

# Dimensionality of Frontline Employee Friendliness in Service Encounters

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## **Dimensionality of Frontline Employee Friendliness in Service Encounters**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This article explores four dimensions of frontline employee (FLE) friendliness (humorous, informal, conversational, and approachable) to propose a relevant measurement instrument of the influence of FLE friendliness on relationship quality and perceived value, as well as its indirect influence on repatronage intentions. Recent studies suggest FLE friendliness, defined as a tendency to convey an affective customer–employee social interaction, is a critical determinant of relationship marketing, but few scholars agree on its dimensionality. This study seeks a deeper understanding of FLE friendliness by investigating its different dimensions in various service contexts.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The mixed method design, including both qualitative and quantitative research, offers a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of FLE friendliness.

**Findings:** The content analysis suggests FLE friendliness is multidimensional and composed of humorous, informal, conversational, and approachable behaviors. The results of a quantitative survey, conducted across four service contexts, validate this four-factor model. A second quantitative survey across two service contexts reveals the weights and relative importance of the dimensions, and then a third quantitative survey across three service contexts confirms that FLE friendliness is a significant driver of relationship quality, perceived value, and repatronage intentions (indirectly).

**Originality/value:** This study contributes to relationship marketing literature by strengthening the conceptual foundations of FLE friendliness, clarifying the dimensionality of the construct, developing a comprehensive measurement instrument, and extending previous research on customer–employee interactions.

**Keywords:** Frontline employee, friendliness, customer–employee interaction, relationship quality

**Paper type:** Research paper

## **Introduction**

Frontline employee (FLE) friendliness receives renewed awareness in services marketing literature (Houston *et al.*, 2018), seemingly because friendly FLEs enable service firms to create closer customer–employee interactions. That is, during service encounters, frontline employees are expected to exhibit positive emotional displays, such as friendliness (Yu and Ngan, 2019), which then emerges as a determinant of service relationship quality, especially when measured as customer satisfaction (Engel *et al.*, 2013; Ho, 2012; Keh *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2016) or commitment (Ahn *et al.*, 2014; Gruber *et al.*, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2008). Successful service firms devote considerable resources to training their FLEs to exhibit friendly behaviors, such as requiring them to greet, thank, and smile in interactions with customers (Taylor, 2017).

As an affective and social component of the customer experience (Grandey *et al.*, 2005b), FLE friendliness is particularly valuable, because a human aspect is central to these interactions, due to the intangible nature of services (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Friendliness implies that FLEs exhibit warm emotions that are socially desired by customers (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a), thereby prompting interpersonal, close relationships (Dagger *et al.*, 2013). For example, customers typically expect waiters to smile, hairdressers to make conversation and ask personal questions, and hotel clerks to look approachable and welcoming, so friendly behaviors constitute norms in such service contexts (Neghina *et al.*, 2017). However, increasing evidence also suggests that customers do not always welcome friendliness or even prefer distant interactions. For example, Uber offers a “quiet option” in its app for riders who wish to avoid chatting with drivers (Lekach, 2019). In a similar vein, a London-based hair salon also offers the option of silent haircuts for customers (Randall, 2019). Thus, it is critical for FLEs to assess the level of friendliness that their customers prefer.

Prior literature identifies several features of FLE friendliness, such as service with a smile (Barger and Grandey, 2006), informal speech (Goodwin and Frame, 1989), and humor (Winsted,

1997). For example, Gremler and Gwinner (2008) show that conversations in face-to-face retail encounters encourage enjoyable customer interactions and foster closer business relationships. Yet Andersson *et al.* (2016) find that banking customers often prefer business-like interactions and regard FLEs using humor as less competent. These mixed results highlight the need to acknowledge the service context when predicting the influence of FLE friendliness on relationship quality.

Furthermore, most studies examine only one dimension of FLE friendliness and conceptualize it as unidimensional (e.g., Ahn *et al.*, 2014; Butcher and Heffernan, 2006; Lin and Hsieh, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2016), which cannot offer an adequate assessment of the scope of the multidimensional construct or its relationships with related constructs such as relationship quality. Firms may ask employees to be friendly (Yu and Ngan, 2019), but no conclusive evidence specifies the relative importance of the different dimensions of FLE friendliness, particularly across service contexts.

In response to these concerns, this study poses and investigates five research questions:

(1) What are the underlying dimensions of FLE friendliness? (2) Which dimension has the strongest influence on FLE friendliness? (3) What impact does FLE friendliness have on relationship quality and other outcome variables, such as perceived value and repatronage intentions? (4) Can a newly proposed measure of FLE friendliness achieve adequate discriminant validity, relative to similar concepts such as employee rapport? (5) Is the proposed measurement instrument generalizable across service settings?

Using a qualitative study, this research conceptualizes FLE friendliness as a four-dimensional construct comprised of four behaviors—humorous, informal, conversational, and approachable—that contribute to FLE friendliness. A quantitative survey offers an empirical validation of the multidimensional conceptualization, revealing the differential impact of each dimension on FLE friendliness across two service contexts (bar and hair care). The findings of

another investigation establish some implications for practice, by revealing the impact of FLE friendliness on relationship quality (customer satisfaction, commitment, and trust) and indirectly on repatronage intentions across three service contexts: banking, ridesharing, and public transportation. When developing training manuals and recruitment policies, service providers should take multiple FLE behaviors into consideration, according to the specific service context.

The next section thus outlines the conceptual domain of FLE friendliness. The description of the mixed-method research methodology process explains the data collection procedure, as well as the results. These findings inform the discussion of the different dimensions of FLE friendliness and their relative importance, as well as the impact of FLE friendliness on relationship quality. Finally, this article concludes with a discussion of implications for both academics and service providers.

## **Literature Review**

In relationship marketing literature, some studies focus on defining the construct of friendliness; others are interested in understanding its impact on key relational outcomes. Some scholars use the term FLE friendliness without delineating what it represents conceptually, and others clarify the content of the construct domain without empirically testing its effects. These discrepancies have resulted in inconsistencies in the theoretical construct and its measures.

### *Frontline Employee Friendliness*

Employee friendliness is an important component of customers' service encounter evaluations (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008). Social competencies like friendliness generate positive emotional experiences (Engel *et al.*, 2013) and enhance interpersonal outcomes (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Empirical research has addressed the impact of perceived FLE friendliness on customers' service quality perceptions, satisfaction, and repatronage behaviors (Bitner *et al.*, 1990; Shaw Brown and Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994; Tsai and Huang, 2002).

In a general sense, FLE friendliness refers to the warm, cheerful attitude and personal approachability of a frontline employee while interacting with a customer (Johnston, 1997; Liu *et al.*, 2016), beyond what is perceived as normative for a given context (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a). In psychology domains, friendliness is a dispositional tendency that comprises certain interpersonal behaviors that imply kindness, cordiality, or goodwill (Reisman, 1984). It usually is operationalized with verbal and nonverbal behaviors, such as smiling, greeting, thanking, and making eye contact (Liu *et al.*, 2016; Luong, 2005), that help customers feel comfortable and welcome (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a; Johnston, 1997; Liu *et al.*, 2016).

In contrast, customers tend to feel distressed if FLE friendliness is lacking (Luong, 2005), likely because friendly displays are expected in service encounters (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a). Several studies note the important role of FLEs for improving service relationship quality. Friendliness can be pivotal to customer–employee interactions (Palmatier *et al.*, 2006), so many firms urge employees to display favorable emotions, to maximize customer evaluations of service quality (Hur *et al.*, 2015; Johnston, 1997). For FLEs, the most common type of emotional display is friendliness (Luong, 2005), which represents a tactic that can increase individualization and move the encounter from a formal business transaction to a personal interaction (Dagger *et al.*, 2013; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987). Friendly behaviors also create opportunities for the FLE to connect and build strong social interactions with customers (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006), emphasize relational benefits, and satisfy customers’ emotional needs (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Such social benefits then can create more satisfaction and commitment (Shamdasani and Balakrishnan, 2000).

Friendly displays also have been linked to relationship quality drivers, such as satisfaction and commitment (Ahn *et al.*, 2014; Engel *et al.*, 2013; Grandey *et al.*, 2005a; Johnston, 1997; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987; Tsai and Huang, 2002). To ensure a positive experience and retain customers, FLEs should aim at relationship building (Dagger *et al.*, 2013), which they can do by

exhibiting friendly behaviors (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Ahn *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that FLE friendliness affects both customers' commitment and repatronage, to the benefit of the firm (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, FLE friendliness can enhance social regard, purchase intentions, and positive word-of-mouth communications, and it moderates the effect of waiting time on customer satisfaction (Butcher and Heffernan, 2006; Hurley, 1998; Ostrom and Iacobucci, 1995).

## **Conceptual Background**

### *Distinction from Other Concepts*

Some ambiguity remains regarding the overlap of friendliness with other variables, such as authenticity (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006), empathy (Goodwin and Gremler, 1996), rapport (Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990), courtesy (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985), and helpfulness (Keh *et al.*, 2013). FLE friendliness relates closely to behavioral aspects of interaction quality (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Gazzoli *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, it is necessary to distinguish these closely related concepts to advance the field.

*Authenticity.* Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2006) examine employees' authenticity during service encounters, which they define as employees' displays of natural and genuine emotional behaviors, rather than fulfilling a role. Grandey *et al.* (2005a) also suggest that authenticity drives FLEs' friendly behaviors, and Turel *et al.* (2013) and Lechner and Paul (2019) show that employee behaviors that are congruent with the firm's image increase perceived friendliness. In contrast, expressing faked emotions is perceived as inauthentic and dishonest (Grandey, 2000, 2003). In repeated service interactions, customers likely detect inauthentic displays, which can lead to negative reactions (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006) and reduced customer satisfaction (Groth *et al.*, 2009).

*Empathy.* Goodwin and Gremler (1996) define empathy as employees' capacity to understand or feel what customers are experiencing, such that they place themselves in others'

position, in a cognitive sense (Bagozzi and Moore, 1994), as when a doctor asks literally how a patient is feeling to support a functional delivery of the service. In a service setting, empathy thus pertains to the core service delivery process, as a form of functional quality; friendliness instead implies considerations of customers' perspectives, unrelated to the service, as a more social behavior (Goodwin and Gremler, 1996). As a signal of social quality, friendliness involves behaviors that are non-essential to the delivery process (Goodwin and Gremler, 1996; Gwinner *et al.*, 1998), as when a hairdresser asks more figuratively about how the customer is doing, exhibiting a desire to build an interpersonal relationship. As Gwinner *et al.* (1998) suggest, friendly encounters thus appear supplemental to the core service.

*Rapport.* Customer–employee rapport is a combination of “enjoyable interactions” and “personal connection” between parties (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000), characterized by the presence of mutual attentiveness (Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990). Rapport increases customer satisfaction and repatronage intentions, and it decreases negative word of mouth (DeWitt and Brady, 2003). Although rapport enhances relationship building, which indicates some overlap with aspects of FLE friendliness (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008), it also requires mutual willingness and behaviors by the two parties, whereas reciprocity and customer participation are not necessary for an FLE to exhibit friendliness.

*Courtesy.* Friendliness can be mistaken for courtesy, which is one of the initial service quality determinants in Parasuraman *et al.*'s (1985) model. According to these authors, courtesy involves politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness. Yet Goodwin and Smith (1990) argue that friendliness and courtesy are two distinct concepts, such that the former involves some informality and a personal relationship, whereas the latter implies a respectful, polite reserve that customers may expect from frontline employees. To illustrate, a hotel associate saying, “Good

afternoon sir, how can I help you?” is courteous, distant, and formal; a waiter saying, “Hey buddy, same as usual?” reflects friendliness with informal manners.

*Helpfulness.* Helpfulness refers to the extent to which FLEs provide assistance and indicate a willingness to serve customers (Lemke *et al.*, 2011). Both friendliness and helpfulness are similar, in that they both emerge in customer–employee interactions and are mutually important for determining customer satisfaction. However, FLE helpfulness is a competence attribute in the service model, whereas FLE friendliness occurs on the relationship level (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Helpfulness reflects not just the willingness but also the ability to help. That is, helpfulness is distinct from FLE friendliness in requiring the competency to complete the task, which is not required from the friendliness (Keh *et al.*, 2013).

#### *Dimensions of Frontline Employee Friendliness*

Having laid out the key differences between FLE behaviors and other related constructs, the discussion can turn to the unique dimensions of friendliness. Various scholars use the term FLE friendliness without providing a clear definition of it; Table I presents a summary.

*Humorous* behaviors denote an FLE’s tendency to induce laughter and amusement in conversations (Söderlund *et al.*, 2017). Several studies identify humor as a critical determinant of customers’ service evaluations, in that humorous FLEs can increase customer satisfaction (van Dolen *et al.*, 2008). Ryoo (2005) specifically stresses the importance of making jokes and laughing to develop momentary bonds during service interactions. The use of humor also evokes a personal touch that makes customers feel special (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008). Furthermore, humor can foster interpersonal relationships for a broad range of service contexts, regardless of the length or frequency of interactions. However, Ryoo (2005) cautions that customers may have different expectations about humorous FLE behaviors, and not all customers appreciate it. For example, some customers perceive humor and jokes as disrespectful, rude, or signals of inadequate service

(Mathies *et al.*, 2016; Söderlund and Oikarinen, 2018).

*Informal* behaviors imply that FLEs act and speak casually, thereby establishing a friendly personal connection (Winsted, 1999). As Butcher *et al.* (2002) point out, informality seems inherent to FLE friendliness, and these informal behaviors, such as addressing customers by their first name, influence customers' service quality perceptions and satisfaction (Goodwin and Smith, 1990). The degree of desired informality appears to vary with the levels of physical contact during the interaction, service frequency, and social status (Goodwin and Smith, 1990). According to Winsted (1999), customers expect more informality from waiters than from doctors; in some service contexts, higher status might increase customers' desire for formality over informality (Furrer *et al.*, 2000; Winsted, 1999).

*Conversational* behaviors feature social talk and questions about non-essential, personal information (Joarder *et al.*, 2017). A FLE might go the extra mile and ask customers for personal details about their lives, moving the business relationship to a personal level rather than focusing strictly on providing the core service (Jacobs *et al.*, 2001). Andersson *et al.* (2016) find that service providers increasingly compel FLEs to build customer relationships by self-disclosing information about themselves too. Many FLEs already engage in social talk that is unrelated to the core service, such as weather conditions or personal interests, which creates more enjoyable, intimate interactions (Ryoo, 2005). Previous literature generally supports the positive effect of conversational behaviors on customer satisfaction and commitment, though some studies report a non-significant (Macintosh, 2009; Wulf *et al.*, 2001) or negative (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987) impact, especially if the behaviors seem intrusive or make the FLE appear less competent (Jacobs *et al.*, 2001).

Finally, *approachable* behaviors ease contact with the FLE, based on positive emotional displays that signal warmth (Andrzejewski and Mooney, 2016). Shaw Brown and Sulzer-Azaroff

(1994) suggest that approachability is a key dimension of FLE friendliness, in that it makes customers feel welcome. Cheerful behaviors, smiling, and greetings facilitate out-of-the ordinary service encounters (Gabriel *et al.*, 2015) and intimate rapport (Keh *et al.*, 2013). Empirical studies on “service with a smile” also indicate that FLEs’ positive emotional displays enhance satisfaction and trust (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a; Houston *et al.*, 2018). Yet this notion of service with a smile also might reflect or depend on the context (Yu and Ngan, 2019).

[Insert Table I about here]

### *Differences Across Service Contexts*

The relative importance of the different dimensions of FLE friendliness might vary across service contexts. For example, Ostrom and Iacobucci (1995) suggest that the various dimensions of FLE friendliness are more important for experience-based (vs. credence-based) services. Mixed findings also suggest that the dimensions of FLE friendliness may vary across service contexts.

In particular, FLEs’ role is critical for managing service customer experiences, because they function as the interface between customers and the firm and, in this sense, represent the face of the company (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). This function is heightened in service contexts characterized by high levels of interpersonal contact (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a). As Winsted (1999) shows, friendliness is more important in restaurant settings, than in healthcare contexts, where patients focus on professionalism. Friendly behaviors by FLEs offer crucial cues to evaluate relationship quality, but they are especially salient in highly tangible service contexts such as restaurants (Grandey *et al.*, 2005a), public transportation (Engel *et al.*, 2013), hair care (Goodwin and Smith, 1990), and banking (Liu *et al.*, 2016), where FLEs must express friendly behaviors to create a positive atmosphere and enhance relationship quality (Goodwin and Smith, 1990; Tsai and Huang, 2002).

## Measures of Frontline Employee Friendliness

Table II details empirical research that measures FLE friendliness. Many empirical studies adopt unidimensional scales (e.g., Ahn *et al.*, 2014; Lin and Hsieh, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2016) or single-item measures (e.g., Butcher and Heffernan, 2006). Some studies that manipulate friendliness (e.g., Engel *et al.*, 2013; Hurley, 1998) also measure it with simple manipulation checks. Several issues might arise from such simplified measures. Because FLE friendliness is a complex construct, it cannot be covered fully by a single-item measure; rather, several dimensions appear necessary to address its full scope, as explicated in a previous section. Construct deficiency (i.e., lacking important facets) is the most obvious concern associated with simple measures, which cannot capture all the FLE friendliness dimensions (El Akremi *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, examining a single dimension of a multidimensional construct cannot offer an adequate assessment of the relationships of the construct with related variables.

[Insert Table II about here]

For example, consider Yan's (2014) measurement instrument, which pertains to a single service context (i.e., banking), a methodological development that restricts its generalizability to other contexts. It comprises seven items adapted from Gremler and Gwinner (2000), Keh *et al.* (2013), and Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) that mainly capture FLEs' personal approachability. However, limiting the operationalization of FLE friendliness to positive emotional displays is not sufficient to capture its complexity and multidimensional nature (Tsai and Huang, 2002). That is, Yan's (2014) contribution represents a step toward a better operationalization of FLE friendliness but still ignores several dimensions, such as informal or humorous FLEs behaviors. Moreover, the unidimensional scale makes the questionable assumption that all the dimensions have the same weight and importance across service contexts. Employing a single item to measure a complex construct also provides insufficient guidance, reliability, validity, and predictive ability (Burnham

*et al.*, 2003).

Overall then, there is a lack of studies that use comprehensive measurements to assess customers' reactions to different facets of friendly behaviors of FLEs and compare their relative effects in various service contexts. Such limitations highlight the need for a comprehensive conceptualization of FLE friendliness to provide researchers and managers with clear guidelines for encouraging friendly behaviors. Ensuring its application to multiple service contexts also requires a redefinition of an appropriate instrument for measuring FLE friendliness that can offer a more meaningful assessment of the broad construct and help resolve some conflicting results.

## **Methods and Results**

### *Mixed Method Design*

The structured scale development process reflects previous research (e.g., Delcourt *et al.*, 2016; Karpen *et al.*, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2019) and established guidelines (e.g., Churchill, 1979; Diamantopoulos, 2005; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003) (Figure 1). It consists of a mixed method design, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection phases. Qualitative data provide valuable insights to explore the key constructs; quantitative data help validate the measurement instrument.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

### *Stage 1: Item Generation*

To determine which dimensions to retain, an extended literature review identified the most common dimensions. A qualitative study then explores customers' experiences with FLEs in service sectors to identify dimensions that they care about when interacting with FLEs. The item generation process began with a series of 50 semi-structured online interviews, conducted in French and in English with diverse customers and across various service contexts (Hewson, 2017). Online rather than face-to-face interviews were deemed preferable, to gain access to a diverse range of participants who then could respond flexibly (Parasuraman and Colby, 2015) to a sequence of

open-ended questions, asking them to describe a particularly friendly, recent interaction with an FLE in the service context of their choice (see Appendix A). After describing the interaction, participants indicated how they felt during and after the encounter. They represent various educational backgrounds and geographical regions, with ages ranging from 27 to 62 years (mean of 34 years), and 64% were women.

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed manually to develop an initial list of items that represent FLE friendliness. A content analysis (Point and Fourboul, 2006) corroborates the existence of a multidimensional structure of the friendliness construct (Table III); in particular, four categories of friendly behaviors emerged as sources of value during customers' interactions. In each category, FLE friendliness can lead to positive outcomes of the customer experience, but it also might prompt negative impacts if respondents perceive the friendliness as misplaced. An analysis of the verbatim transcriptions of the online interviews, combined with a review of items from prior literature, produced an initial pool of 60 items.

[Insert Table III about here]

Guided by these findings, FLE friendliness is defined for this study as personal characteristics associated with an enjoyable customer–employee interaction. It refers to nice, personable, and affective behaviors of the frontline employee that help the customer feel comfortable, at ease, and welcome during the encounter. Four dimensions—humorous, informal, conversational, and approachable behaviors—contribute to FLE friendliness. They can be operationalized with items that reflect both verbal cues, such as joking, greeting, thanking the customer, and engaging in small talk, and nonverbal behaviors, including smiling, laughing, and making eye contact.

### *Stage 2: Item Purification*

This stage involved an item-sorting task (Hardesty and Bearden, 2004). Eight trained coders

(graduate students in marketing) grouped items according to the different dimensions of FLE friendliness (Howard and Melloy, 2016). Each coder had access to 30 randomly selected items; coding all 60 items may have been excessive (Brace, 2008). The coders freely assigned each item to one of the four categories. Items that were not categorized were removed, which resulted in a subset of 48 items.

### *Stage 3: Item Evaluation*

Two methods assessed face and content validity. First, nine research methodology and services marketing experts rated the appropriateness of each item (Delcourt *et al.*, 2016), to indicate if it was representative of the dimension it was expected to measure (1 = “not representative,” 2 = “somewhat representative,” 3 = “clearly representative”) (Hardesty and Bearden, 2004). The 17 items in Table IV achieved the highest summed scores per dimension. Second, to evaluate the managerial relevance of the items, 22 actual FLEs participated in one-on-one interviews and indicated if the selected items represented behaviors they display to signal their friendliness (Appendix B). The results specify that some items pertaining to humor and jokes are more relevant in leisure contexts (restaurants, entertainment), though they also are used by insurance or banking service FLEs. Items related to discussing private topics appear polarizing, depending on the respondents’ personality traits and encounter length, though they are not more or less relevant in different contexts. The use of informal behaviors seemingly is based primarily on job status. Behaviors such as smiling and greeting are noted in all service settings; eye contact is less frequently mentioned. Overall, these results indicate satisfactory face validity for all 17 items.

### *Stage 4: Factor Development*

To test the proposed model, a link to an online questionnaire, using Sondage Online, was sent to 3,500 students and non-faculty staff of a Swiss university, seeking to ensure representation of all age categories. The 760 returned questionnaires represent a satisfactory response rate of 21.7%

(Deutskens *et al.*, 2004). To ensure the generalizability of the measures, the collected data refer to four service contexts: bar, restaurant, hotel, and hair care, as frequently used in prior literature (e.g., Ahn *et al.*, 2014; Gabriel *et al.*, 2015; Grandey *et al.*, 2005a; Houston *et al.*, 2018). They each require substantial levels of customer–employee interaction (Lovelock, 1983). Respondents completed the survey in reference to a recent encounter (within the past month) they had with a friendly FLE, in the context of their choice. Respondents who could not recall any friendly encounters in these four settings could choose “none of the above” and stop participating in the survey. After deleting questionnaires with more than 10% missing values, 714 usable questionnaires remained (bar  $n = 210$ , restaurant  $n = 126$ , hotel  $n = 111$ , hair care  $n = 267$ ). The average age of the respondents is 25 years, and 65% are women. Respondents rated the 17 FLE friendliness items using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 7 = “totally agree.” The items were displayed in a random order to minimize response bias and halo effects (El Akremi *et al.*, 2018).

An exploratory factor analysis with Promax rotation was performed. All variables were tested with principal component analysis. Items with average item-to-total correlations of less than .50 were removed (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), as were items with cross-loadings greater than .30 (Ang *et al.*, 2007). This process resulted in the removal of four items (Table IV). After these deletions, the statistically significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity ( $\chi^2 = 5386.28$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value (.82) indicate the overall factor solution is adequate (Osborne, 2014).

[Insert Table IV about here]

The analyses resulted in 13 items reflecting the four dimensions of FLE friendliness: 3 items measuring humorous behaviors, 3 items for informal behaviors, 3 items for conversational behaviors, and 4 items for approachable behaviors. The eigenvalues from the unrotated factor solution and scree plot indicate a four-factor solution corresponding with the a priori specified

dimensions. The 13 items explain 78% of the total variation in the data. The results also indicate high levels of reliability, in that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients are greater than .70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Next, a separate exploratory factor analysis for each service context revealed a stable factor structure that indicates high internal consistency across the four contexts (Table V). These consistent patterns, in both magnitude and relative order across service contexts, support the validity of the measure.

[Insert Table V about here]

#### *Stage 5: Factor Validation*

A second quantitative study used a Qualtrics panel to recruit participants from France, in two service contexts (bar and hair care), resulting in 322 usable questionnaires. Participants were randomly assigned to either context (bar  $n = 159$ ; hair care  $n = 163$ ) and asked to rate their most recent encounter with a FLE. The quota sampling procedure ensured six groups, roughly equivalent in age and gender. Participants rated the 13 items retained in Stage 4.

The two service categories of bars and hair care both feature high levels of customer–employee interactions but differ notably in the content of those interactions (Winsted, 1999). In general, hairdressers have longer-term relationships with their customers, whereas bartenders often engage in one-time encounters. Communications also differ in length and complexity, such that hairdressers have more time for chatting, whereas bartenders tend to have brief conversations with guests. As such, these two service contexts are appropriate for cross-service comparisons.

The results of a confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS 26, reveal that the initial measurement model fits the data well (Hu and Bentler, 1999), ( $\chi^2_{(58)} = 130.6, p = .000$ , confirmatory fit index [CFI] = .96, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .06 [90% confidence interval (CI): .04; .07], and square root mean residual [SRMR] = .03). In further analyses of the

levels of reliability and validity, in support of convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each dimension exceeds .50 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The square roots of the AVE all exceed the correlations between their respective dimensions. In terms of the reliability of each dimension, the composite reliability (CR) values are all greater than .70 (Hancock, 2001). These reliability and validity checks indicate the adequate unidimensionality of the dimensions proposed to measure FLE friendliness. The detailed CR and AVE values, together with the correlations, are in Table VI.

[Insert Table VI about here]

To check for collinearity, composite variables were created by computing individual factor scores (DiStefano *et al.*, 2009). The tolerance coefficients are all above .10, ranging from .20 to .70. The variance inflation factors (VIF) are below 5.00 for all dimensions, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2011). The VIF values range from 1.11 for approachable when humorous is the outcome variable to 2.20 for humorous when informal is the outcome variable. Overall, no multicollinearity problems emerge across the dimensions of FLE friendliness.

In addition, comparative analyses contrast the four-factor model with a three-factor and a single-factor solution (Delcourt *et al.*, 2016). In the three-factor solution, humorous and conversational behaviors merge; the four-factor solution outperforms it ( $\Delta\chi^2_{(3)} = 101.5, p < .001$ ). It also offers a better fit than the unidimensional model ( $\Delta\chi^2_{(6)} = 712.1, p < .001$ ). The  $\chi^2$  difference test provides evidence of the superiority of the four-factor model and additional support for a multidimensional conceptualization of FLE friendliness.

The applicability of the measurement instrument across the two service contexts was examined by computing the series of invariance tests proposed by Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998). This process tests for configural invariance and metric invariance sequentially. First, a

multigroup analysis across the two service categories reveals the adequate goodness of fit for a freely estimated model across both service contexts ( $\chi^2_{(116)} = 212.0, p < .001, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .05$  [90% CI: .04; .06], SRMR= .05), in support of configural equivalence. Second, the test of metric invariance compares the fit of a model in which the factor loadings were constrained to be equal against the fit of a freely estimated model. According to the chi-square difference, the measures do not differ across groups ( $\Delta\chi^2_{(9)} = 14.5, p = .105$ ), in support of metric invariance. This evidence for configural and metric invariance across samples suggests the factor loadings are equivalent. The results indicate that the measure of FLE friendliness is both valid and generalizable.

#### *Stage 6: Comparison of FLE Friendliness Dimensions with Closely Related Constructs*

To demonstrate the uniqueness of the FLE friendliness and clarify its conceptual discriminant validity, relative to similar constructs, a third quantitative study was conducted, in a hair care service context. A link to an online questionnaire, using Qualtrics, was posted on CloudResearch (Litman *et al.*, 2017) to recruit U.S. participants. After deleting incomplete responses, 352 usable questionnaires remained for the analysis, from a sample of respondents in which 54% are between 18 and 34 years of age, and 60% are men. The 13 items measuring FLE friendliness underwent a back-translation procedure from French to English to ensure the conceptual equivalence of the FLE measurement instrument (Brislin, 1986). This study compares FLE friendliness against five theoretically related constructs: rapport (11 items adapted from Gremler and Gwinner, (2008)), authenticity (3 items adapted from Grandey *et al.*, (2005a)), empathy (5 items adapted from Delcourt *et al.*, (2016)), courtesy (3 items adapted from Gotlieb *et al.*, (2004)), and helpfulness (5 items adapted from Liu *et al.*, (2016)). The measures are in Appendix C.

The check of the discriminant validity of the four dimensions of FLE friendliness and the two dimensions of rapport (enjoyable interaction and personal connection) reveals that the square

roots of the AVE of all four dimensions of FLE friendliness exceed their respective correlations with the personal connection dimension of rapport (Table VII). However, two of the dimensions of FLE friendliness (humorous and approachable) exhibit square roots of their AVE values that are smaller than their correlations with the enjoyable interaction dimension of rapport, suggesting a potential lack of discriminant validity.

[Insert Table VII about here]

To clarify these results and reconfirm discriminant validity, or its lack, the Venn diagram in Figure 2 was derived from the correlations between the constructs. As it shows, the surfaces of the circles are proportional to the AVEs of each construct; the overlaps between circles indicate their squared correlations. Although the construct domains of rapport and FLE friendliness thus overlap, they also differ. Whereas rapport shares some communalities with certain dimensions of FLE friendliness, it also partly lays outside this domain. The humorous and approachable behavior dimensions of friendliness are not covered by enjoyable interaction, from rapport. Furthermore, the informality dimension of friendliness mostly lays outside the rapport construct. Thus, this empirical validation indicates that even if rapport and FLE friendliness are highly related and share some common elements, they remain distinct constructs. Finally, FLE friendliness demonstrates discriminant validity relative to courtesy, helpfulness, empathy, and authenticity. The correlation coefficients and squared AVE values are in Appendix D.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

### *Stage 7: Evaluation of the Latent Structure*

Thus far, the results have established the dimensionality of FLE friendliness. The selection of a measurement model should be a conceptual choice, be theoretically driven, and relate to the conceptualization of the construct (Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2008). According to Karpen *et al.* (2015) and Ruiz *et al.* (2008), second-order models are theoretically meaningful when the construct is

complex, with different dimensions that represent distinct facets of the construct. In the case of FLE friendliness, a second-order construct is appropriate, because the construct is composed of multiple dimensions, and each depicts an important aspect of FLE friendliness.

In accordance with prior research (Jarvis *et al.*, 2003), this study features a Type II construct, consisting of a multidimensional, formative, second-order FLE friendliness construct that is composed of reflective, first-order items. A service provider might prioritize certain dimensions of FLE friendliness while achieving minimum levels on other dimensions, so the components of the second-order FLE friendliness construct do not necessarily covary (Karpen *et al.*, 2015). The second-order model is formative though, because changes in any dimension are likely to affect the overall influence of FLE friendliness. Moreover, dropping one of the four dimensions from the second-order FLE friendliness construct would significantly change its meaning (Karpen *et al.*, 2015). In contrast, though the items at the first-order level might capture slightly different aspects of each dimension, they indicate a relatively high degree of interchangeability. For example, the three items that constitute humorous behaviors are undistinguishable and interchangeable, because they mirror the dimension (Ruiz *et al.*, 2008). In other words, omitting an item from this dimension does not alter the domain it measures.

According to the requirements of a latent structure, all items in the specified constructs should share a similar nomological net (Gilliam and Voss, 2013). Relationship quality contains three principal dimensions: satisfaction, commitment, and trust (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002a). Although the effect of FLE friendliness on satisfaction and commitment has been studied, trust has received less attention (see Table II). In addition, previous research denotes the importance of FLE friendliness as a driver of perceived value, associated with customers' repatronage intentions (Bergel *et al.*, 2019). When the three outcome variables (relationship quality, perceived quality, and repatronage intention) are included in a structural model, perceived quality and repatronage

intention emerge as important measures of relationship performance (Palmatier *et al.*, 2006; Yim *et al.*, 2008).

The scales for the measurement model were tested for their psychometric properties (see Appendix E). As a conservative test of the effects of FLE friendliness dimensions on repatronage intention, the model also includes the gender match between customer and FLEs (four dummy variables), age match (three categorical variables: younger, about the same age, older than me), consumption frequency, and relationship length as control variables. The test of these relationships uses data collected through CloudResearch (Litman *et al.*, 2017), with a Qualtrics survey, in three non-hospitality service contexts that entail different levels of FLE friendliness: ridesharing (high-friendliness context), banking (mid-friendliness context), and public transportation (low-friendliness context). This test relies on 352 questionnaires from the banking context, 326 pertaining to ridesharing, and 356 in the public transportation context. Most respondents are between 18 and 34 years of age (54.4%), and 61.1% are men. A multistep process, using partial least squares (PLS) and Troiville *et al.*'s (2019) method, was conducted. The formative second-order construct was evaluated with SmartPLS 3, which enables the construction of reflective–formative hierarchical models through an extended repeated indicators approach (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2019). The second-order FLE friendliness construct thus is established through the repeated use of all items from the underlying dimensions.

From separate analyses for each service context, the path coefficients for each dimension in the second-order FLE friendliness construct emerge as follows: in the banking context, humorous ( $\beta = .39, p < .001$ ) and approachable ( $\beta = .37, p < .001$ ) behaviors are the most prevalent drivers of FLE friendliness, followed by informal behaviors ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ) and conversational behaviors ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ). For ridesharing, approachable behaviors ( $\beta = .43, p < .001$ ) are the

most prevalent dimension, closely followed by humorous ( $\beta = .39, p < .001$ ), conversational ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ), and informal ( $\beta = .20, p < .001$ ) behaviors. Public transportation mimics the pattern for ridesharing: approachable behaviors ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ), then humorous behaviors ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$ ) and conversational behaviors ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ), and finally informal behaviors ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ).

Finally, the structural model was evaluated. Gender match, age match, frequency, and relationship length had no direct or moderating effects. A good model should strive for both a simple structure and satisfactory accuracy; to decrease its complexity, non-significant control variables with only negligible influence thus were removed from the model (Astrom, 1979). The significance of the path coefficients was confirmed by a bootstrapping procedure using 5,000 replications (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). In the banking context, FLE friendliness drives commitment ( $\beta = .46, p < .001$ ), trust ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ), and perceived value ( $\beta = .40, p < .001$ ). Its total indirect effect on repatronage intentions also is significant ( $\beta = .47, p < .001$ ). However, FLE friendliness has no impact on satisfaction in this banking context ( $\beta = .17, p > .05$ ). In the ridesharing context though, FLE friendliness is a strong driver of satisfaction ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ), as well as commitment ( $\beta = .47, p < .001$ ), trust ( $\beta = .60, p < .001$ ), and perceived value ( $\beta = .53, p < .001$ ), and its total indirect effect on repatronage intentions is significant ( $\beta = .51, p < .001$ ). Finally, in public transportation contexts, FLE friendliness drives satisfaction ( $\beta = .72, p < .001$ ), commitment ( $\beta = .74, p < .001$ ), and trust ( $\beta = .68, p < .001$ ), with a significant total indirect effect on repatronage intentions ( $\beta = .68, p < .001$ ). However, FLE friendliness has no impact on perceived quality in this transportation context ( $\beta = .01, p > .05$ ). Table VIII contains the standardized estimates, which support the argument that FLE friendliness is positively associated with relationship quality drivers, perceived value, and repatronage intentions.

[Insert Table VIII about here]

*Stage 8: Superiority of the Multidimensional Measurement Instrument*

To assess the superiority of the proposed measurement instrument, relative to existing scales that measure FLE friendliness, a dominance analysis (Azen and Budescu, 2003) was conducted in the ridesharing context. Dominance analyses effectively compare the relative importance of highly correlated predictors in multiple regression models, as applied in service management (Kumar *et al.*, 2009), services marketing (Plouffe *et al.*, 2016), organizational behavior (Lo Presti *et al.*, 2019), and psychology (Rauthmann *et al.*, 2014) studies. Using a unidimensional scale from Liu *et al.* (2016) and a single-item scale from Butcher and Heffernan (2006), this study also considers the superiority of the multidimensional measurement instrument for satisfaction, commitment, and trust. Satisfaction and trust are attitudinal variables; commitment often serves as a proxy for behavioral measures (Evanschitzky *et al.*, 2006; Fullerton, 2003; Mottaz, 1989). The latent variable coefficients were extracted with SmartPLS3, which then can support a multiple regression in the RLM macro for SPSS 26 (Darlington and Hayes, 2017).

The measurement instruments do not exhibit the same explanatory power across outcome variables. For commitment, the new multidimensional measure of FLE friendliness has the most prominent contribution, whereas for satisfaction and trust, the unidimensional scale seems to exhibit a superior contribution. These results suggest that existing unidimensional measures mostly contribute to attitudinal variables, such as satisfaction and trust, whereas the proposed multidimensional measure is a significantly stronger predictor of behavioral variables, such as commitment. Attitudes are intermediate variables that might not reflect actual consumer actions; behaviors achieve greater accuracy and offer better explanatory power in relation to consumer actions. The proposed measurement instrument offers broader coverage of the construct domain, such that the effects reported in previous studies seemingly may be overestimated, because the

related measurements do not cover the entire spectrum of the construct. In this case, the effect of FLE friendliness might not be as critical as what other studies have suggested. A summary of the relative weights inferred from the dominance analysis is presented in Appendix F.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to develop a measurement instrument that could reliably and validly measure the underlying dimensions of FLE friendliness and (2) to assess their relative importance with regard to determining relationship quality, perceived value, and repatronage intentions. Findings across four service contexts—bar, restaurant, hotel, and hair care—reveal four dimensions—humorous, informal, conversational, and approachable behaviors—that contribute significantly to FLE friendliness. The current study also affirms the generalizability of the dimensions across two service contexts—bar and hair care—and the overall convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of the measurement instrument.

To assess the relative importance of the four dimensions of FLE friendliness, this study also proposes a second-order conceptualization of FLE friendliness that emphasizes the specific importance of the construct dimensions, across three service contexts—bank, ridesharing, and public transport—which in turn offers a more precise means to evaluate the effect of FLE friendliness on customer outcomes, compared with unidimensional and single-time measures. The results show that it is critical to account for all four dimensions to cover the broad nature of overall FLE friendliness and establish its construct validity.

This study corroborates previous research findings, in which FLE friendliness induces satisfaction and commitment (Engel *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2016; Yan, 2014). The findings further demonstrate that FLE friendliness is a strong driver of trust, one of three key aspects of relationship quality, together with satisfaction and commitment, as well as perceived value, and together they influence repatronage intentions. Trust, perceived value, and repatronage intentions are three

relevant outcomes that have not been explored in prior FLE friendliness studies.

In terms of the strength of the dimensions, some similarities and differences also emerge across service contexts. That is, this study offers substantial evidence of a robust, positive influence of humorous and approachable behaviors on FLE friendliness. Both dimensions, interchangeably, are the most prominent signals of FLE friendliness. A sense of humor is crucial too, especially in the banking context, to encourage a bond and foster commitment, even when customers and FLEs are strangers in a temporary interaction. These results provide support for van Dolen *et al.*'s (2008) account of the importance of humorous FLE behaviors in face-to-face encounters. Positive emotional displays and ease of contact are strong determinants of relationship quality in transportation settings, such as ridesharing and public transport. This result also corroborates Shaw Brown and Sulzer-Azaroff's (1994) findings that FLEs' greeting and smiling behaviors are positively related to customer satisfaction.

The effects of conversational behaviors on FLE friendliness do not seem to vary much across contexts. In three industries, the path coefficients remain relatively stable, compared with those for the other dimensions. The conversational dimension involves exchanging personal information with customers, and customers appear to have consistent ideas about this factor; what matters most is their privacy (Wirtz *et al.*, 2019). The findings about conversational behaviors align with studies that report a significant effect of small talk and conversation on satisfaction (Jacobs *et al.*, 2001) and commitment (Wulf *et al.*, 2001). The present study goes further by denoting the relative importance of conversational behaviors compared with humorous, informal, and approachable behaviors for FLE friendliness.

Informal behaviors contribute more to FLE friendliness in the banking than in the two other contexts. Customers seem to appreciate pleasant exchanges involving informal and familiar manners in face-to-face encounters, as when bank tellers look directly at them. Arguably,

customers might consider this factor less important for encounters such as ridesharing, where drivers do not directly face them. Other explanations could be that ridesharing and public transportation tend to involve one-time service encounters, whereas banking could feature repeated customer–employee interactions and longer customer tenures. These findings support Winsted’s (1999) assertion that the importance of FLE friendliness dimensions varies across service contexts. Particularly with regard to informal behaviors, the service context can strongly influence the strength of its relationship with customer perceptions.

Finally, relationship quality drivers, such as satisfaction, commitment, trust, perceived value, and repurchase intentions can be attained through FLE friendliness. The results confirm a positive influence of FLE friendliness on customer outcomes but also a non-significant impact of FLE friendliness on satisfaction in the banking industry. That is, friendliness helps build long-term relationships with the bank consultant but does not foster quality perceptions related to the financial product. The non-significant effect of FLE friendliness on perceived value in the public transportation context may stem from the primary importance of safety and efficiency considerations in customers’ transportation choices (Knupfer *et al.*, 2018). These findings are in line with Engel *et al.*’s (2013) research. Even in sectors in which FLE friendliness conventionally would not be considered a key determinant of the complete customer experience, it is still a significant supporting factor.

#### *Academic Contribution and Managerial Implications*

From an academic perspective, this study advances service management literature by (1) improving the conceptualization and measurement of FLE friendliness and its dimensions and (2) investigating the salience of FLE friendliness dimensions across service contexts. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, this article represents the first empirical effort to combine the distinct dimensions of FLE friendliness into an overall measurement instrument and establish its

psychometric properties. The results show that FLE friendliness is conceptually valid. This broad concept is composed of multiple dimensions. The formative nature of the FLE friendliness construct requires accounting for all four dimensions, and omitting any dimension is likely to induce biased results. This formative conceptualization also indicates that it is important to assess which of the four dimensions is the most critical in each service context. Furthermore, this study contributes to a better understanding of the relationships between FLE friendliness and relevant outcomes, such as relationship quality, perceived value, and repatronage intentions.

This specification of the FLE friendliness construct complements research on the relationship between FLEs and customers, in parallel with other relevant variables, such as rapport. Some dimensions, like humorous and approachable behaviors, share communalities with the personal connection dimension of rapport, but others, such as informality, extend beyond this related construct. Thus, FLE friendliness is distinct, with differentiated power, from other concepts and adds its own theoretical contributions. As such, this conceptualization of FLE friendliness provides additional guidance for researchers.

From a managerial point of view, this study details the salience of four dimensions of FLE friendliness and the effect of the overall construct on managerial outcomes. The proposed, multidimensional measurement instrument also gives relationship marketers a new tool for managing FLEs' friendliness, according to customer perceptions across a variety of service contexts. Managers can leverage such differences to encourage FLEs to adapt their behaviors to match customer expectations in their specific service context. Friendly displays also can be a source of competitive advantage (Chalon, 2019). By developing training programs that emphasize humorous, approachable behaviors, managers can train FLEs to maximize relationship quality, perceived value, and repatronage intentions. However, key differences exist across dimensions, so outcomes will not transfer automatically from one service context to another.

Notably, FLE friendliness is not exclusively critical in hospitality contexts. Findings from three non-hospitality service contexts—banks, ridesharing, and public transport—provide novel insights regarding the wider effects of FLE friendliness on relationship quality, perceived value, and repatronage intentions. Students who complete hospitality management programs thus should appeal to recruiters in non-hospitality service companies, such as the Swiss bank UBS (Chalon, 2019), which already acknowledges such talent. As performance, product, and pricing features grow increasingly homogeneous, a key strategic differentiation can be FLEs' friendliness, regardless of the industry sector (Elmadağ *et al.*, 2008). When FLEs can sense customer expectations, know how to behave, and interact comfortably with diverse customers, they put them at ease, and such capabilities should be a top priority for human resources departments for firms in multiple sectors.

Ridesharing companies such as Uber and Lyft also could improve their customer relationship management by enhancing the interactions between customers and drivers. Asking customers to rate their satisfaction with Uber drivers on a particular measure (e.g., “the driver made conversation”) assumes that all users want to have conversations. Instead, simple customizing options available on users' personal accounts, such as the level of small talk desired (Lekach, 2019) or a favorite music genre, offers greater personalization but also establishes guidelines for the FLE that signal that the service provider cares about customers.

Customer-focused operations also are essential for public transport companies, which need to provide consistent, reliable, and appealing services and quality. The public transportation system strongly depends on the FLEs performing the service (Engel *et al.*, 2013), suggesting the need for investments to build their soft skills, related to managing customer care operations and expectations. Best practice training and communication standards can benefit both the company

and its employees, especially in public sectors that often struggle to hire and retain skilled employees (Suchanek, 2019).

#### *Limitations and Further Research Directions*

As a first step toward developing a comprehensive measurement instrument of FLE friendliness, this research relied on online data collections for both the qualitative and quantitative surveys. Online participant sourcing platforms such as Qualtrics and CloudResearch enable researchers to collect data quickly and cost effectively. However, participants' task attentiveness may be a concern (e.g. Hauser and Schwarz, 2016). To reduce the risk of such detrimental effects, this study relied on data screening and response validity indicators (Chmielewski and Kucker, 2020), but continued efforts might turn to different data collection techniques, such as field experiments (Lim *et al.*, 2017).

The current findings also should be complemented by empirical studies that distinguish varied service contexts, according to their high versus low job social status, high versus low contact, standardization versus customization, or personalized versus non-personalized elements (Ruiz *et al.*, 2008). Additional service contexts could provide a more thorough justification and theoretical contribution to the FLE friendliness construct. As noted previously, customers expect friendlier service from waiters than from doctors (Winsted, 1999), so higher job status seemingly might increase the desire for formality over friendliness, to the extent that FLE friendliness even might seem inappropriate and could lower customer satisfaction. As another option, researchers could investigate friendly service robots to determine how the friendliness construct applies to the scope of currently available service technologies (Furrer *et al.*, 2020).

To enrich managerial understanding of FLE friendliness behaviors, another extension could integrate business-to-business markets. Methodologically, noting the conceptual integration of employee and customer perceptions in this study, studies might gather matched data from FLEs,

their supervisors, and peers (Gazzoli *et al.*, 2013). For example, Moskowitz (1990) finds evidence of gender-specific, systematic errors in self-reports of dominance and friendliness, suggesting that men tend to overestimate their friendliness. Examining FLE friendliness from the service provider's perspective might encourage new theoretical development of the construct.

The qualitative results imply some potentially negative effects of certain FLE friendliness behaviors in some service contexts (Goodwin and Smith, 1990; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987), yet the quantitative results fail to detect such effects. This discrepancy might stem from the design of the studies, which ask respondents to recall their last experience with a frontline employee. To identify negative effects of FLE friendliness, studies instead might ask specifically about an experience in which an FLE tried to be friendly, but it was annoying or decreased satisfaction, similar to a critical incident technique (Gremler, 2004).

Some omitted boundary conditions also might mitigate customer perceptions of FLE friendliness and inform the generalizability of the research conclusions. This study focuses solely on the main effects of FLE friendliness on customer relationship outcomes, though individual and cultural differences clearly could contribute to perceptions of FLE friendliness. Thus, additional research might incorporate boundary conditions, such as the customer's personality type (Paulssen, 2009), social introversion (Sieber and Meyers, 1992), and cross-cultural values (Winsted, 1999). Such boundary conditions might affect or moderate customers' perceptions and expectations of FLE friendliness, such that its dimensions could be perceived differently or with distinct relative weights. In some status-conscious societies such as Japan (Winsted, 1997), informal forms of address are generally inappropriate. Japanese customers tend to consider roles rather than individuals and thereby embrace more distant customer–employee relationships. In contrast, informality is an important characteristic in egalitarian societies such as the United States, where people tend to befriend strangers quickly, and employees often treat customers as acquaintances

(Grandey *et al.*, 2005b). In some cases, the effect of a dimension could even become negative, depending on these individual or cultural contexts.

Finally, FLEs' conversational behaviors involve exchanging personal information with customers, which may evoke some reluctance to share information or risk privacy breaches. In addition, this dimension requires customers' own contributions, because FLEs ask them to talk about their personal lives. Privacy intentions and concerns thus might be added to the model as a relevant control variable.

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**Table I. Definitions and Dimensionality of Frontline Employee Friendliness**

<b>Unidimensional Definitions</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Friendly displays are part of the interpersonal requirements for service encounters. Friendly interactions occur when the employee is particularly friendly, warm, personable, or nice while interacting with the customer, beyond what is perceived as normal in the given context. Such behavior may help make the customer feel comfortable and at ease in the setting.	Grandey <i>et al.</i> , 2005a
Friendliness refers to the warmth and personal approachability (rather than physical approachability) of the service, particularly of contact staff, including a cheerful attitude and ability to make the customer feel welcome.	Johnston, 1997
Employee friendliness refers to the warmth and personal approachability of the employee, including a cheerful attitude and making the customer feel welcome. Friendliness is increasingly considered an idiom for a commercial relationship emphasizing the relational benefits; it is an old construct, but it has gained a novel interpretation involving customer value in recent years. Friendliness is a newly established construct for commercial friendships, developed over time to satisfy exchange needs. According to social exchange theory, the service employee may occupy two different exchange-based roles: economic (i.e., service provision) and/or exchange (i.e., friendship). Friendliness emphasizes the aspect of building a connection by establishing rapport and warmth, satisfying emotional needs, increasing customer satisfaction, and building customer commitment to the firm by satisfying the social exchange needs.	Liu <i>et al.</i> , 2016
Friendliness is a dispositional tendency with four components: self-concept, accessibility, rewardingness, and alienation. Friendliness may be regarded as interpersonal behaviors, operationalized as a construct that implies kindness, cordiality, and goodwill. Friendliness refers to the feeling that people have about behaviors such as smiling, greeting, and cooperating.	Reisman, 1984
<i>FLE friendliness is defined as personal characteristics usually associated with an enjoyable customer–employee interaction. The construct refers to nice, personable, and affective behaviors of the frontline employee that help the customer feel comfortable, at ease, and welcome during the encounter. Four dimensions—humorous, informal, approachable, and conversational behaviors—contribute to FLE friendliness. These dimensions can be operationalized with items pertaining to both verbal cues, such as joking, greeting, thanking the customer, and engaging in small talk, and nonverbal behaviors, including smiling, laughing, and making eye contact.</i>	<i>Current study</i>
<b>Dimensions' Definitions</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Humorous defines FLE temperament inducing laughter and amusement in the encounter.	Söderlund <i>et al.</i> , 2017
Informal defines FLE casual way of acting or talking in establishing a personal connection.	Winsted, 1999
Conversational defines FLE engaging in social talk and asking non-essential personal information to build a relationship.	Jacobs <i>et al.</i> , 2001
Approachable defines FLE ease of contact bringing warmth to customers.	Andrzejewski and Mooney, 2016

**Table II. Literature Review of Frontline Employee Friendliness**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Contexts</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Dependent Variables</b>
Butcher and Heffernan, 2006	Coffee shop	Focus on friendliness and wait length	<i>Friendliness single item scale:</i> Staff are friendly at this cafe	Friendliness	(+) Repeat visit intention (+) Positive word of mouth
Gabriel <i>et al.</i> , 2015	Coffee shop	Focus on employee positive emotional display as an antecedent of service performance	<i>Employee positive emotional displays scale:</i> Smiling and being friendly with all customers <i>Employee friendliness single item scale:</i> To what extent was the service provider friendly	Approachable (employee positive emotional display)	(+) Friendliness (+) Service performance
Goodwin and Frame, 1989	Various services	Focus on preference for friendliness in service encounter	<i>Friendliness single-item scale:</i> Degree of desired friendliness, from "impersonal" to "close friends with frequent social contact"	Friendliness	(+) Quality evaluation (0) Irritation
Goodwin and Smith, 1990	Various services	Focus on friendliness as an indicator of closeness, related to service quality	<i>Conceptual</i>	Informal	(+) Service quality Moderators: social status
Grandey <i>et al.</i> , 2005a	Hotel and restaurant	Focus on friendliness as an antecedent of satisfaction.	<i>Friendliness unidimensional scale:</i> Uses Tsai & Huang 2002	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction
Gremler and Gwinner, 2008	Retail	Focus on friendly interaction as an indicator of connecting behavior, related to rapport	<i>Interviews:</i> Connecting behavior categorized as using humor, pleasant conversation, and friendly interaction	Friendliness (friendly interaction)	(+) Connecting behavior
Hennig-Thurau <i>et al.</i> , 2006	Movie store	Focus on employee emotional display as an antecedent of emotional labor display	<i>Experiment:</i> High vs. low smile	Approachable (smile)	(+) Rapport (-) Satisfaction
Hurley, 1998	Tax, hair care and medical	Focus on friendliness as antecedents of satisfaction, retention and word of mouth	<i>Experiment:</i> Friendly vs. unfriendly	Friendliness	(+) Customer retention (0) Satisfaction (0) Positive word of mouth
Jacobs <i>et al.</i> , 2001	Insurance	Focus on how verbal exchange influences sales	<i>Experiment:</i> High vs. low disclosure	Conversational (disclosure)	(+/-) Satisfaction
Johnston, 1997	Bank	Focus on friendliness as an antecedent of satisfaction	<i>Interviews:</i> Defines friendliness as warmth and approachability	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction
Liu <i>et al.</i> , 2016	Bank	Focus on friendliness as an antecedent of customer satisfaction	<i>Friendliness unidimensional scale:</i> Uses Yan Li 2014 scale	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction
Ostrom and Iacobucci, 1995	Hotel and hair care	Focus on friendliness as an antecedent of satisfaction and purchasing intention	<i>Experiment:</i> More friendly vs. less friendly	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction (+) Purchase intention Moderator: type of service
Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> , 1985	Various services	Focus on courtesy as a determinant of service quality	<i>Interviews:</i> Defines courtesy as politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness	Friendliness	(+) Courtesy

Price and Arnould, 1999	Hair care	Focus on the effect of commercial friendship on loyalty	<i>Friendliness unidimensional scale:</i> Hairstylist likes to talk with people Hairstylist is friendly Hairstylist tries to establish a relationship Hairstylist is very pleasant Hairstylist treat me like just a customer rather than as a person with specific needs and desires I like this hairstylist as a person	Friendliness (commercial friendship)	(+) Satisfaction (+) Loyalty (+) Positive word of mouth
Reisman, 1984	Psychology	Focus on friendliness as a psychological concept	<i>Friendliness dimensions:</i> Accessibility (attention, respect) Rewardingness (compliments) Alienation Self-concept	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction
Ryoo, 2005	Grocery and jewelry stores	Focus on positive aspects of friendly interactions	<i>Field study</i>	Humorous (joke), conversational (small talk)	(+) Rapport
Shaw Brown and Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994	Bank	Focus on greeting, smiling, and looking at customers as indicators of friendliness	<i>Service friendliness-specifically incidents:</i> Tellers smiling, greeting, looking at customers	Approachable (greetings)	(+) Satisfaction
Surprenant and Solomon, 1987	Bank	Focus on friendliness as an indicator of personalization	<i>Friendliness indicators:</i> Treatment, friendliness, helpfulness	Friendliness	(+) Personalization (+) Warmth (+/-) Satisfaction
Tsai and Huang, 2002	Shoe store	Focus on friendliness as an antecedent of customer behavioral intentions	<i>Friendliness unidimensional scale:</i> Provided the service in a friendly manner Had a kind smile Treated the customer nicely	Friendliness	(+) Behavioral intentions
Winsted, 1997	Restaurant	Focus on friendliness in relation with service encounter satisfaction	<i>Friendliness items:</i> Clear language, enthusiasm, intelligent, personable, pleasant	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction
Yan, 2014	Bank	Focus on friendliness as an antecedent of customer satisfaction.	<i>Friendliness unidimensional scale:</i> The teller said hello or other greetings to me The teller said thank you to me The teller made eye contact with me The teller smiled at me The teller created a feeling of warmth The teller was pleasant I was comfortable interacting with the teller Overall, the employee is friendly to me	Friendliness	(+) Satisfaction

**Table III.** *Content Analysis of the Online Interviews*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Positive Characteristics</b>	<b>Negative Characteristics</b>
Humorous	“She acted with funny mimics, what I personally liked was her confidence and humor”	“The steward was constantly joking but it was a misplaced opportunity to make humor”
Informal	“He was talking informally, at the beginning it surprised me a little, but it was not annoying”	“I don’t like when employees act as they know you, they should be polite otherwise it is not serious”
Conversational	“I have common interests with my hairdresser, we talk about holidays, work, parties”	“I hate it when I go for massage and they talk all along, I go there to relax not to hear about their story”
Approachable	“The hotel clerk asked, ‘how are you doing?’ with a pleasant smile. I feel like to go there again”	“She pretended to smile because she wanted to sell more expensive things. I felt a disgusted feeling”

**Table IV. Factor Loadings and Item Reliability**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Bar (n = 210)</b>	<b>Restaurant (n = 126)</b>	<b>Hotel (n = 111)</b>	<b>Hair Care (n = 267)</b>
<i>Humorous</i>	.85	.92	.91	.90
The employee had a lot of humor	.88	.96	.83	.99
The employee made funny jokes*	.83	.89	.92	.86
The employee was fun	.89	.96	.89	.87
The employee joked with me	.85	.91	.86	.86
<i>Informal</i>	.89	.95	.90	.89
The employee addressed me in an informal way	.92	.94	.94	.94
The employee used informal language	.93	.93	.93	.88
The employee greeted me informally	.87	.96	.87	.89
The employee befriended me in a natural way*	.78	.30	.59	.17
<i>Conversational</i>	.77	.83	.77	.74
The employee told me about his/her private life with a lot of enthusiasm	.85	.95	.83	.92
The employee talked about his/her personal experiences with the service	.84	.78	.79	.83
The employee showed interested by asking me personal questions	.78	.91	.65	.55
The employee shared his/her knowledge of the service with pleasure*	.65	.56	.32	.40
<i>Approachable</i>	.86	.86	.81	.83
The employee said hello or other greetings to me	.86	.89	.78	.75
The employee said thank you to me	.85	.92	.67	.77
The employee smiled at me	.90	.95	.86	.86
The employee was pleasant	.73	.59	.88	.88
The employee made eye contact with me*	.16	.15	.81	.22

Notes: Entries in *italics* are the Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

\* Deleted items, due to low or cross-loadings.

**Table V. Eigenvalues**

	<b>Bar</b>		<b>Restaurant</b>		
	<i>Initial eigenvalues</i>		<i>Initial eigenvalue</i>		
	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>% of variance</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>% of variance</i>	
Humorous	64.91	13.25	Humorous	72.13	15.01
Informal	51.65	19.95	Informal	57.11	24.70
Conversational	75.45	10.54	Conversational	82.25	10.12
Approachable	31.70	31.70	Approachable	32.40	32.40

	<b>Hotel</b>		<b>Hair Care</b>		
	<i>Initial eigenvalue</i>		<i>Initial eigenvalue</i>		
	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>% of variance</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>% of variance</i>	
Humorous	69.33	11.81	Humorous	66.32	10.84
Informal	57.52	20.52	Informal	55.47	20.46
Conversational	76.21	6.87	Conversational	75.17	8.85
Approachable	36.99	36.99	Approachable	35.01	35.01

**Table VI. Reliability and Validity**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>
(1) Humorous	.86	<i>.82</i>			
(2) Informal	.84	.46***	<i>.80</i>		
(3) Conversational	.76	.73***	.58***	<i>.79</i>	
(4) Approachable	.83	.56***	.31***	.29***	<i>.75</i>

Notes: Diagonal elements in *italics* are the square root of the average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table VII.** Validity Assessment of FLE Friendliness vs. Rapport

<b>Rapport</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(6)</b>
(1) Humorous	.83	<i>.79</i>					
(2) Informal	.82	.57***	<i>.78</i>				
(3) Conversational	.73	.75***	.44***	<i>.76</i>			
(4) Approachable	.80	.63***	.66***	.40***	<i>.71</i>		
(5) Enjoyable interaction	.84	.87***	.60***	.65***	.79***	<i>.75</i>	
(6) Personal connection	.90	.73***	.34***	.76***	.36***	.75***	<i>.81</i>

Notes: Diagonal elements in *italics* are the square roots of the average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

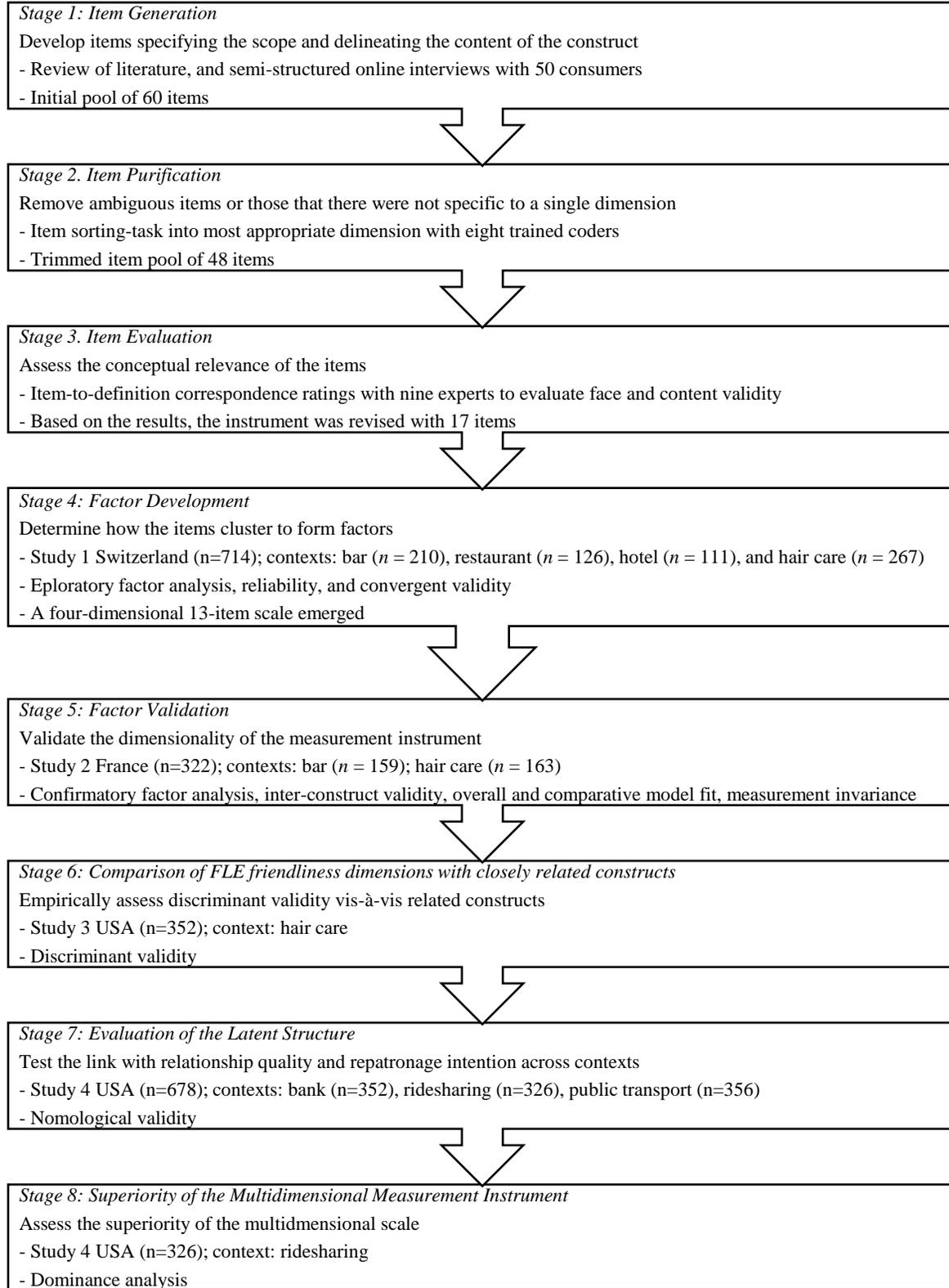
\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table VIII.** *Nomological Validity*

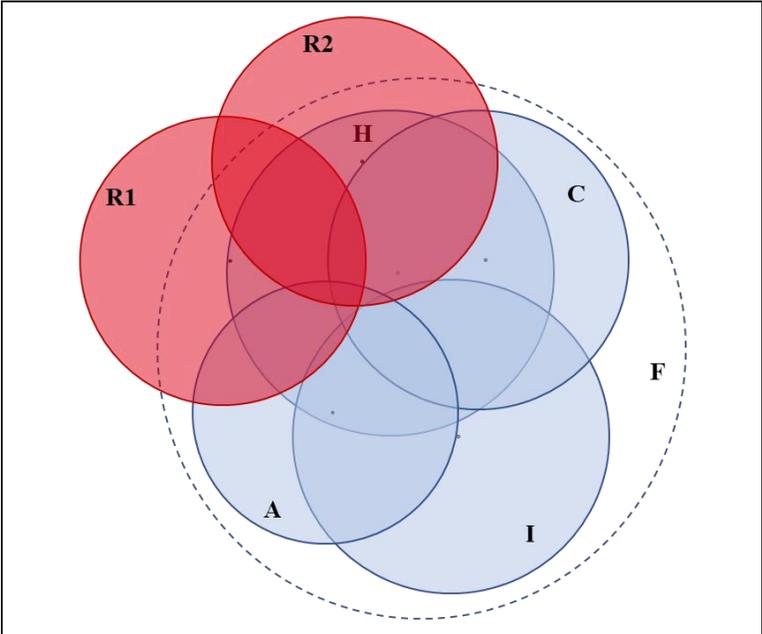
Service context	Bank			Ridesharing			Public Transport		
	<i>STD estimate</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>STD estimate</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>STD estimate</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>
Humorous → Friendliness	.39***	21.78		.39***	19.90		.31***	24.03	
Informal → Friendliness	.30***	11.35		.20***	6.98		.21***	12.40	
Conversational → Friendliness	.30***	11.27		.27***	14.80		.28***	25.96	
Approachable → Friendliness	.37***	3.37		.43***	15.28		.38***	22.12	
Friendliness → Satisfaction	.17	1.91	.42	.33***	5.94	.45	.72***	5.38	.53
Friendliness → Commitment	.46***	7.30	.32	.36***	5.98	.27	.74***	15.08	.54
Friendliness → Trust	.30***	5.48	.49	.28***	5.90	.55	.68***	4.03	.46
Friendliness → Perceived value	.40***	4.84	.16	.53***	11.71	.28	.01	.01	.00
Friendliness → Repatronage intention	.47***	7.38	.68	.49***	13.28	.59	.68***	19.79	.71

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Figure 1. Scale Development Procedure**



**Figure 2.** *Discriminant Validity between Friendliness and Rapport*



Notes: F = FLE friendliness; H = humorous; I = informal; C = conversational; A = approachable; R1 = enjoyable interaction; R2 = personal connection.

## *Appendix A. Semi-Structured Online Interview Script*

Think of a recent time when, as a customer, you interacted with an employee who was particularly friendly (it could be for example in a hotel, restaurant, bank, airline, hair care...).

- When did it happen?
- Explain in detail what did the employee say or do to be friendly? How did he behave exactly? Did he have any attitude that particularly caught your attention?

In overall, was this service experience pleasant or unpleasant? Explain why.

- Did the employee displayed faked emotions (forcedly cheerful, faking a smile...)?
- Was the employee overfriendly (too much friendly)?
- How did that make you feel?

Do you think your positive (negative) reaction to a (too) friendly employee depends on the type of industry?

If you were to describe what is a friendly employee with your own words, how would you describe it? Can you please give me your own definition of what a friendly employee means to you?

What differentiates a friendly employee from a courteous (empathic) employee according to you?

***Appendix B. Semi-Structured Frontline Employee Interview Script***

Please look at the following statements carefully before answering the next questions.

- I use a lot of humor
- I make funny jokes
- I am fun
- I joke with customers
- I address customers in an informal way
- I use informal language
- I greet customers informally
- I befriend customers in a natural way
- I tell customers about my private life with a lot of enthusiasm
- I talk about my personal experiences with the service
- I show interest in customers by asking them personal questions
- I share my knowledge of the service with pleasure
- I say hello or other greetings
- I say thank you
- I smile at customers
- I am pleasant
- I make eye contact with customers

Among these statements, which are the ones that best reflect your actions in your line of work?

In your opinion, are there any statements that you do not consider imperative when you want to exhibit friendly behaviors to customers?

**Appendix C. Description of Scales to Examine Discriminant Validity**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Enjoyable interaction (rapport 1)	I enjoyed interacting with this employee	1.01	.86
	The employee created a feeling of “warmth” in our relationship*	-.04	
	The employee related well to me	.64	
	I had a harmonious relationship with this employee	.70	
	I was comfortable interacting with this employee*	.03	
Personal connection (rapport 2)	I looked forward to seeing this employee when I visited this service provider	.62	.92
	I strongly cared about this employee	.91	
	The employee had taken a personal interest in me	.83	
	I had a close relationship with this employee	.97	
Authenticity	I felt like there was a “bond” between this employee and myself	.85	.89
	The employee seemed to be faking how he/she felt in this interaction	.92	
	The employee seemed to be pretending in this interaction	.89	
Empathy	The employee seemed to be putting on an act in this interaction	.91	.83
	The employee gave me individual attention	.80	
	The employee gave me personal attention	.82	
	The employee had my best interests at heart	.75	
	The employee understood my specific needs	.77	
Courtesy	This service provider has operating hours convenient to all its customers	.72	.87
	The employee who served you was: - Very discourteous, Very courteous	.90	
	The employee who served you was: - Very impolite, Very polite	.88	
Helpfulness	The employee who served you was: - Very unfriendly, Very friendly	.90	.82
	The employee gave prompt service to me	.71	
	The employee told me exactly when services will be performed	.61	
	The employee was never too busy to respond to my requests	.76	
	The employee gave me individual attention and care by having my best interest at heart	.80	
	The employee had the knowledge and competence to answer my specific queries and requests	.79	
	The employee showed a sincere interest in solving it when I had a problem	.68	

\* Deleted items, due to low or cross-loadings.

Notes: The enjoyable interaction dimension of rapport initially had a low AVE score of .37, below the threshold of .50 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Two items with low loadings (“The employee created a feeling of warmth in our relationship” and “I was comfortable interacting with this employee”) were deleted, after which all the AVE scores exceeded the .50 threshold.

**Appendix D. Discriminant Validity with Courtesy, Helpfulness, Empathy, and Authenticity**

<b>Authenticity</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
(1) Humorous	.83	<i>.79</i>				
(2) Informal	.85	.50***	<i>.81</i>			
(3) Conversational	.72	.74***	.48***	<i>.75</i>		
(4) Approachable	.84	.63***	.51***	.29***	<i>.75</i>	
(5) Authenticity	.90	.00	-.04	-.27***	.40***	<i>.86</i>
<b>Empathy</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
(1) Humorous	.83	<i>.79</i>				
(2) Informal	.85	.50***	<i>.81</i>			
(3) Conversational	.72	.73***	.48***	<i>.75</i>		
(4) Approachable	.84	.63***	.51***	.29***	<i>.75</i>	
(5) Empathy	.85	.64***	.52***	.31***	.94***	<i>.72</i>
<b>Courtesy</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
(1) Humorous	.85	<i>.81</i>				
(2) Informal	.78	.52***	<i>.74</i>			
(3) Conversational	.76	.78***	.44***	<i>.78</i>		
(4) Approachable	.77	.59***	.45***	.41***	<i>.67</i>	
(5) Courtesy	.87	.58***	.38***	.35***	.86***	<i>.83</i>
<b>Helpfulness</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
(1) Humorous	.83	<i>.79</i>				
(2) Informal	.85	.50***	<i>.81</i>			
(3) Conversational	.72	.73***	.48***	<i>.75</i>		
(4) Approachable	.84	.63***	.51***	.29***	<i>.75</i>	
(5) Helpfulness	.76	.60***	.50***	.31***	.89***	<i>.67</i>

Notes: Diagonal elements in *italics* are the square roots of the average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Appendix E. Description of Reliability, Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analyses

An EFA, using SPSS 26, was performed on the five dependent variables to test for their psychometric properties. Internal consistency was assessed according to whether the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were greater than .70. Next, a model assessment in SmartPLS 3 was performed for the four dimensions of FLE friendliness. Convergent validity requires AVE values exceeding .50 for each dimension (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Discriminant validity depends on the comparison of the square roots of the AVE, which must be greater than the correlations of their respective dimensions (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Collinearity among the four dimensions was assessed by variance inflation factor values, which need to be below 5.00 (Hair *et al.*, 2011). In terms of reliability, the composite reliability values were greater than .70 (Hancock, 2001).

Variables	Bank (n = 352)	Ridesharing (n = 326)	Public Transport (n = 356)
<i>Satisfaction</i>	.88	.90	.84
I was pleased with the overall service provided by the employee	.86	.86	.86
I felt delighted with the overall service provided by the employee	.82	.82	.82
I was completely satisfied with the service experience	.87	.87	.87
I was happy with the overall service provided by the employee	.89	.89	.89
<i>Commitment</i>	.95	.96	.88
My relationship to this specific service provider is something that I am very committed to	.94	.95	.86
My relationship to this specific service provider is very important to me	.93	.96	.86
My relationship to this specific service provider is something I really care about	.93	.95	.84
My relationship to this specific service provider deserves my maximum effort to maintain	.91	.93	.84
<i>Trust</i>	.81	.80	.81
I feel that I can trust this employee	.82	.79	.84
I feel that I can count on this employee to give me good advices	.85	.85	.77
I think this employee would help me	.76	.68	.77
This employee appears to have reliable skills and abilities	.77	.84	.81
<i>Perceived value</i>	.89	.88	.84
This company offers good value for the price I pay	.85	.86	.77
This company offers good value for the effort I make	.84	.85	.77
This company offers good value for the time I invest	.82	.82	.71
This company offers experiences that make me feel good	.79	.76	.75
This company's offerings are reasonably priced	.86	.86	.73
This service provider offering is: - Extremely poor, Extremely good	.63	.61	.73
<i>Repatronage intention</i>	.87	.87	.75
The next time I need similar type of services, I will choose this service provider again	.80	.80	.67
I will say positive things about this service provider to others	.87	.89	.77
I will recommend this service provider someone who seeks my advice	.90	.89	.80
I intend to encourage friends and relatives to do business with my service provider	.81	.83	.77

Notes: Entries in *italics* are the Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

	CR	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>Bank</b>					
(1) Humorous	.92	.89			
(2) Informal	.92	.68	.89		
(3) Conversational	.91	.77	.71	.88	
(4) Approachable	.91	.14	.09	.08	.84
<b>Ridesharing</b>					
(1) Humorous	.92	.90			
(2) Informal	.91	.32	.88		
(3) Conversational	.88	.68	.38	.85	
(4) Approachable	.86	.52	.20	.36	.78
<b>Public Transport</b>					
(1) Humorous	.88	.85			
(2) Informal	.86	.54	.82		
(3) Conversational	.90	.73	.58	.87	
(4) Approachable	.87	.67	.42	.53	.79

Notes: Diagonal elements in *italics* are the square roots of the average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Appendix F. Dominance Analysis**

Contribution on:	Satisfaction				Commitment				Trust			
	$R^2$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$	$R^2$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$	$R^2$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$
<i>Subset model (x)</i>												
<i>k = 0 average</i>	.00	.30	.32	.45	.00	.24	.01	.11	.00	.32	.38	.55
<i>x<sub>1</sub></i>	.30		.09	.15	.24		.05	.01	.32		.14	.22
<i>x<sub>2</sub></i>	.32	.07		.15	.01	.27		.14	.38	.08		.18
<i>x<sub>3</sub></i>	.45	.00	.03		.11	.13	.04		.55	.00	.01	
<i>k = 1 average</i>		.04	.06	.15		.20	.04	.08		.04	.08	.20
<i>x<sub>1</sub>x<sub>2</sub></i>	.40			.08	.28			.00	.46			.10
<i>x<sub>1</sub>x<sub>3</sub></i>	.45		.03		.25		.04		.55		.01	
<i>x<sub>2</sub>x<sub>3</sub></i>	.48	.00			.15	.13			.56	.00		
<i>k = 2 average</i>		.00	.03	.08		.13	.04	.00		.00	.01	.10
<i>x<sub>1</sub>x<sub>2</sub>x<sub>3</sub></i>	.48				.28				.56			
Overall average		.11	.14	.23		.19	.03	.06	.03	.12	.16	.28
% of contribution		.24	.29	.47		.67	.11	.22		.22	.28	.50

Notes:  $x_1$  = multidimensional scale;  $x_2$  = single-item;  $x_3$  = unidimensional scale.