016) in their research had improved the understanding of boundary spanning of expatriate managers namely by showing;

1. how MNC's mobility policies shape the social positioning of expatriate managers in the host country.
2. how in turn, the elite position created institutionally depends on the performance of expatriate managers.

The base of this empirical study was on German expatriate managers working in China and the US. Further, the research designates global mobility policies to intrude firmly into the personal day to day life of the expatriate managers by creating a distance between them from local communities of the host country

Sandmann et al. (2014) in his article has provided clarification of the core theoretical concepts and the expansion and testing process of the instrument. Recommendations are presented concerning appropriate issues of boundary spanning and simplification of boundary-spanning roles across a variety of prospective topics.

Ofstein (2013) in his study, investigated the role of boundary spanning within entrepreneurial firms with innovation and performance. The researcher has taken 3 objectives and investigated the effect on firms' innovativeness. The capacity of integrating the diversity of the firms depends on its level of innovativeness.

Williams (2011) The sole purpose of this research was to determine, the role and nature of boundary spanners, a devoted number of people works and function within cooperative boundaries to recognise the particular skills and capabilities that they exhibit; and to reflect on the strains and uncertainties that they face in their everyday work.
Boundary spanners have a significant part to play in handling the collaborative arenas that are intended to manage health and social care, and they assume this by arranging a range of proficiencies, braced by pertinent knowledge, experience, and personal characteristics. The valued role that boundary spanners play must be replicated in inappropriate investment in their training and development.

Levina & Vaast (2004) both have explored the issue by asking: How is IT used to span the boundaries in knowledge work? They have illustrated two boundary-spanning devices: boundary spanners and objects. Currently, the main perspective concentrates on boundary spanners' roles and on boundary objects' properties and considers boundaries as fixed. They have proposed a balancing outlook on boundary-spanning that emphases on boundaries themselves.

Cassiman & Veugelers (2002) has emphasized that fruitful innovation relies upon the growth and addition of new knowledge in the innovation procedure. A chunk of this knowledge

comes from outside of the firm. Many authors and researchers have recognized that external information is the main reason for the innovation and development of the firm.

Tyler & Stanley (2001) Ironically, while refining the quality of transactional service, the *"profound"* relationship interface has under-mined the association of the manager's role and caused confusion and resentment amid customers. The negative result is that customers have a more hostile, transactional approach to purchasing decisions. The banks need to cooperate between transactional and relational effort, and the *"deep"* multi-channel service delivery interface must have a revitalised relationship manager if banks are to recall their competitive advantage.

Noble & Jones (2006) their article presents the following on their study inspecting the roles and behaviors of boundary-spanning managers during the establishment of voluntary public-private partnerships (PPPs). It answers to the latest demands in the literature to chase research that includes the essential contribution of individual actors in the cooperative process, within the stage-specific context of partnerships. The study is positioned within the theoretical framework of organizational sense-making. Using a stranded methodology of data collection, coding, and analysis within ten Australian and UK PPPs, the study defines a four-stage evolutionary establishment process of PPPs. Boundary-spanning managers employ numerous approaches to overcome such challenges within each precise phase, thus guaranteeing the advanced development of the PPP. These foci, encounters, and policies are recognized and investigated in the article.

Robertson (1995) performance is influenced by the condition in which it occurs, it is contended that penalties of engaging in boundary-spanning activity are likely to reduce the influence of the inside work setting on boundary spanners' work behavior. To assess this evidence, four hypotheses were suggested regarding the extenuating effects of boundary-spanning activity on the relationship between three work setting features and a set of behaviors. Findings indicate that this relationship is weaker among spanners than among other organizational members for one of the three work-setting variables

Tushman & Scanlan (1981) A study of different apparatuses by which information is introduced into organizations designate that informational boundary spanning is achieved only by those persons who are well associated internally and externally. These key persons are designated as technically knowledgeable in their unit and have personal characteristics to link their unit successfully to outside areas.

Objectives

Examining the role of Boundary Spanners in relation to Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, and Cultural Awareness & Confidence.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H_0) there is no occurrence of the relationship between the Independent variables and the Dependent variable

METHODOLOGY

Since the boundary spanning role has rarely been examined in the international Scenario, and the first in Saudi Arabia, this research is exploratory. In order to obtain the richest data

possible, the research strategy is a case study. This study was conducted to analyze the difficulties or the problems faced by the boundary spanners working in the unit retail outlets. Further, this study is based on primary data collected through structured questionnaires on a sample of 350 retail customers. The sample was divided into 175 each from both the cities of Riyadh and AlBaha. The sample size was limited to 350 due to shortage of time and money. The survey was conducted during the first half of 2019, in the cities of Riyadh and AlBaha. The questions mainly depend on the personal interaction model.

Results and Discussions

For testing the research Hypothesis, whether there is a linear relationship between the Dependent Variable, i.e., Overall Boundary Spanners and the Predictors, Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, Cultural Awareness, Confidence in our multiple linear regression model. The Step-wise Method is used to run the multiple linear regression to the produced model, where 350 respondents were taken for the analysis. Model Summary gives details of the overall correlation between the variables left in the models and the dependent variable.

The Table 1 in the results output Model Summary and overall fit statistics tells us the variables the relationship between Overall Boundary Spanners and the Predictors, Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, Cultural Awareness, Confidence defined the multiple correlation coefficient is 0.978 which is a very high degree of positive correlation. We found that the adjusted R^2 of our model is 0.957 with the R^2 = 95.7. With model 5 below, some 95.7 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained using the independent variables.

Table 1 DISPLAY THE MODEL SUMMARY STATISTICS OF SELECTED VARIABLES									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.672[a]	0.452	0.450	0.20304	0.452	287.117	1	348	0.000
2	0.841[b]	0.707	0.705	0.14867	0.255	302.048	1	347	0.000
3	0.938[c]	0.879	0.878	0.09566	0.172	492.245	1	346	0.000
4	0.974[d]	0.948	0.948	0.06263	0.069	462.198	1	345	0.000
5	0.978[e]	0.957	0.957	0.05707	0.009	71.418	1	344	0.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits									
c. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization									
d. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, Cultural Awareness									
e. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, Cultural Awareness, Confidence									
f. Dependent Variable: Overall Boundary Spanners									

Source: Output SPSS 20

The next output Table 2 is the F-test. The multiple linear regression's F-test has the null hypothesis that the model explains zero variance in the dependent variable (in other words, R^2 = 0). The F-test is highly significant; thus, we can assume that the model explains a significant amount of the variance in the Percentage share of Overall Boundary Spanners.

Table 2	SHOWS THE ANOVA STATISTICS OF SELECTED VARIABLES					
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	11.836	1	11.836	287.117	0.000[b]
	Residual	14.346	348	0.041		
	Total	26.182	349			
2	Regression	18.513	2	9.256	418.772	0.000[c]
	Residual	7.670	347	0.022		
	Total	26.182	349			
3	Regression	23.017	3	7.672	838.497	0.000[d]
	Residual	3.166	346	0.009		
	Total	26.182	349			
4	Regression	24.829	4	6.207	1582.674	0.000[e]
	Residual	1.353	345	0.004		
	Total	26.182	349			
5	Regression	25.062	5	5.012	1538.853	0.000[f]
	Residual	1.120	344	0.003		
	Total	26.182	349			
a. Dependent Variable: Overall Boundary Spanners						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits						
d. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization						
e. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, Cultural Awareness						
f. Predictors: (Constant), Language Known, Food Habits, Product Familiarization, Cultural Awareness, Confidence						

Source: Output SPSS 20

The next table shows the multiple linear regression estimates, including the intercept and the significance levels. In Table 3, the output Coefficients, showing the multiple linear regression equation coefficients for the various model variables. The *"B"* values are the coefficients for each variable, that is, they are the value which the variable's data should be multiplied by in the final linear equation we might use to predict long term illness with. The *"Constant"* is the intercept equivalent in the equation (i.e. the equation would be y (Overall Boundary Spanners) = 3.340 + (X1 x 0.205) + (X2 x 0.217) + (X3 x 0.199) + (X4 x 0.199) +(X5 x 0.092). The Significance (Sig.) figures should be 0.05 or below to be significant at 95 percent. A value of 0.000 means the figure is too small for three decimal place representation.

Table 3	EXHIBITS THE COEFFICIENTS STATISTICS OF SELECTED VARIABLES						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	**Collinearity Statistics**	
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Tolerance**	**VIF**
1	(Constant)	3.340	0.053		63.363	0.000		
	Language Known	0.213	0.013	0.672	16.945	0.000	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	2.244	0.074		30.326	0.000		
	Language Known	0.197	0.009	0.621	21.250	0.000	0.990	1.010
	Food Habits	0.285	0.016	0.508	17.380	0.000	0.990	1.010
3	(Constant)	1.388	0.061		22.649	0.000		
	Language Known	0.209	0.006	0.661	35.018	0.000	0.980	1.020
	Food Habits	0.255	0.011	0.454	23.985	0.000	0.974	1.027

Model	Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	Product Familiarization	0.228	0.010	0.420	22.187	0.000	0.977	1.023
4	(Constant)	0.740	0.050		14.759	0.000		
	Language Known	0.204	0.004	0.645	52.038	0.000	0.977	1.024
	Food Habits	0.223	0.007	0.398	31.353	0.000	0.932	1.074
	Product Familiarization	0.200	0.007	0.368	29.185	0.000	0.942	1.062
	Cultural Awareness	0.203	0.009	0.276	21.499	0.000	0.909	1.100
5	(Constant)	0.389	0.062		6.289	0.000		
	Language Known	0.205	0.004	0.646	57.219	0.000	0.976	1.024
	Food Habits	0.217	0.007	0.387	33.288	0.000	0.921	1.086
	Product Familiarization	0.199	0.006	0.367	31.895	0.000	0.942	1.062
	Cultural Awareness	0.199	0.009	0.271	23.105	0.000	0.907	1.103
	Confidence	0.092	0.011	0.095	8.451	0.000	0.981	1.020
a. Dependent Variable: Overall Boundary Spanners								

Source: Output SPSS 20

In multiple linear regression analysis, we found a significant intercept and highly significant Language Known (0.205), Food Habits (0.217), Product Familiarization (0.199), Cultural Awareness (0.199), Confidence (0.092) coefficient, which we can interpret as: for every 1-unit increase in Independent variables we will see beta change independent variable.

Dependent Variable: Overall Boundary Spanners(Y)

Predictors: Language Known(X^1), Food Habits(X^2), Product Familiarization(X^3), Cultural Awareness(X^4), Confidence (X^5)

Model Produced

$$Y = \alpha + \beta 1 X^1 + \beta 2 X^2 + \beta 3 X^3 + \beta 4 X^4 + \beta 5 X^5$$

Overall Boundary Spanners (Y) = Constant (α) + β1 (Language Known) + β2 (Food Habits) + β3 (Product Familiarization) + β4 (Cultural Awareness) + β5 (Confidence)

Y (Overall Boundary Spanners) = 3.340 + Language Known (.205) + Food Habits (0.217) + Product Familiarization (0.199) + Cultural Awareness (0.199) + Confidence (0.092).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that language is known, food habits, product familiarization, cultural awareness, and confidence have a significant impact on boundary spanners. There are number of factors that effects the unit retail sectors, but particularly in Saudi Arabia, boundary spanners play a significant role in increasing the sales, however, the expatriates are working in large numbers here. The output depicts the multiple models but model 5 is best fit to show the impact of independent variables on dependent variables; all the value was found to be significant.

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