

Cranfield University

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An examination of the relationship  
between frontline employees' perceptions  
of people management practices and their  
prosocial service behaviours

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A case study of an employee-owned organization

School of Management

PhD Thesis

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# Abstract

With a growing body of literature examining HR systems' influence on organizational performance outcomes, there has been a plea for research that examines the underlying mechanisms that facilitate this in a service setting. This study adopts the notion of people management which incorporates the management of HR implementation and line managers' leadership behaviour in its investigation of how HR affects performance. This study, by examining how frontline employees' perception of people management practices affects individual level prosocial service behaviours, and by using a qualitative approach in data collection and analysis, offers an explanation of the underlying mechanisms in the causal chain. Furthermore, the setting of this research in an employee-owned organization affords a context-rich account of how HR systems affect individual level performance in a service setting.

Thirty one semi-structured interviews were conducted, of which twenty three were conducted with frontline employees to elicit how their experiences of people management practices affected their display of prosocial service behaviours. Eight semi-structured interviews were arranged with frontline managers to offer an alternate perspective to data gathered from the employees.

The research identifies bundles of practices, comprising both "employment" and "work practices" as instrumental in employees' display of prosocial service behaviours. The results confirm the AMO framework as being a suitable explanation of mediating mechanisms in the HR-performance chain, whilst not only confirming the presence of a few existing intervening influences but also identifying novel factors not previously studied within the HR-performance discussion. It also demonstrates that adopting multiple theoretical perspectives in investigating HR-performance relationships offers a more comprehensive picture.

Finally, the research confirms the role of the line manager as a protagonist within the HR-performance discussion whilst also demonstrating the significance of co-workers. The ownership context emerges as important in this enquiry – specifically work atmosphere and relationships – in influencing employees' service behaviour.

# ABBREVIATIONS

ABC – Approach Build Close

AMO – Ability, Motivation, Opportunity

EO – Employee ownership

FLE – Frontline employee

FLM – Frontline manager

HCWPs/HCWSs – High-commitment work practices/systems

HIWPs – High-involvement work systems

HPWPs – High-performance work practices

HPWSs – High-performance work systems

HR – Human Resource

HRM – Human Resource Management

JLP – John Lewis Partnership

LM – Line manager

OBSE – Organization-based self-esteem

OC – Organizational commitment

OCB – Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

PDP – Partner development programme

POS – Perceived Organizational Support

PSSB(s) – Prosocial Service Behaviour(s)

RBV – Resource based view

SHRM – Strategic HRM

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## *Preface*

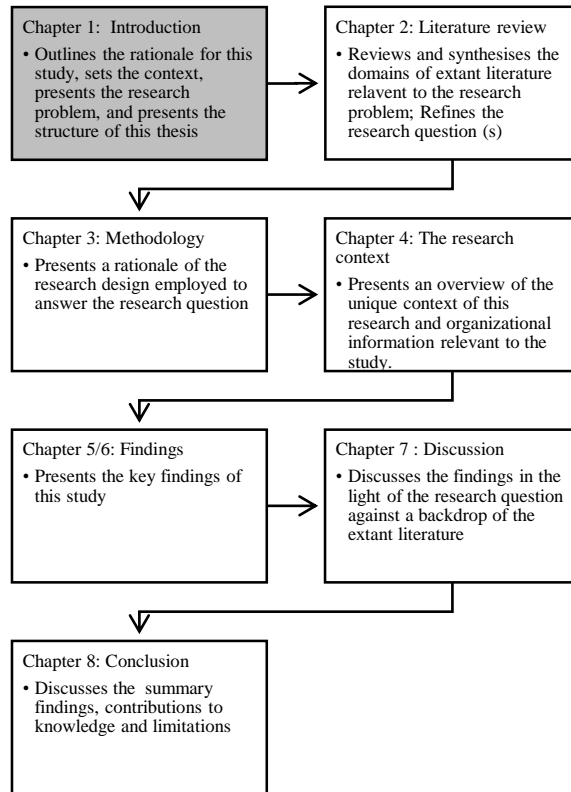
### *My passion for all things service*

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From 1994-2000 I worked for The Oberoi Group of Hotels in India, where I learnt and lived the art of providing exceptional service. Starting my role there as a Housekeeping Executive and working with frontline housekeeping staff exposed me to the pressures of frontline work. I then moved to work in Sales and Marketing where I undertook a different kind of frontline job, particularly key account management. Even though the two jobs were as different as two jobs could possibly be, they both instilled in me the same thing – a passion for service. Fuelled by this desire to understand, explore and study how service companies could provide exceptional service, I looked for academic institutions that specialised in the study of service businesses. I joined the University of Buckingham and graduated with an MSc in Service Management in 2000. I was then invited to teach at the same university which I did, and this led me to pursue an academic path that I never envisaged. Over the next couple of years, even though I now understood how service businesses functioned, I nevertheless felt this niggling desire to explore more in depth how and why frontline employees delivered exceptional service. By 2006, convinced that a PhD route was the only way I could challenge myself, coupled with the fact that my husband had just finished his DPhil, my PhD dream seemed realistic. Being a working mum by this time I chose Cranfield because of its reputation in the people management area and also because it was close to home. This led me to pursue this doctorate in Cranfield – a journey I have enjoyed immensely and one that has enabled me to cultivate new skills and knowledge.

# 1. Introduction

This thesis is concerned with investigating how frontline employees' (FLEs) perceptions of people management practices affect their prosocial service behaviours. Within a business context, I explore the mechanisms through which perceptions of both HR and line management practices affect FLEs' service interactions with customers through a case study approach in an organization reputed for its customer service provision. This, I believe,



affords an in-depth understanding of the relationship between human resource management and performance in a service setting. This chapter sets out the road map for this doctoral thesis and situates the research subject in the larger discussion of HR and performance. Section 1.1 presents the background to this research; in section 1.2 I explain the academic context; section 1.3 presents the proposed research questions and the definitions of the key terms employed; finally section 1.4 condenses the ensuing chapters of this doctoral paper.

## 1.1 The background to the research

My interest in the management of people in organizations stems from my need to understand how employees could be managed to display exceptional service levels in organizations. This involved researching the domain of managing Human Resources (HR) in service organizations within academic literature. The context of service

organizations is relevant and important because, in the UK, more than 78.9% of the GDP comes from the service sector (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). Service industries currently contribute more than any other industry to the UK economy with 85% of the labour force by occupation being employed in the service sector (Jones, 2013). This makes it a very relevant context for any investigation within the business discipline.

Within the domain of managing people in businesses, the literature suggests that HR practices affect organizational performance as shown in Figure 1 (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Combs et al., 2006) but the evidence suggested an “*association rather than a causation*” (Guest, 2011, p. 3). It is clear that HR affects organizational performance

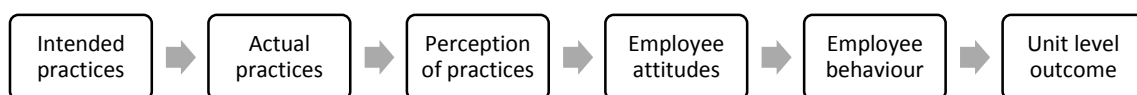


Figure 1: People -performance causal chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007)

but what is not really clearly understood is how this happened. This is generally referred to as the black box discussion (Pauwe, 2004, p. 56). The black box discussion involves the following questions: How is HR actually translated into performance? What are the intervening variables that explain the relationship between HR practices and firm performance? (Pauwe and Farndale, 2005). The black box studies attempt to explore the linking mechanisms between HR practices and performance. Within the HRM black box, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) conceptualised the people management – performance causal chain to indicate how people practices were ultimately translated into unit level outcomes and theirs was the first study to include both employee experiences and the line manager (LM) in any HR-performance investigation. They clarified the distinction between practices and how employees perceived them. Purcell and Hutchinson’s (2007) study also confirmed the crucial role of frontline managers (FLMs) in two ways: implementation of HR practices and general leadership in how employees experience HR practices. They labelled this as People Management activities in an organization. I wished to use this model to explore how perceptions of people management practices (not only HR practices) affected individual level outcomes.

Additionally, a point noted by academics was that most of the seminal works of HR-performance have been conducted in manufacturing settings (Arthur, 1994; Batt 2002; Guest et al., 2003; Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prensushi, 1997; Redman and Mathews, 1998) even though the global economy was primarily a service economy (Gronroos, 2007). This led me to explore the black box (Paauwe, 2004, p. 56) in a service setting. In this service business, for many organizations the interaction between FLEs and customers is paramount in creating customer satisfaction (Bowen and Schneider, 1988; Sergeant and Frenkel, 2000). As a consequence of the intangibility and inseparability (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2009) inherent in services, FLEs in service roles are absolutely crucial. Because services may not have a tangible component the customer experience becomes central in the assessment of the overall service experience. In service settings where there is high-contact between FLEs and customers, the service employee plays a vital role. The inseparability of production from consumption also signifies that to consume a service, they may have demands and needs as customers which the FLEs providing the service have to fulfil. This demonstrates the significance of the FLE in any service context. Within performance in a service context, it is the FLEs' behaviour in service interactions between customers and employees that influences to a great extent whether customers' are satisfied or not (Sergeant and Frenkel, 2000; Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2009). Therefore frontline service employee performance at the individual level was deemed to be relevant for consideration in the exploration of the black box in a service setting. In particular, employee behaviour during service encounters requires employees to engage in behaviours to satisfy customers' expectations. Customers may have demands that necessitate employees not only to display behaviours defined by their roles but also to engage in behaviours that go beyond what is expected of them. The service organization's goal is to create satisfied customers and the role of the FLE in this cannot be underestimated. Therefore, service organizations would benefit from knowing how they can support and manage their FLEs such that they exhibit behaviours during service encounters that can result in satisfied customers. Employee behaviours directed at customers are known as prosocial service behaviours (PSSBs) (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997). These are not simply citizenship behaviours directed internally within the organization's context but in addition, helping out behaviours that are directed at targets outside the organization, i.e. towards customers. Therefore PSSBs go beyond

Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) (Organ, 1988) and Service-OCBs (Sun, Aryee and Law 2007) as they incorporate not only the internal- or organization-directed extra-role behaviours but also include the extra-role behaviours directed towards customers, who are fundamental to the evaluation of any service performance. Even though Bettencourt and Brown's (1997) conceptualisation of PSSBs also include a cooperation element, involving employees cooperating behaviours with fellow co-workers, for this study I chose only the behaviours that were targeted at external customers as I was interested in their direct impact on customers. The following section provides the academic context in more depth in my investigation into how perceptions of people management practices affect FLEs' prosocial service behaviours.

## **1.2 The academic background**

This section seeks to establish the academic context for my doctoral study which does not deliberate on the association between HRM and performance *per se*, but centres on the black box (Paauwe, 2004, p. 56) exploring how this actually happens in reality in a specific service setting. I start by introducing the literature surrounding the black box and then go on to identify some research gaps within that discussion.

Over the last three decades research investigating the role of human resources in organizations has grown increasingly sophisticated. Boxall (2012) describes HRM, i.e. the management of work and people, as an indispensable function in organizations that influences organizational performance. In the 1990s, research around this topic revealed a positive relationship between HRM and firm performance (Arthur, 1994; Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Delery and Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995). Empirical research in this area has evolved to establish how a system of practices composed of bundles of HR practices – high-performance work systems (Becker and Huselid, 1998); high-commitment work systems (Arthur, 1994); and high-involvement work systems (Guthrie, 2001) – affect organizational performance. The body of knowledge in the area of strategic human resource management (SHRM) indicates that high-performance work systems (HPWSs), or systems of HR practices could improve organizational performance (Batt, 2002; Delery and Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prensushi

1997; Wright et al., 2005). These systems of HR practices are a set of distinct but interrelated practices (Takeuchi et al., 2007) aimed at increasing employees' ability, motivation and opportunities to contribute (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Boxall and Purcell, 2003) consequently, leading to organizational performance. The two main reviews of research in the area of HR and performance (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Combs et al., 2006) confirmed that the bulk of available studies established a relationship between HRM and performance; *"but both also emphasised that their analysis provided evidence of an association rather than causation"* (Guest, 2011, p. 3). Some commentators have stated that it was unclear how practices actually translated into performance (Batt, 2002; Shore et al., 2004; Wright, Gardner and Moynihan, 2003). Guest (2011, p. 7) comments on how the HR-performance discussion has developed from *"What impact does HR have on performance?"* to *"What is the process whereby HRM can have an impact on performance?"* This is known as the black box of HR and Performance (Paauwe, 2004, p. 56). Academics have, of late, proceeded to explore the black box or mechanisms through which HR practices influence organizational performance (Chuang and Liao, 2010; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Takeuchi, Chen and Lepak, 2009; Takeuchi et al., 2007), i.e. *"unlocking the black box"* (Purcell, Kinnie and Hutchinson, 2003). Purcell et al., (2003) include several variables between HR practices and firm performance, such as employee motivations, employee skills, discretionary effort etc. Deeper examination of these mediating variables illustrates that different theoretical standpoints inform them – social exchange, human capital, (Chuang and Liao, 2010; Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Takeuchi et al., 2007; Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak, 2009). Additionally, the AMO theory (Appelbaum et al., 2000) is perceived as an acceptable framework for stipulating the mediating variables between HRM and performance (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005). However, only a limited number of studies have investigated the HR-performance linkage from a job characteristics and empowerment perspective (Snape and Redman, 2010). The concept now is that HR practices (organizational level) affect the attitudes and behaviour of employees (individual level), which in turn, when aggregated, affect HR behavioural outcomes, which could then lead to organizational outcomes (Paauwe, 2009). Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) elaborate on the HRM-performance causal chain, portraying a chain of links from intended practices to unit level performance.

Specifically within this, they adopted Wright and Nishii's (2007) idea of the differences between intended, actual and perceived practices. Perceptions of the HR practices are influenced by how LMs implement them and it is these perceptions that shape employees' attitudes and behaviour, thus in turn influencing organizational level outcomes. Through their research, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) find that, both independently and additively, satisfaction with HR practices (perception) and (frontline) leadership affects employee attitudes; thus, both employees' perceptions of HR practices and leadership behaviours are crucial in affecting employee attitudes. They coin the term '*people management*' to reflect this. Within the discussion on implementation, even though Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) study proved that both satisfaction with HR practices and LM leadership were instrumental in affecting employee's performance, the LM's role is not really included in many HR-performance studies. Bos-Nehles (2010) note that even if HR practices are designed appropriately, if LMs do not execute them well, then they would fail to be effective (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Alfes et al. (2013), Knies and Leisink (2014) and Purcell and Hutchinson (2007), are the only studies, to the best of my knowledge that have actually addressed how LMs implement practices. Equally, even though it is actually the perception of people management practices that affect employee attitudes and behaviours, most of the studies investigating the black box have not addressed this distinction. In fact, only a few studies have in reality examined actual practices or included employee perceptions in such investigations (Aryee et al., 2012; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Jensen, Patel and Messersmith, 2013; Liao et al., 2009). I came to the conclusion that any study looking into the black box needed to include employees' perceptions of HR practices and furthermore needed to incorporate the LM as a crucial actor in not only in the implementation of HR practices but also from a general leadership perspective.

My interest in service organizations, coupled with recognising that HR-performance studies that were limited to service settings were lacking, meant that employee-level outcomes, in order to be measured, required adaptation to help organizations acquire a more realistic understanding of what HR practices are actually perceived by employees as helping them to deliver excellent customer service. Employees who interact with customers are FLEs and it is the behaviour of these FLEs that affects customer perception of service quality (Schneider and Bowen, 1985). Recently, there has been a move to study

the relationship between HR and organisational outcomes within a service setting (Cho et al., 2006; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Gittel, Seidner and Wimbush, 2010; Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014; Messersmith et al., 2011; Nishii, Lepak and Schneider, 2008; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Ueno, 2012; Yang, 2012). Individual level outcomes include commitment (Boselie, 2010; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Veld, Paauwe and Boselie, 2010) and service performance/behaviour (Aryee et al., 2012; Browning, 2006; Liao et al., 2009). In particular, there is a focus on OCB and in-role and extra-role behaviour (Alfes, Shantz and Truss, 2012; Boon et al., 2011; Boselie, 2010; Karatepe, 2013; Knies and Leisink, 2014; Snape and Redman, 2010; Yang 2012). Behaviour, including OCB, service-focused OCB and in-role/extra-role behaviour is highly relevant in a service context as it is the actual behaviour of the FLEs when interacting with the customer that is regarded to impact on perceptions of service quality (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2009). The reason behaviours emerge as important in service settings is because the display of behaviour is crucial in a service context. Even if employees have favourable attitudes, without the actual behaviours being displayed during service encounters, this attitude may not result in satisfied customers. Within the Services Management literature, employee behaviours directed at customers are known as PSSBs (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997). These are not simply citizenship behaviours directed internally within the organization's context but in addition, helpful behaviours that are directed at targets outside the organization, i.e. towards customers. Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) conceptualise this in a slightly different way, calling them customer-oriented behaviours. Initially, Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) theorised this as commitment to customer service and then in 2001, relabelled it as customer-oriented behaviour. On comparing these two constructs, I decided to employ Bettencourt and Brown's (1997) measure for PSSBs as the individual employee-level outcome within the black box discussion.

I also noticed that within this HR-performance discussion there seemed to be no agreement over the actual list of practices that are included in the HPWS discussion (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Lepak, Marrone and Takeuchi, 2004; Wall and Wood, 2005); although typically studies used a similar set of practices incorporating training and development, contingent pay and reward schemes, performance management and recruitment and selection (Paauwe, 2009). For any sort of understanding on how perceptions of HR practices translate into behaviours, it is fundamental to understand

which the actual practices are. However, it has been noted that terms such as high-performance work systems; high-commitment work systems and high-involvement work practices are often used interchangeably (Wood, de Menezes and Lasaosa, 2003). Both Wood and Wall (2007) and Wood and de Menezes (2011) observe that the opportunity component of the HPWS is often not considered in studies. Most studies looking into the black box adopt a select group of practices from the larger collection of all practices with HPWSs. This could mean that practices may have been overlooked that are relevant to the business being investigated. How would one know that in studies in which the opportunity component has been not included in the list of practices, that it is not important for employees?

Most of the studies in this area have adopted a quantitative route adopting stringent statistical methods in examining the linking mechanisms within the black box, with the exception of a few studies (Harney and Jordan 2008; Monks et al., 2013). Notwithstanding the contribution to knowledge that this stream of literature has made, it does not allow for a full and nuanced understanding of *how* HR practices actually affect performance. Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006, p. 1978) reiterate that the “*scientific approach to studying the HRM-performance link is under-theorized*” and lacks “*explanatory power*”. They add that most researchers in this area confront this problem of under-theorisation by conducting more and more empirical work and believe that theory will emerge as a result of this scientific work. Furthermore, Hesketh and Fleetwood, (2006, p. 678) comment that a statistical relationship between measures of HR and measures of performance by no means “*constitute a theory nor an explanation*”. They argue that empirical research in the area of HR and performance lacks explanatory power and therefore they are opposed to this view of examination of the HR-performance link (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008). In-depth examinations of *how* HR affects performance can only be achieved through qualitative research.

My study contributes to the current deliberation about how people management translates into performance. First, specific to the context of services, which accounts for more than 80% of the GDP in the UK (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015), it investigates how the perception of people management practices affects employee behaviours in a service setting as shown in Figure 2. The employee group I chose for this study was that of the FLE, by considering the relative importance of this group in creating satisfied customers.

Secondly, it considers PSSBs as an individual-level outcome. PSSB is an employee-level behaviour specifically relevant to the service context which incorporates FLEs exhibiting both in-role and extra-role behaviours. To the best of my knowledge there is only one other study (Tsauro and Lin, 2004) which employs PSSB in examining the role it plays as a mediator between perceptions of HR practices (selected from a list of practices) and service quality. Tsauro and Lin (2004) find that perceptions of HR practices affect service behaviour; however, they do not investigate how it does so. Furthermore, my study differs from their specific study in other ways: 1) I consider the role of people management and not solely of HR practices; 2) Related to the HR practices, I do not select HR items from a list of pre-existing practices but generate the HR practices from the FLEs; 3) I include the LM as a central actor affecting perceptions of HR practices, which they do not. Thirdly, in contrast to most previous studies that utilise a quantitative hypothesis testing route, my study employs a qualitative approach to explore how perceptions of people management practices actually translate into behaviours.

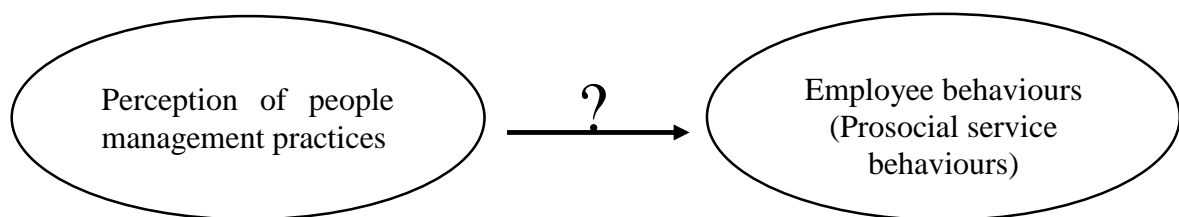


Figure 2: My research study

### 1.3 The research gap and research questions

As I have outlined above, research into the HR-performance discussion has demonstrated links but not necessarily a relationship and there have been calls to explore *how* HR practices actually affect performance, i.e. what is known as the black box. My research is positioned in the broader context of HR and performance, even though it does not focus on the relationship between HRM and performance *per se*, but concentrates on exploring the linking mechanisms in the black box. I decided to adopt Purcell and Hutchinson's

(2007) People-performance model and within that look specifically at the linking mechanisms between perceptions of people management practices and a particular employee-level behaviour in a service business context, PSSB. This will help identify the linking mechanisms in the black box. The principal question that has been identified is:

**How do frontline employees' perceptions of people management practices affect their prosocial service behaviours?**

A few sub-questions were also identified which would help answer the main research question:

**Sub-question 1a: What are the perceptions of people management practices that lead to frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?**

**Sub-question 1b: What, from the line managers' perspective, are the people management practices that lead to frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?**

**Sub-question 1c: Are there any other factors that affect the people-performance discussion?**

At this point I wish to articulate the definitions of the key items in the research questions outlined above:

**People management** practices include all human resources and line management practices that are used to manage the employees in an organization (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

**Frontline employee** is defined as the employee who is in direct contact with the customer.

**Prosocial service behaviour(s)** is defined as helpful behaviours that are directed towards customers and this includes both in-role and extra-role behaviours (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997).

It is pertinent to comment that this research is intended to build theory with respect to the HRM-performance link, with specific emphasis on the linking mechanisms between perceptions of people management practices and PSSBs.

The site where this research is conducted is a company that has an excellent reputation in customer service, namely the John Lewis Partnership, where one particular store was selected for this research study. John Lewis is unique in its nature by also being the largest employee-owned organization in the UK (John Lewis Partnership, 2015a; Employee Ownership Association, 2015a). The FLE in John Lewis is known as the selling Partner<sup>1</sup> and the frontline manager is the section manager. The distinctive setting for this doctoral study will be presented in detail in Chapter 4.

#### **1.4 Plan of the thesis**

The further chapters of this thesis can be précised as follows:

Chapter 2 focuses on the extant literature in depth and positions the research question in the context of the existing discourses in this area. In this chapter I review the literature and crystallize ideas and also explain certain decisions that were made in relation to how data were collected. I explore the literature not only surrounding HR and performance but also specifically looking into literature that investigates the linking mechanisms. Keeping the service setting in mind, I also ensure that this chapter covers discussions surrounding the people-performance discussion in a service setting.

Chapter 3 then makes explicit my research approach and methodology and the philosophical roots of this research. I present in a detailed manner how I endeavour to gather data aligned with my philosophical perspective of critical realism and how that affects every aspect of my research data gathering design. I also lay out in detail the data gathering, i.e. semi-structured interviews, and the use of analysis tools such as NVivo in this chapter. I also present my research site, the Milton Keynes branch of John Lewis UK, an organization that is reputed for its customer service but which is also the largest employee-owned organization in the UK.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation, the term Partner will be shown as “Partner” and not “partner” as that is how it is used within the John Lewis Partnership

In Chapter 4 I present the specific employee-ownership context of this study providing a brief discussion of employee ownership from academic literature and also present an overview of John Lewis as a research site. The objective of this chapter is to aid in a better appreciation of the unique nature of this research site.

I then set out to present the data that were actually gathered for the study with a view to addressing the research question. I do this in Chapters 5 and 6. In chapter 5 I present the findings from the 23 interviews with the selling Partners, who are the FLEs, to collect not only the perception of the people management practices instrumental in their displaying PSSBs, but also to explore the role of context in this. In Chapter 6, I present the findings of the eight interviews with the section managers, the FLMs. The purpose of these selected interviews was to help understand from these LMs which were the people management practices that they thought helped their selling Partners to display PSSBs. The objective of these interviews was *not* to explore in depth their perceptions of these practices but only to add more reliability to the data about the practices obtained from the selling Partners. To that end, this would provide some indication of practices implemented by the LMs.

After having presented the findings from the selling Partners and the section managers, I then go on to discuss these findings in Chapter 7. The discussion is done in two stages: first, I discuss the empirical findings *per se* in the light of the research questions set out and following that, I discuss the findings in the light of the extant literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Where the findings are novel, I also present a brief academic piece on the concept to allow for a clearer understanding of this emerging outcome in this study. I particularly look to draw conclusions on how perceptions of people management practices affect PSSBs in a specific service-ownership context.

I conclude this doctoral dissertation in Chapter 8 with some clear contributions to existing knowledge, theory and practice, present the limitations associated with my work and also discuss future research thoughts. The thesis ends with my personal reflection on the research journey.

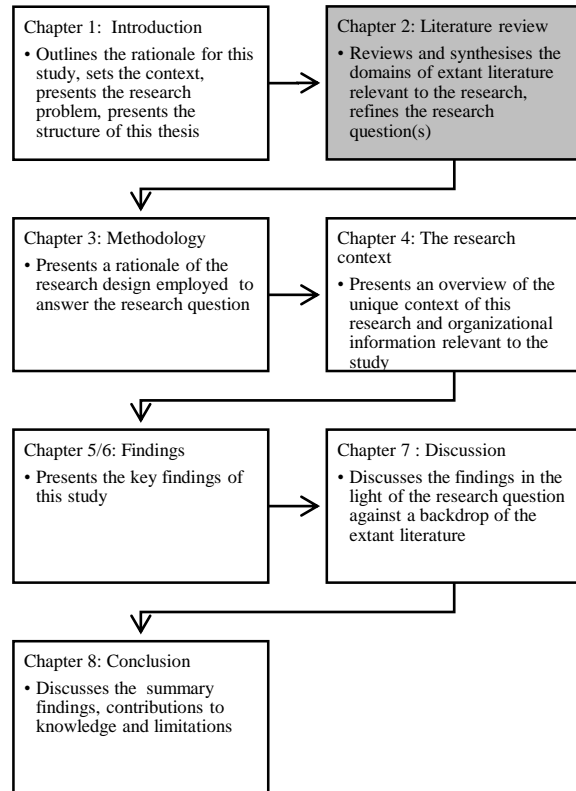
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## 2 Literature review

Bryman and Bell (2011) assert that the purpose of a literature review is to provide justification for a research question and to help guide the researcher's choice of subsequent research design. Thus, this chapter will seek to present a review of the literature pertaining to the research question I introduced in Chapter 1. It will also make transparent to the reader the process of how the final research question was developed.

The research question seeks to investigate how perceptions of people management practices affect

PSSBs. This research question is situated within the black box of the broader framework of the HR-performance discussion in a service setting, with PSSBs as the identified employee-level performance outcome to be investigated specific to the service backdrop. This required conducting a literature search on the theme of HR-performance in general, first, before proceeding to position the HR-performance in a service setting. Consequently, this chapter has two main sections: Section 2.1 starts with a critical analysis of the literature surrounding HRM and organizational performance and then follows this by linking the two concepts; Section 2.2 presents the academic discourse surrounding HRM and performance in a service setting to specifically reflect the context of services for this study. These two sections both follow the same structure; starting with a discussion of the relevant literature followed by a discussion on developing the research question. Two smaller sections follow: Section 2.3 presents the final research question and sub-questions in relation to the gaps identified through the review and finally, Section 2.4 provides a brief conclusion to this chapter.



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## 2.1 Literature Review on HR and performance

Over the last three decades, the field of human resource management (HRM) has evolved and within this domain the link between HRM and organizational performance has particularly grabbed the attention of researchers (Singh et al., 2012). Researchers have devoted significant empirical effort towards understanding the HRM–organizational performance relationship (Combs et al., 2006). Since 1994 this discussion has evolved through distinct stages, with the initial focus on seeking to establish the impact of single practices, to examining the impact of a system of HR practices on several facets measuring organizational performance (Lepak et al., 2006). In their study, Huselid and Becker (2000) found that a one standard deviation change in the HR system gave rise to a 10-20% increase in a firm’s market value. The two main reviews of research in the area of HR and performance (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Combs et al., 2006) confirmed that the bulk of available studies established a relationship between HRM and performance; *“but both also emphasised that their analysis provided evidence of an association rather than causation”* (Guest, 2011, p. 3). But over the last few years, several researchers have been more guarded in their interpretation of the link between HR and performance, with a few suggesting that this link is weak (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Wright, Gardner, and Moynihan, 2003). Over the last 20 years, there have been several reviews in the area of HR and performance with Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005), Wall and Wood (2005) and Combs et al. (2006) furnishing the most comprehensive reviews. Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005, p. 81) in their review of 104 articles, conclude that *“though by no means all of the empirical research HRM in its 'system' form has been found to matter (in a positive sense) for organisational performance; however the 'Holy Grail' of decisive proof remains elusive”*. Wall and Wood (2005, p. 454) comment from their review of 25 articles *“it is premature to assume that HRM initiatives will inevitably result in performance gains, either in all situations or even where deemed appropriate by contingency arguments”*. Furthermore, they add that even though 19 out of the 25 studies *“report some statistically significant positive relationships between HRM practices and performance”* (p. 451) most of the inter-linkages between HR and performances should be *“treated with caution”* because they employed inadequate methodologies (p. 454). Guest (2011, p. 7) highlights how the HR-performance discussion has developed from

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*“What impact does HR have on performance?” to “What is the process whereby HRM can have an impact on performance?”*

### 2.1.1 Human Resource Management and Performance

Boxall, Ang, and Bartram (2011, p. 1504) defines HRM as *“the process of managing work and people in organizations”*. This definition is used in this study in that it articulates the management of not only human resources within a firm but also includes the management of work that human resources perform to help organizational objectives. Several studies measure HRM in terms of individual HR practices (Batt, 2002) or systems/bundles of HR practices (Cappelli & Neumark, 2001; MacDuffie, 1995; Subramony, 2009). Strategic HRM is the study of how HRM can help an organization achieve its objectives (Wright, Gardner, and Moynihan, 2003). Strategic HRM consists of looking at a group of practices within a system and uncovering its effect on some organizational performance outcome. Guest (2002, p. 79) remarks that *“there is little agreement over which practices should be combined to constitute effective HRM”*. On the nature of HRM, Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005, p. 81) conclude that *“A steady body of empirical evidence has been accumulated since the pioneering studies in the mid-1990s, yet it remains the case that no consistent picture exists on what HRM is or even what it is supposed to do”*. Equally, Wall and Wood (2005) observe the diversity of HR practices across HR-performance studies. As recent as 2012, Jiang et al (2012a) remark that there is still no clarity on what exactly constitutes this HR system and questions still remain about the exact make-up of this bundle of practices and its constituents. Heavey et al. (2013) note that there are issues with the substantive content of HR practice items with work practice items varying more across the studies than HR practice items. It was found that compensation, training, selection, performance appraisal, communication and organization structure were assessed in more than 56% of the studies. Other functional categories, such as autonomy, job control, teamwork and career development, were studied in less than 4% of the articles reviewed. The main issue was in how authors defined what constitutes HR practices; in some studies this included both employment and work practices whereas others only included employment aspects. Guest (2011, p. 8)

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concludes that the question of what combinations of practices are likely to have greater impact on performance is hitherto unresolved. The next section will present a discussion of the differing perspectives in SHRM, with the focus on providing an in-depth understanding of the practices used so far in HR-performance research.

### *2.1.1.1 Differing perspectives in Strategic HRM*

Strategic human resource management (HRM) calls for a study of a bundle of human resource (HR) practices, in lieu of individual practices, when considering the HR-performance relationship, essentially because HR practices do not work in isolation but in tandem (MacDuffie, 1995). This has led to the emergence of a systems-led perspective in the investigation of HR and performance (Wright and Boswell, 2002). Three major theoretical perspectives employed in the HR-performance debate are the contingency (Schuler and Jackson, 1987), universalist (Pfeffer, 1994) and configurational schools (Delery and Doty, 1996). Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández and Sánchez-Gardey, (2005) posited a comprehensive model integrating different strategic perspectives. The question is which HR practices included in the best practices list, in reality, contribute to firm performance (Collins and Smith, 2006).

The contingency or best fit approach (Delery and Doty, 1996; Schuler and Jackson, 1987) puts forward the view that in order to be effective, an organization's HR practices must fit with the business strategy of the organization and the relationship between HR and performance will vary according to internal and external factors. HRM will only have a positive impact on performance if the HR practices fit with the firm's business strategy (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández and Sánchez-Gardey, 2005). In the best practices approach, Pfeffer (1998) outlined a set of seven HR practices that he proposed, when implemented, would result in superior organizational performance, irrespective of country, sector and industry (Huselid, 1995). These include employment security, selective hiring, self-managed teams, high pay contingent on performance, extensive training, reduction of status differentials and sharing information. Boxall and Purcell (2003) and Paauwe and Boselie (2005) argue that the universalist and contingency-based practices are relevant in looking at the HRM-performance research in more depth,

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whereby some practices by themselves universally yield positive results but their actual design would depend on the context in which they operate.

Most studies using the best practice approach have investigated the effect of individual practices on firm performance (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005). Essentially, the universalist position posits that there is no requirement for HR practices to match a firm's specific strategy or a precise organizational environment (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009). Within the universalist school, there exists the idea of high-performance work systems (HPWSs) or high-performance work practices (HPWPs) (Appelbaum et al., 2000) or high-commitment work systems/practices (HCWSs/HCWPs) (Guest et al., 2003; Walton, 1985) or high-involvement work practices (HIWPs) (Guthrie, 2001; Lawler, 1986) or alternative work practices (Godard, 2001) wherein more than one HR practice is combined to affect firm performance via enhanced employee skills, motivation and involvement in decisions (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Based on their reviews of studies in the HR-performance area, Wood and Wall (2007, p. 1368) remark that researchers "*treat terms like high involvement, high commitment and high performance management as synonymous, and the studies as if they were measuring the same phenomenon. Yet, it is evident that they are not*". Boxall and Macky (2009) note that HIWPs focus on the work practice items whereas HCWSs focus more on the employment practices of HR systems. The focus of HIWPs is on (i) the power to perform and take decisions regarding work; (ii) information around processes and business results; (iii) rewards attached to business performance; and (iv) knowledge of the entire work system (Vandenberg, Richardson and Eastman, 1999). Boxall and Macky (2009, p. 8) note that high-involvement and high-commitment are less laden terms than high-performance purely because they do not automatically assume that the bundle of practices is performance-enhancing. They also note that a high-involvement system may lead to high commitment but the reverse may not be true. Datta, Guthrie and Wright (2005) describe HPWSs as a structure of HR practices intended to improve employees' skills, commitment and productivity in a manner that results in employees emerging as the competitive advantage for an organization. Lepak and Snell (1999) discuss the concept of HR architecture whereby different HR configurations exist within an organization. Boxall (2012) and Conway and Monks (2008) advise that it would add value to the theory and practice of HRM if

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researchers appreciated the diversity imminent in work contexts and how that affected the manner by which HPWSs worked in particular contexts and why.

HPWPs enhance organizational performance via two interactive and overlapping processes: first, by equipping employees with the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities to execute their daily jobs and tasks, and increase their motivation and opportunity to use those abilities, and secondly by improving the internal social structure through superior communication and collaboration within the workforce (Combs et al., 2006). Following on from Combs et al.'s (2006) review of HR's impact on performance, there has emerged a body of research on exploring the linkages between HPWSs and performance (Chuang and Liao, 2010; Gong et al., 2010; Hsu et al., 2007; Messersmith et al., 2011; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Takeuchi et al., 2007). This will be discussed in more depth in Section 2.1.3.1. Marchington and Grugulis (2000) comment that the list of best practices normally lacks work organization items and those related to employee voice. US research suggests that HCWPs work best for organizations that seek to differentiate on quality and service (Boxall and Purcell, 2000). HRM practices in the form of HPWSs are associated with positive performance outcomes and financial success (Appelbaum et al., 2000, Huselid, 1995).

In addition to financial measures, several studies (e.g. Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Guthrie, 2001) have shown that improving HR practices also increase productivity and lowers employee turnover rates. Most of the research in the HR-performance area has been using high-commitment HR practices (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Collins and Smith, 2006; Combs et al., 2006; MacDuffie, 1995; Youndt et al., 1996) and Wood and de Menezes (2011) note the paucity of research encompassing the involvement element in HPWSs. Some academics suggest that it is essential to group together the appropriate combinations of HRM practices to realise the synergistic effects that result from the exchanges between them (Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prensushi, 1997; MacDuffie, 1995). As Gooderham, Parry and Ringdal (2008) highlight, within the best practices school it is becoming widespread to cluster practices in order to build more sound explanations of the HRM-performance link.

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The configurational perspective proposes that there exists a bundle of complementary HR practices that affect firm performance as a whole and these are known as HR bundles or clusters (MacDuffie, 1995). Subramony (2009) observes that HPWSs employed in most studies typically encompass practices that are part of the ability-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing bundles, thus demonstrating that HR bundles are part of the HR system of practices. Arthur (1994) published one of the first studies using the system approach and this initiated the first of many studies on HR systems and bundles of practices. This was followed by studies from Dyer and Reeves (1995), Huselid (1995) and MacDuffie (1995), in which they studied the effect of HR bundles on organizational performance. This emphasises that the bundles include practices that are interrelated and demonstrate internal fit within the bundle (Boxall, 2012). Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prennushi (1997) suggest that bundles of complementary HR practices have a greater effect on organizational performance than individual practices and it is the synergistic interaction between complementary HR practices that results in enhanced outcomes leading to better firm performance. Monks and Loughnane (2006) comment that not all practices within a bundle are of equal importance and suggest the notion of core and ancillary bundles. Subramony (2009) finds that HRM bundles have considerably larger positive effects than their individual component practices on business outcomes. These bundles also display effects akin to, or larger than, those of HPWSs. Subramony (2009) further identifies that most of the practices are classified into empowerment, motivation and skill enhancing bundles, as presented in Figure 3. However, as noted earlier, Wood and de Menezes (2011) observe an increasing disregard for the involvement component (what Subramony (2009) refers to as the empowerment bundle) in examinations of the relationship concerning HRM systems and performance, and furthermore note that in the industrial relations tradition, the involvement component is central to high-performance management.

Empowerment-Enhancing Bundles	Motivation-Enhancing Bundles	Skill-Enhancing Bundles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Employee involvement in influencing work process/outcomes</li> <li>•Formal grievance procedure and complaint resolution systems</li> <li>•Job enrichment (skill flexibility, job variety, responsibility)</li> <li>•Self-managed or autonomous work groups</li> <li>•Employee participation in decision making</li> <li>•Systems to encourage feedback from employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Formal performance appraisal process</li> <li>•Incentive plans (bonuses, profit-sharing, gain-sharing plans)</li> <li>•Linking pay to performance</li> <li>•Opportunities for internal career mobility and promotions</li> <li>•Health care and other employee benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Job descriptions /requirements generated through job analysis</li> <li>•Job-based skill training</li> <li>•Recruiting to ensure availability of large applicant pools</li> <li>•Structured and validated tools/procedures for personnel selection</li> </ul>

Figure 3: The content of HRM bundles (Subramony 2009, p. 746)

Several recent studies have employed this concept of bundles in their pursuit of a better understanding of HR-performance as can be seen from Table 1. Different authors are seen to employ different types of bundles depending on their theoretical stance.

Table 1: Different types of bundles used in the HR-performance studies

Study	Kinds of HR bundle
Bal et al. (2013)	Developmental and accommodative HR system
Batt and Colvin (2011)	Investments and inducement bundle and performance enhancing bundle
Chang et al. (2013)	Flexibility-oriented HR practices
Collins and Clark (2003)	Network-building HR practices
Gardner, Wright and Moynihan (2011)	Skill-enhancing practices Motivation-enhancing practices Empowerment-enhancing practices
Lopez-Cabrales et al. (2009)	Knowledge-based HRM practices Collaborative HR systems
Teo et al. (2011)	Human capital-enhancing practices

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In addition, Kinnie et al. (2005) have found, through their research, that different employee groups are satisfied with different HR practices. In recent years, the thinking has evolved to reflect that organizations rarely have only one HR system in operation (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009) and different HR systems are purported to be applicable to different groups of employees within a single organization (Lepak and Snell, 2002). Boxall (2012) urges researchers to identify a target employee group in any study, rather than including all employees, as different groups of employees make sense of practices differently. The issue here is, therefore, identifying the set of practices particular to specific groups and within them, identifying the complementary bundles.

#### *2.1.1.2 Human resource practices*

Any HR system involves both work and employment practices. Work practices entail how work and processes are organized, whilst employment practices comprise the procedures utilised to recruit people into the firm, manage, motivate and enable them to perform their jobs while they are in the firm, and also incorporate processes to retain them but if needed, to end their work contract (Boxall and Macky, 2009). In the studies there seems to be no agreement on the nature of HRM (Paauwe and Boselie, 2005) or agreement on the list of practices used (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Lepak, Maronne and Takeuchi, 2004; Wall and Wood, 2005). However, there seem to be some common practices, such as training and development, contingent pay and reward schemes, performance management and recruitment and selection (Paauwe, 2009), although both Wood and Wall (2007) and Wood and de Menezes (2011) observe that the opportunity component of the HPWSs is often not considered in studies.

##### *2.1.1.2.1 Intended, actual and perceived practices*

Boxall and Macky (2007) in their commentary on HPWSs and organizational performance, conclude that *“better information on employee perceptions of, and*

responses to, espoused and actual HR practices is a prerequisite to improving HRM's contribution to organisational effectiveness" (p. 268). There have also been calls for including employees in the HR-performance relationship equation (Conway and Monks, 2009; Guest, 2002; Kinnie et al. 2005). Gerhart et al. (2000) and Wright and Nishii (2007) differentiate between HR policies/intended practices (the HR practices that are supposed to be implemented), HR practices/actual practices (those that are actually being conducted in the company by the LM) and perceived practices (those experienced by the employees). Figure 4 illustrates these different levels of HR practice. Hope-Hailey, Farndale, and Truss (2005) found through their research into the UK banking industry that simply focusing on HR practices without understanding how employees experience them is inadequate. Purcell and Kinnie (2006) and say that employee response is at the 'heart' of any HR-performance investigation as it is employees' understanding of the HR practices that affects their subsequent behaviour. Conway and Monks (2009) also call for the inclusion of employee perceptions.

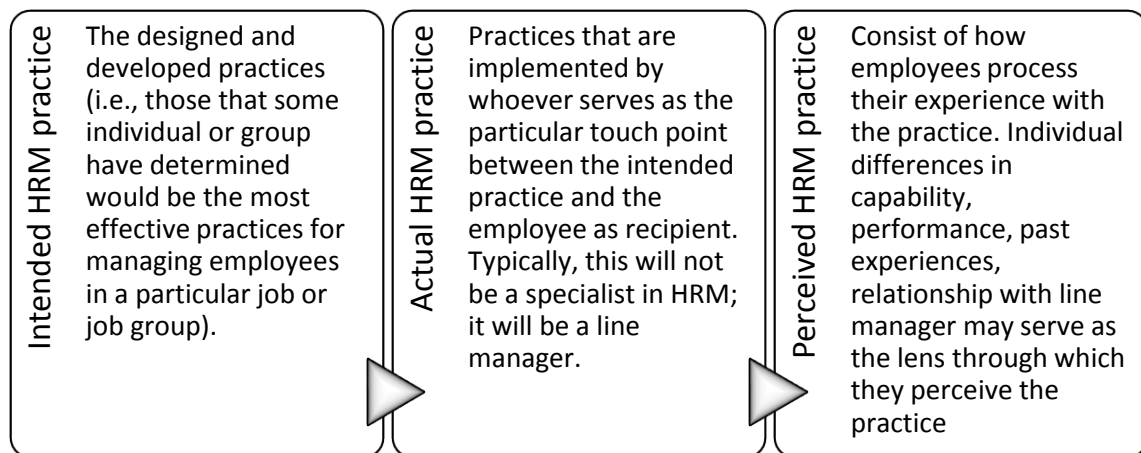


Figure 4: Levels of HR practice (Brewster, Golan and Wright, 2013, p. 831)

Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) also refer to the same distinction as 'espoused' and 'enacted' practices. This has previously been documented by Truss (2001) as the difference between the 'rhetoric' of policy and the 'reality' of practice. Bartram et al. (2007) in their study find that there are considerable discrepancies between perceptions of SHRM and HR focus between CEOs, HR directors and senior managers, thus

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demonstrating a ‘lost in translation’ effect between levels. Researchers reason that employee perceptions of HR practices are pertinent in any discussion of how HR affects performance, because practices are not automatically perceived as intended as there are variations in interpretation amongst individual workers (Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Liao et al., 2009; Nishii and Wright, 2007; Wright and Nishii, 2007). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) similarly posit that the messages that HR practices transmit to employees can be interpreted idiosyncratically (p. 206) and can result in two employees evaluating the same practice in a different light. Nishii, Lepak and Schneider (2008) find through their study of a supermarket chain, that it is not merely the HR practices themselves but the employees’ perceptions of those practices that are significant in realising the desired organizational results. Khilji and Wang (2006) find differences in perception between intended and implemented HRM. Edgar and Geare (2005, p. 544) find that employees’ perceptions of HR practices are most strongly correlated with employee attitudes. As they note, *“Practitioners need to be aware that the way they implement their HRM practices may be a more important determinant of employee attitudes than the number of practices they put in place”*. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) include employee perceptions of HR practices in their research and find that the role of the FLM is crucial in the enactment of the HR practices for the purpose of fostering employee commitment. (The role of the LM in implementing HR practices will be dealt with later in Section 2.1.1.3). Since then, several researchers have documented that it is indeed the employees’ perceptions of HR practices that have an effect on employees’ motivation, attributions, and behaviours (Khilji and Wang, 2006; Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009; Nishii, Lepak and Schneider, 2008). As Hannah and Iverson (2004) note, employees perceive HR practices as the organization’s commitment to them and subsequently respond by positive attitudes and behaviour. Though HR policies could be well designed, it is the actual implementation of these practices that really matter, i.e. it is the ‘how’ of HRM that is vital to the discussion of the contribution of HRM to performance (Boxall, 2012).

Therefore, this seems to indicate that there could be a substantial difference between HR policies designed by organizations at a senior level and what lower level employees actually perceive them to be. This ‘lost in translation’ effect could be quite significant as, in the worst-case scenario, employees could perceive something that was not intended at

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all. This might then impact on employees' attitudes and behaviour in a manner that it was not intended to.

Even though the extant literature makes repeated claims about measuring HR practices, researchers prior to 2008 made no distinction between intended/actual/perceived practices and, to my knowledge, very few studies have examined actual practices or incorporated employee perceptions in their research – the only exceptions being Khilji and Wang, (2006) and Purcell and Hutchinson (2007). In their analysis of HR perceptions, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) use 'satisfaction with HR practices' in their questionnaire. However, perception and satisfaction are conceptually different, i.e. perception of a practice may lead to employees being satisfied or dissatisfied with that practice. Therefore, satisfaction with HR practices may not be the most reliable measure of perception of HR practices. Also, many of the claims made by researchers in the first 10 years of the HR-performance discussion need to be treated with caution as their results are indicative of the relationship between intended practices and organizational performance and not of the relationship between actual or perceived practices and organizational performance. If we were to add to this the fact that how the practices were measured was also questionable, it means that this further weakens the strength of the claims made regarding the HR-performance relationship.

However, since Wright and Nishii's (2007) call for research to capture HR perceptions, many researchers have sought to study the role of employee perceptions in the HR-performance chain (Alfes et al., 2013; Alfes, Shantz, and Truss, 2012; Aryee et al. 2012; Baluch, Salge, and Piening, 2013; Boon and Kalshoven, 2014; Boon et al., 2011; Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Edgar and Geare, 2009; Frenkel, Restubog, and Bednall, 2012; Garcia-Chas, Neira-Fontela, and Castro-Casal, 2014; Karatepe, 2013; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Knies and Leisink, 2014; Kuvaas, 2008; Piening, Baluch, and Salge, 2013; Veld, Paauwe, and Boselie, 2010; Yamamoto, 2013). Overall, findings from these studies validate that it is perceptions which affect how employees react and behave in the workplace. (A detailed discussion of the employee outcomes that have been studied will be conducted in Section 2.1.2.1). As we also observe from Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) study, the role of the LM is key to any HR-performance discussion and I will go on to present a discussion of the role of the LM in bringing policies to life (Purcell et al., 2003).

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### 2.1.1.3 HRM and the LM

The two distinct contributions of Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) were the gathering of employee perceptions of HR practices and the inclusion of the FLM in the HR-performance chain. Likewise, Becker and Huselid (2006, p. 922) note that *“The role of strategy implementation in the “black box” between the HR architecture and firm performance reflects the centrality of the LM and the associated broader focus on workforce management. This shift in the SHRM axis within the firm needs to be reflected in SHRM research as well”*. Adding to this call, Wright and Nishii (2007) also call for the study of enacted HR practices. However, the role of the LM in the HRM-performance causal chain has been largely ignored in research in this area (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). Front LMs or first LMs are the enactors of the HRM practices and are therefore essential to the HR value chain (Gratton and Truss, 2003; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2003). Hence, a discussion of the role of the LM within HRM is crucial to my research. A key discussion in the HR-performance discussion is the role played by LMs in enacting the HR policies and in bringing those policies to life (Purcell et al., 2003), with terms such as decentralisation (Kirkpatrick, Davies, and Oliver, 1992) and devolution (Budhwar and Sparrow, 1997).

The prospect of increased LM participation in HRM was initiated by Eisenstat (1996) and Ulrich (1997, 1998) and Ulrich and Beatty (2001) whereby they proposed that “Partnerships” be formed between HR and the line to “add value” and “deliver results” for organizations. The conversations then moved on to discuss the challenges facing LMs in the implementation of HR (Larsen and Brewster, 2003). The discussion has ranged from returning HR to the line (Hutchinson and Wood, 1995), to the ‘broadening of the roles’ for supervisors (Hales, 2005) and the distinction between espoused and enacted HR practices (Whittaker and Marchington, 2003). Even though Renwick (2003, p. 262) stresses that LMs occupy ‘central stage’ in HRM, a CIPD<sup>2</sup> commissioned study (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2003, p. 2), concludes that *“delivery of HR practices by the line is seen as an area requiring substantial improvement with HR managers tending to believe that LMs have not fully accepted HR responsibility”*.

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<sup>2</sup> Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

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Nehles et al. (2006) define the first LM as “*the lowest LM at the operational level, who manages a team of operational employees on a day-to-day basis and is responsible for performing HR activities*” (p. 257). Hales (2005) defines the FLM as the manager to whom non-managerial employees report. This definition of the FLM fits in with my view of the LM and will be used in my research. The HR devolution to the line literature indicates that LMs are reluctant to take on their HR role (Renwick, 2000) and there are several challenges facing LMs in this devolution: specifically, that LMs may not want to take on the HR role, may not have the time/training to do it, may have inadequate expertise to implement these practices, or are not provided with adequate support from HR to perform these additional tasks (Nehles et al., 2006; Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou, 2003). Renwick (2003) comments that line involvement in HR was suggested for several reasons, such as to reduce costs, to provide a more comprehensive approach to HRM, to place responsibility for HRM with managers most accountable for it, to speed up decision-making, and as an alternative to outsourcing. The rationale for this devolution to the line is that LMs are closer to the employees; this helps reduce operational costs and increases LMs’ effectiveness (Budhwar, 2000; Mayrhofer et al., 2004; Renwick, 2000).

Wright and Nishii (2007) make a noteworthy contribution to the HR-line-performance discussion in stressing the distinction between intended, actual and perceived HR practices. Actual HR practices are those that are implemented and largely enacted by LMs (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). The role of FLMs in enacting HR practices implies that they need to be included in the HR-performance causal chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). The HRM role of LMs therefore includes a management (enacting and managing the HR practices) role and a leadership role (Purcell et al., 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). LMs have an important role to play in executing the designed HR system, and variations in implementation might occur at this level (Den Hartog, Boselie, and Paauwe, 2004). How LMs implement practices depends on how committed and capable they are of playing out their HR role (Den Hartog, Boselie, and Paauwe, 2004; Khilji and Wang, 2006). Woodrow and Guest (2011) find through their research that LMs ignore good management practices to concentrate on other aspects of their job that they perceive as more important. Contrary to this, Harney and Jordan (2008), through their qualitative

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study of a call-centre, find that LMs' interventions ameliorate some of the negative aspects of work tasks. Recent research evidence confirms that how LMs implement HRM practices impacts on employee attitudes and behaviour (Alfes et al., 2013; Knies and Leisink, 2014). From a psychological contract perspective, LMs are the principal contract creator for their employees (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000) and these contract beliefs affect employees' job performance and discretionary behaviour (Rousseau, 2010). Maertz et al. (2007) remark that LMs cover the shortcomings of organizational policies and management decisions. The role of the LM has emerged to be crucial in influencing employee attitudes and performance (Dysvik and Kuvaas, 2012; Gilbert, de Winne, and Sels, 2011; Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2010). Farndale and Kelliher's (2013) study of the employee experience of performance appraisals advocates that LMs have a crucial role to play in the proper functioning of HRM practices.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggest that a strong HRM system, coupled with a good LM, may result in a higher contribution of HRM to organizational performance, rather than just the HR system. However, this area of LM implementation or enactment of HR practices is not without its problems (McGovern et al., 1997; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Renwick, 2000, 2003). The key problematic areas include the relationship between HR and the line, LM's desire to carry out the tasks properly, and the LM's knowledge of the policies and practices (Watson, Maxwell and Farquharson, 2007). Brandl, Madson and Madson (2009) through their analysis of the LM involvement in HR research, highlight that "*HR duties are often low on the list of priorities of LMs*" (p. 195) and the most important reason for the successful implementation of HR practices by LMs seems to be their personal motivation to do so. Brandl, Madson, and Madson (2009) find that for most LMs, motivating others and staff well-being are the most important HR activities, whereas team building, handling conflicts and coaching are their least important. Heavy workloads, short-term job pressures and lack of time-management skills are the main reasons why LMs fail to adequately support the HR initiative (Watson and Maxwell, 2007), whilst Maxwell and Watson (2006) find that senior management support and time/workloads exigencies were the main challenges for LMs in enacting HR initiatives.

In his study, Renwick (2003) finds that the line did possess the "desire" to do HR-related work, and had both the "capacity" and the "ability" to do it well if sufficiently trained and

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assisted by HR, but not if they tried to do it without HR assistance. However, his study does raise the question about whether LMs do their jobs in a fair manner as interpreters of the HR policy and whether employees trust LMs' motives to look after their well-being. The skills and capacities of LMs are crucial in eliciting employee responses in terms of employee attitudes (Thornhill and Saunders, 1998). Supervisors can influence how employees experience management practices and identify with organizational goals. Thus, supervisors also affect employee commitment to the organization (Ogilvie, 1986). Specifically in the service sector, where the employees' inputs are so crucial in creating an organizational success story, involving LMs in HRM adds value to the organization (Watson, Maxwell, and Farquharson, 2007).

Considering the role of the LM in implementing HR policies, it is welcoming to see that research has started to include the LM in the HR-performance chain (Alfes et al., 2013; Knies and Leisink, 2014; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007) and has also demonstrated the strategic importance of adding the LM to the HR-performance equation. Alfes et al. (2013), through their research, identify the LM as a key actor in the HR-performance chain. They find that perceptions of LM behaviour and perception of HR practices are related to employee engagement. Knies and Leisink (2014) find that the enactment of HR practices by supervisors, in addition to their leadership behaviour, impacted on the ability, commitment and autonomy of employees – and consequently had an indirect effect on extra-role behaviour. Alfes et al. (2013) found that perceived LM behaviour was associated with employee engagement. Adopting a relational approach, Frenkel, Sanders, and Bednall (2013) discover that employees who hold a consistent view of the level of support provided by LMs feel more satisfied at work and are less inclined to leave the organization. This section has established the emergence of the crucial role of the LM within the HR-performance discussion. Having reviewed the extant literature on the HRM and the role of the line within the HR-performance linkage, I will now present an account of performance within the HR context and the issues and discussion surrounding it.

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### 2.1.2 Understanding performance

Dyer and Reeves (1995) summarise performance outcomes under financial outcomes, organizational outcomes and employee (HRM) outcomes (see Figure 5). They note that

Financial outcomes	Organizational outcomes	Employee (HRM) outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Profitability</li><li>• Revenues</li><li>• Share prices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality</li><li>• Productivity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attitudes</li><li>• Behaviours</li></ul>

Figure 5: Performance outcomes

HRM measures of performance are more likely to be affected by HR practices than organizational or financial outcomes. Wright et al. (2005), comment that most of the performance measurements in this HRM-performance link had used financial measures of performance (Arthur 1994; Delery and Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Huselid and Becker, 2000) or organizational measures of performance (Guest et al., 2003, Wright, Garner, and Moynihan, 2003). In Boselie, Dietz and Boon's (2005) review they find that most of the performance measures are financial. This might not be the most reliable indicator of the HR-performance measurement, as factors not related to HR can influence profits, and these could be both internal and external factors. Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005) comment that even though HR is supposed to bring about effective performance through changes in employee attitudes and behaviours, the number of studies that actually used employee-level measures is quite low. They find that only 26 out of 104 articles in their review of HR-performance adopt some form of employee-related outcome. Employee outcomes at an individual level that have been measured are increased commitment, competence, cost-effectiveness, individual well-being and organizational effectiveness (Truss, 2001). The only employee-related outcomes that Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005, p. 75) encounter are "*employee turnover or leaving rates; absenteeism; job satisfaction,*

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*commitment and trust-in-management; employees' stress levels and perceptions of work intensification and impact of work on home life''.*

### *2.1.2.1 Employee outcomes of performance*

Human resource practices have been understood to have an effect on organizational performance via employee attitudes and behaviour (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Wood and de Menezes, 1998). In the last few years, following calls to include the employee in the HR-performance chain (Purcell and Kinnie, 2006), academics have started examining employee outcomes of performance in their quest to validate the HR-performance link. Recent studies on employee outcomes within the HR-performance chain include person-level attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Liao et al., 2009; Snape and Redman, 2010; Takeuchi, Chen and Lepak, 2009; Wright and Kehoe, 2008). Research in examining HR's effect on employee outcomes has also investigated organizational commitment (Boon and Kalshoven, 2014; Boon et al., 2011; Edgar and Geare, 2009; Macky and Boxall, 2007; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Wright and Kehoe, 2008); job satisfaction (Boon et al., 2011; Edgar and Geare, 2009; Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak, 2009; Wood and de Menezes, 2011; Wu and Chaturvedi, 2009; Zhang et al., 2013); and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Boon et al., 2011; Kehoe and Wright, 2013 ; Meyer and Smith, 2000; Snape and Redman, 2010; Wei, Han and Hsu, 2010). HR practices and their perceptions have been found to be strongly related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Edgar and Geare, 2009). Boon et al.'s (2011) study establishes that HR perceptions are robustly related to employees' attitudes. Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak (2009) confirm that shared establishment-level climate operates as a significant mediator of the cross-level relationships between HPWSs and individual commitment and job satisfaction. Kehoe and Wright (2013) prove that employees' collective perceptions of high-performance HR practices are strongly linked to affective commitment, OCB, and intent to remain with the organization, and are negatively related to absenteeism. They also establish that affective commitment further mediates the HR perception and OCB link.

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In a study by Kinnie et al. (2005) they find that different HR practices affected different worker groups, with respect to their commitment, in different ways. Satisfaction with select HR practices has been found to affect organizational commitment (Paul and Anantharam, 2004). Frequently, social theory (Blau, 1964) has been used as a basis to explain the association between HR practices and employee attitudes (Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro, 1990). When employees perceive that the organization they are working for is committed to them (e.g. perception of HR practices) they reciprocate with higher levels of commitment towards the organization (Whitener, 2001). Eisenberger et al. (1986) conceptualise the notion of perceived organizational support (POS) to reflect the organization's commitment to the employee. A positive relationship between the employee and the organization results in employee actions that signal reciprocation in beneficial ways (Whitener, 2001).

Several authors (e.g. Lepak and Snell, 1999; Wright and Boswell, 2002) argue that it might be inadequate to suggest that there exists one set of HR practices that would yield high-commitment responses from all employee groups. Conway (2004) finds that different HR practices affect different types of commitment at different stages in the employees' career cycle. Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2004) state that commitment can take varying forms and be directed towards different foci, i.e. the organization, the job, the profession, LM/supervisor, customer (Iles, Mabey and Robertson, 1990; Swailes, 2002). As Bergmann et al. (2000, p15) note, employee commitment includes the ideas of organizational commitment, professional commitment and professional association (union) commitment. Studies on commitment have also brought to light that the more proximal a focus of commitment, such as LMs, team workers and of course customers in a service context, the greater the power they have to exert influence on employee behaviour (Redman and Snape, 2005).

OCBs, the other most studied employee outcome, are often seen as behavioural consequences of organizational commitment (LePine, Erez, and Johnson, 2002; Paulin, Ferguson and Bergeron, 2006). The concept of OCB was first conceptualised by Bateman and Organ (1983). OCB represents "*individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation*" (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Organ (1988) put forward five dimensions of OCB: altruism, sportsmanship, civic virtue, courtesy, and

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conscientiousness. They are behaviours that are internally directed within the organization (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). Research has found that organizational commitment, job satisfaction (MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Paine, 1999) and perceptions of fairness (Moorman, Niehoff and Organ, 1993) affect OCBs. Podsakoff et al.'s (2000) review of research on OCBs established employee, task and organizational characteristics and leadership behaviours as antecedents of OCB. In a meta-analysis of consequences of OCB, Podsakoff et al. (2009), conclude that OCBs affect employee turnover intentions, actual turnover, and absenteeism at an individual level, and productivity, efficiency, reduced costs, customer satisfaction, and unit-level turnover at the organizational level. In addition, Nishi, Lepak, and Schneider (2008) find that OCBs are related to customer satisfaction. Whitman, Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, (2010) find support for a positive association between OCBs at the unit level and unit-level performance. Similarly, Messersmith et al. (2011) conclude that OCBs are associated with a range of employee outcomes. Bettencourt, Gwinner and Meuter (2001) comment that in spite of considerable research into the subject of OCB, that research was limited in scope, i.e. it was not conducted across different types of organizations and sectors. 'Spillover' effects of OCBs include employees wanting to engage in other prosocial behaviours, such as helping customers fulfil their needs (Yoon and Suh, 2003).

Specifically, behaviours that have been studied beyond OCBs include discretionary work effort and co-worker assistance (Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, 2012); extra-role customer service (Karatepe, 2013); in-role behaviour (Snape and Redman, 2010); in-role and extra-role behaviours (Tremblay et al., 2010); extra-role behaviour (Knies and Leisink, 2014); service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Sun, Aryee and Law, 2007); innovative work behaviour (Alfes et al., 2013); and employees' civility towards patients (Baluch, Salge, and Piening, 2013).

In addition, newer measures, in line with calls for investigating employee well-being (Guest, 2001) as an outcome, have also led to considering outcomes such as employee well-being (Alfes, Shantz and Truss, 2012), job stress (Butts et al., 2009), work intensification; job insecurity; job strain (Orlitzky and Frenkel, 2005), anxiety and overload (Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith, 2013), anxiety and contentment (Wood and de Menezes, 2011), emotional exhaustion (Zhang et al., 2013), and subjective well-being

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(Fan et al., 2014). Paauwe (2009, p. 130) argues that HPWS research should pay ‘equal attention both to the managerial, functionalist perspective and to the concerns, involvement and well-being of employees. This is consistent with a more nuanced view that HRM can lead to workers’ well-being and therefore enhance performance for the organization (Guest, 2011).

### 2.1.3 Existing theories on associations between HR and performance

Having discussed in depth the nature of HRM and organizational performance, I will now present a critical discussion of the various theoretical explanations linking HR and organizational outcomes.

The following section presents a critical review of the chronological development of the mechanisms linking HR and performance. Specifically, it seeks to look into the black box, i.e. how does HR affect Performance?

#### 2.1.3.1 *The black box discussion*

*“A clearer articulation of the black box between HR and firm performance is the most pressing theoretical and empirical challenge in the SHRM literature”* (Becker and Huselid, 2006, p. 915). The black box discussion involves the following questions: How is HR actually translated into performance? What are the intervening variables that explain the relationship between HR practices and firm performance? (Paauwe and Farndale, 2005). The absence of definitive connections between HRM and organizational performance allows no definitive conclusions to be reached on the HR-performance research front (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005; Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2006; Wall and Wood, 2005). Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005, p. 77) specifically conclude, based on their review, *“Our analysis of the 104 articles confirms the impression that the 'linking mechanisms' between HRM and performance and the mediating effects of key variables are largely disregarded”*. They further comment that even though they found that authors acknowledged the existence of the black box and speculated on what could be in it, very

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few studies actually attempted to look inside. Hesketh and Fleetwood (2006) similarly posit that there appears to be some agreement that a relationship exists but not on how or why the HR practices affect organizational performance. Previous research has demonstrated that HR has an effect on firm performance in some form, but we do not yet have adequate information on how this link really works (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Wright et al., 2001; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Klein and Kozlowski, 2000). Moreover, Wright and Gardner (2003, p. 312) specifically state “*Theoretically, no consensus exists regarding the mechanisms by which HR practices might impact on firm outcomes. This lack of theoretical development has resulted in few empirical studies that explore the processes through which this impact takes place*”. They go on to reiterate that the HR-performance relationship has been portrayed as a linear causal model with HR practices acting as the independent variable and some form of organizational performance as the dependent variable, with the black box in between. Regarding the black box issue, they go on to pose questions such as “*How many boxes should be in the black box?*” (p.319) and “*What should be in each black box?*” (p.321) and agree that future research should look at the mechanisms in depth. The question about whether HR has an impact on performance is not in doubt, only how organizations can make it happen (Boxall and Macky, 2009; Marchington and Zagelmeyer, 2005).

There has been some initial research work (both conceptual and empirical) done in this area, i.e. “unlocking the black box” (Purcell, Kinnie, and Hutchinson, 2003; Purcell et al., 2003) or “peeling back the onion” (Guthrie, Datta and Wright, 2004). Several researchers, such as Appelbaum et al. (2000), Becker et al. (1997), Guest (1997), Purcell et al. (2003), have included several variables between HR practices and firm performance, such as employee motivations, employee skills, discretionary effort, etc.

#### *2.1.3.2 Theoretical perspectives on how HR affects performance*

The dialogue on how HR affects performance has evolved in the last two decades. I will now go on to present a discussion in chronological order of how HR affects performance and how this has changed/is changing the way we understand this relationship. The first conceptualisations of how HR affects performance was put forward by US-based

researchers Becker et al. (1997) as illustrated in Figure 6. Based on previous empirical research, they suggested that SHRM systems (HR systems aligned to the organization's strategic orientation) resulted in employee behaviours that were in line with crucial business priorities, which subsequently led to profits, growth, and eventually market value.

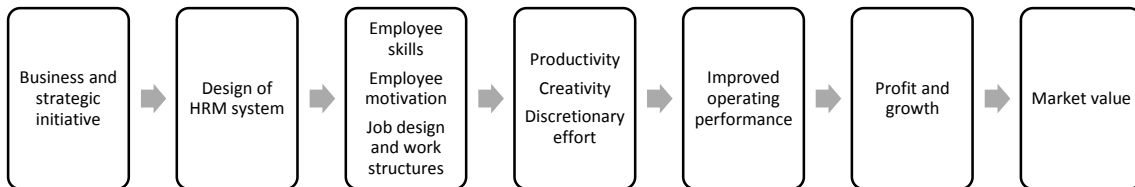


Figure 6: A model of the HR–shareholder value relationship (Becker et al., 1997, p. 40)

Around the same time, in the UK, Guest (1997) also proposed that HR affects strategy through changes in HRM outcomes, behaviour outcomes, performance outcomes, finally resulting in financial outcomes. Guest's (1997) model illustrates concepts in more detail than Becker et al. (1997). Guest (1997) particularly specifies the HRM strategy in terms of innovation, quality and cost reduction, and then outlines the HRM practices that fit these defined strategies as shown in Figure 7. The specific outcomes that HR contributes to, as outcomes of employee behaviours, could be aggregated at the organizational level from the employee-level and consequently lead to higher profits and return on investment. Guest's research was followed by that of Appelbaum et al. (2000) who then suggested that a high-performing work system encourages discretionary effort and it is this effort that leads to overall firm performance.

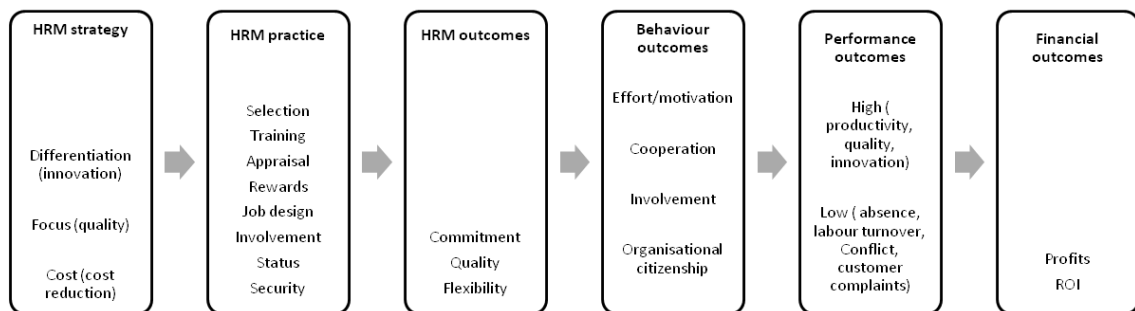


Figure 7: How does HR lead to Performance? (Guest, 1997)

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The key difference between Appelbaum et al.'s (2000) and the previous two models is the explicit omission of HR strategy by Appelbaum et al. (2000) as highlighted in Figure 8. They argue that a focused high-performance work system engulfing specific practices was the key, irrespective of its fit with the organization's business strategy.

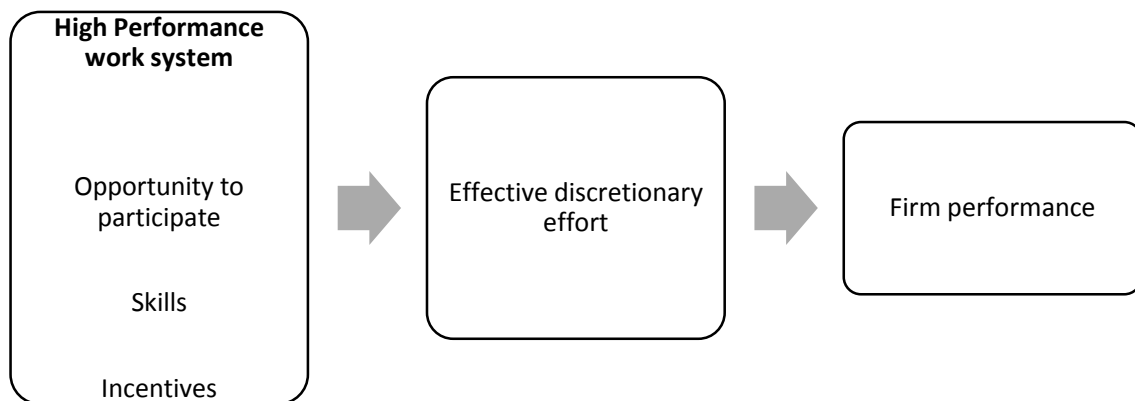


Figure 8: The HR-performance link (Appelbaum et al., 2000)

The three commonly-cited theoretical frameworks used in exploring the HR-performance link are (Boselie, Dietz, and Boon, 2005): the behavioural approach (Jackson, Schuler and Rivero, 1989; Schuler and Jackson, 1987); resource-based view (RBV) (Barney and Wright, 1998); and the AMO (Appelbaum et al., 2000) framework. The behavioural perspective proposes that HR practices encourage desired behaviours amongst employees to result in organizational objectives (Jiang et al., 2012b). Research in the area of HR and performance is also underpinned by the RBV of the firm, whereby an organization uses its resources to gain competitive advantage, i.e. it is the organization's HR function that provide the differentiation in the marketplace by being rare, inimitable, valuable and non-substitutable (Barney and Wright, 1998; Wright and McMahan, 1992); within this, they focus on employee competencies to result in competitive advantage. Criticisms have emerged of this approach with researchers stating that the questions of strategy are not explicitly addressed. The AMO model developed by Appelbaum et al. (2000), has grown to become a widely-established framework within which to elucidate how HR policies impact on performance, and is instrumental in determining which HR practices should be developed and implemented. To some extent, "AMO theory" (Appelbaum et al., 2000)

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has evolved as a model to help guide the choices of HR practices to study. The model suggests that HR practices result in enhanced employee performance by developing 1) employees' abilities (A) and skills, 2) improving an employee's motivation (M) for discretionary effort, and 3) providing employees with the opportunity (O) to make full use of their skills and be motivated (Paauwe and Boselie, 2005) to engage in discretionary effort leading to firm performance. Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005) and Macky and Boxall (2007) point out that the AMO framework seems to be the most favoured in articles post 2000. Paauwe and Boselie (2005), in their review of articles in the area of HR-performance find that more than half of the articles use the AMO framework and highlight that at least there seems to be some agreement in understanding how HRM is operationalised in explaining how HRM translates into performance.

The Bath People and Performance model (Purcell et al., 2003) as displayed in Figure 9 builds on the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000) and advocates two main ideas: 1) discretionary behaviour contributes to organizational performance and 2) the role of the LM is crucial in bringing HR policies to life. For employees to exhibit discretionary behaviours that contribute positively towards organizational performance, the central building block is enhancing the employees' ability and motivation, and providing them with opportunities (through effective choice and use of HR practices) to engage in discretionary behaviours through the effective design of policies and practices. The model therefore agrees with Appelbaum et al. (2000) on the idea of discretionary behaviour emerging as the crucial item leading to competitive advantage but also identifies the role of the LM as vital in achieving the desired employee-level attitudes leading to discretionary behaviour. This was the first model conceptualising the HR-performance link that included the LM.

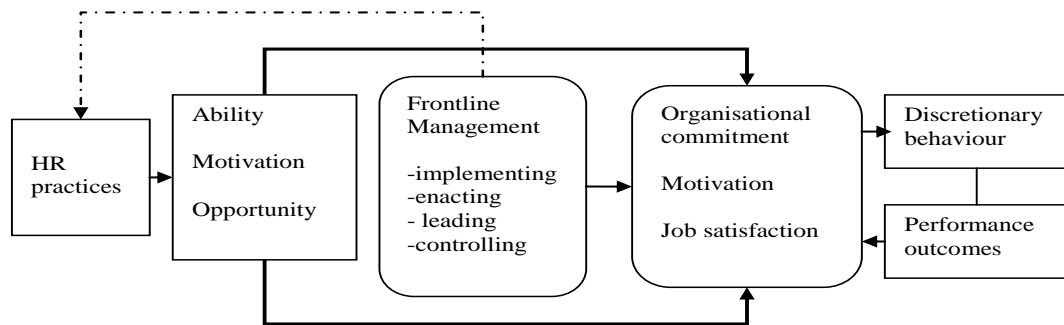


Figure 9: The Bath People-Performance model (Purcell et al., 2003)

Wright and Nishii (2007) suggest an alternative approach that focuses on the *process* of how HR affects performances. They argue that most of the earlier research was also situated at one level (primarily at the organizational level) and assumed that everything else at other levels (employee or collective) remained constant. In their paper they also argue that the HR-performance literature has omitted the individual variance and processes that are required for HR practices to have an effect on organizational performance. They call for the development of multi-level theories of SHRM and multi-level research. They acknowledge that multi-level theorising may not be feasible and propose that alternatively researchers might wish to “*study smaller aspects of the linkage between organisational and individual phenomenon*” (2007, p. 20).

Subsequently, Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) amended their 2003 People and Performance model to include the distinctions between policies, practices and employees’ experience of them. They also wanted to demonstrate the instrumental role of the LMs in the enactment of the intended HR practices and researched the role of the LM in perception of HR practices.

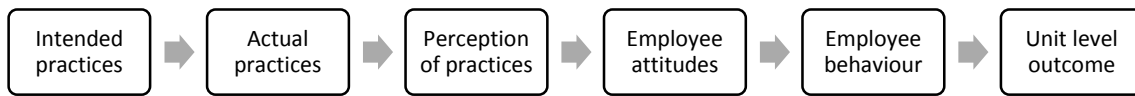


Figure 10: Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) *People Management - performance causal chain*

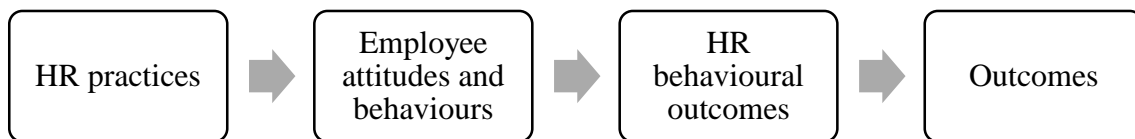
Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) propose that how employees perceive the HR practices and how they are implemented will affect their attitudinal and behavioural responses to them as demonstrated in Figure 10. This entails a form of social exchange, whereby employees respond to the commitment the organization shows them in how they design and implement HR practices by engaging in discretionary behaviours. They label the frontline enactment of HR practices and frontline leadership behaviour together as *people management* and posit that employee outcomes affect organizational effectiveness, which then results in enhanced firm performance. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) also find through their research that, both independently and additively, satisfaction with HR and leadership practices affects employee commitment to the organization and to the job. This was the first paper of its kind to include the FLM in any empirical research involving the HRM-Performance causal chain.

However, that paper is also not without its limitations. It adopted a hypothesis-testing route where the measurement items for HR practices and leadership practices were not exhaustive. In addition, the measurement of perception of HR practices was established by asking for satisfaction with HR practices. In my view this is not a valid measure. The FLM's leadership abilities were only gathered through a few questions on change, involvement and communication. I am also sceptical that these are the only roles that the LMs play in addition to translating HR practices into action. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) also measured commitment to the organization and to the job through a few items such as job autonomy, challenge and achievement. This, in my view, excludes many variables from the HRM-performance relationship. Therefore, their study, though influential, is not exhaustive. Future research needs to look into investigating perceptions

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of HR practices and also needs to include employee outcomes more specific to the service industry of today. I propose to choose their conceptual model for my research question.

The understanding now is that HR practices (organizational level) affect the attitudes and behaviour of employees (individual level), which in turn, when aggregated, affect HR behavioural outcomes, which then could lead to organizational outcomes (Paauwe, 2009) (as shown below in Figure 11).



*Figure 11: How does HR affect organizational outcomes (Paauwe, 2009)*

As Paauwe (2009) notes, this involves multi-level theorising and linking observations between the organizational and individual level. Jiang, Takeuchi and Lepak (2013) take the concept of multi-level theorising a step further and add a third level in addition to organization and the individual. They argue that HR systems operate at three levels: the organization, the team and the individual and at each level, there are mediating mechanisms that link these HR practices to level-specific outcomes.

### *2.1.3.3 Empirical studies on how HR affects performance*

Wright and Gardner (2003) remark that there is no consensus concerning the mechanisms by which HR practices might affect firm outcomes. They then go on to note that as of 2003, this has resulted in hardly any empirical studies that have delved deeper into exploring these mechanisms. Since then there has been a spate of studies examining the mediating mechanisms within the black box (Jiang, Takeuchi, and Lepak, 2013). These studies have established the presence of several mediating variables. Deeper examination of these mediating variables illustrates that different theoretical standpoints inform them – the behavioural perspective (Schuler and Jackson, 1987); the human capital perspective

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(Takeuchi et al, 2007); and the social exchange theory (Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007). In addition, Snape and Redman (2010) and Boxall, Ang and Bartram (2011) have employed the job characteristics theory (Oldham and Hackman, 1976) and empowerment theory to provide an additional explanation of the HR-performance association. Burgeoning literature in this area has now moved to a multi-level study with mediators including individual perceptions of HPWSs consistently measured. However, this seems to be following a ‘more of the same’ quantitative approach associated with earlier research within the HR-performance domain, with more sophisticated numerical analysis to establish the mediators. The area of most topical movement in SHRM research is the exploration of mediating mechanisms from a multi-level theoretical angle (e.g. Liao et al., 2009; Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak, 2009) – see Table 2 for a summary of the mediating variables by unit level of analysis. As can be seen from Table 2, research investigating mediating mechanisms have been conducted at unit-level, individual-level and multi-level and the mediators being studied include employee perceptions, climate mediators and employee attitudes and behaviours. This has answered calls from Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Wright and Nishii (2007) for this line of research.

Table 2: Mediators in the black box (adapted from Jiang, Takeuchi, and Lepak, 2013)

Unit level of analysis	
<b>Human Capital</b>	Cabello-Medina, López—Cabrales and Valle-Cabrera (2011); Hsu et al. (2007); Takeuchi et al. (2007); Youndt and Snell (2004)
<b>Employees' attitudes and behaviours</b>	Harmon et al. (2003); Kizilos, Cummings, and Cummings (2013); Messersmith et al. (2011); Orliczky and Frenkel (2005); Park et al. (2003); Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007)
<b>Climate related mediators</b>	Chuang and Liao (2010); Collins and Smith (2006); Orliczky and Frenkel, (2005); Rogg et al (2001); Veld, Paauwe, and Boselie (2010)
Individual level of analysis	
<b>Employees' attitudes and behaviours</b>	Barling, Kelloway and Iverson (2003); Boxall, Ang, and Bartram (2011); Kuvaas (2008); Macky and Boxall (2007)
Multi-level analysis	
<b>Employee perceptions of HPWS</b>	Aryee et al. (2012); Den Hartog et al. (2013); Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith (2013); Liao et al. (2009)
<b>Climate mediators</b>	Aryee et al. (2012); Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak (2009)
<b>Employee attitudes and behaviours</b>	Gittell, Seidner, and Wimbush (2010); Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith (2013); Snape and Redman (2010); Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak (2009); Wood et al. (2012); Wu and Chaturvedi (2009)

Unquestionably as can be seen from Table 2, empirical studies offer convincing support that employees' perceptions of HR practices are related to firm performance through mediating employee attitudes and behaviours (Baluch, Salge, and Piening, 2013; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Kuvaas, 2008; Piening, Baluch, and Sange, 2013; Yamamoto, 2013). This is evident from research using a multi-level perspective. Taking into account multiple perspectives (as is evident in current research) concurrently offers a richer

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understanding of the association between HRM and organizational outcome (RBV, human capital, behavioural perspective) (Jiang et al., 2012b). Specifically, trust (Alfes, Shantz, and Truss, 2012), psychological empowerment (Aryee et al., 2012, ; Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Ehrnrooth and Björkmann 2011), perceived organizational support (POS) (Kuvaas, 2008; Liao et al., 2009), climate mediators (Aryee et al., 2012; Veld, Paauwe and Boselie, 2010; Wei, Han, and Hsu, 2010), justice perceptions (Frenkel, Restubog, and Bednall, 2012; Kuvaas, 2008), job satisfaction (Den Hartog et al., 2013; Wei, Han, and Hsu, 2010), work engagement (Karatepe, 2013; Boon and Kalshoven, 2014) have emerged as the key mediating mechanisms linking perceptions to employee and organizational outcomes. Appendix 1 provides a review of the studies investigating the black box that have specifically incorporated employee perceptions and also demonstrates the range of mediators in the HR-performance investigation. Please see Appendix 2 for a brief overview of the main mediators employed in the investigation of the HR-performance chain.

It can be noted that behavioural outcomes have become a focus of investigation; in particular, (in addition to OCB) extra-role behaviour (Knies and Leisink, 2014), extra-role customer service (Karatepe, 2013) or discretionary behaviour (Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, 2012) are being considered as employee outcomes. Furthermore, there seems to be the emergence of research incorporating the customer measures of performance at an organizational level (Baluch, Salge, and Piening, 2013). Following on calls from Guest (2011), employee well-being measures have also been added (Alfes, Shantz and Tuss, 2012; Fan et al., 2014; Wood and de Menezes, 2011). What is noteworthy by its absence is the LM's general leadership role in any measurement of HR perceptions, even though Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) study very noticeably renders that independently and additively HR practices and LM's leadership affect employee-level attitudes. Adding a new insight, recent SHRM research has begun to focus on social relationships at work and how that affects the HR-performance dialogue. Collins and Clark (2003) and Gant, Ichniowski and Shaw (2002) demonstrate through their research that social networks mediate the HR-performance relationship. Gittell, Seidner and Wimbush (2010, p. 2) in the same vein suggest that researchers should concentrate on 'relationships between employees' as the key causal mechanism that ties high-performance work systems to performance outcomes and through their study in hospitals, validate that relational

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coordination mediates the association between these high-performance work practices and outcomes, suggesting a relational pathway through which high-performance work systems work. In the same vein, Frenkel, Sanders and Bednall (2013) establish through their research that employees who hold a consistent view of the level of support offered by line and senior management will experience greater work satisfaction, and will be less inclined to quit their jobs; they also call for research that not only utilises skills/ ability and motivation-related mediators but in addition, employs relational mediators.

But it is also interesting to note that most researchers in this field use the hypothesis testing route of identifying an HR system, selecting mediating variables, selecting suitable performance outcomes and, through rigorous statistical testing, establishing some kind of association between these variables. I found evidence of only two studies, one by Harney and Jordan (2008) and the other by Monks et al. (2013) that followed a qualitative path to explore the HR-performance relationship. Harney and Jordan (2008) found through their study that one big customer (in a call-centre context) exercises considerable control over the HRM policies developed within the call-centre but that the LMs played a very important role in ameliorating some of the negative work tasks and the HRM imposed by this dependency relationship. Monks et al. (2013) uncovered the important role played by HR philosophy and processes in the functioning of HR systems, the choices that firms have in the ways in which they configure their HR systems, and the outcomes that may result. Both these qualitative pieces of research uncover novel factors that affect the HR-performance dialogue and fit within the idea of contextual research incorporating multiple stakeholders (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Paauwe, 2009). It can be seen that Purcell et al.'s (2003) study, which depicts the importance of the Big Idea and the LM, is also a qualitative study. This further illustrates that simply by taking an hypothesis-testing route, it might not be possible to obtain a true understanding of the HR-performance relationship, more so because organizations are not closed, but open, systems (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008).

Having presented the empirical discussion surrounding HR-performance, the next section will concentrate on highlighting the concerns acknowledged by researchers pertaining to this field and their implications for this piece of research.

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#### 2.1.4 Concerns in the HR-performance research

This section will seek to summarise the key issues within the HR-performance discussion. I would like to highlight here that this section might be presenting some method-related information that has been considered earlier in this chapter (Section 2.1.1.2), but I feel that it would be worth presenting again (briefly) for a better understanding of the methodological concerns as a whole.

As the SHRM field has matured, this has led to the emergence of identifying methodological concerns about how research has been conducted in this field (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009). Wright and Haggerty (2005) have identified the problems in the HR-performance discussion as time, cause and individuals (see also Vanhala and Tuomi, 2005). Wall and Wood (2005), through their review, summarise HR measurement issues as reliability, random measurement error and knowledge contamination (i.e. the same person providing both HR and organizational performance data). Batt (2002) summarises the limitations as being in three specific areas: 1) the research does not highlight mediating behaviours that explain this HR-performance relationship (Marchington and Gurgulis, 2000); 2) even though research suggests that the external business strategy of the organization should in theory moderate this HR-performance link, little actual research supports this; and 3) in spite of the fact that three-quarters of employment is in services, most research in this area of HR-performance is based on manufacturing settings (Redman and Mathews, 1998; Guest et al., 2003). Wright et al. (2005) also remark that although the HR-performance link is substantiated in the literature, the studies almost entirely use research designs that do not allow the inference of causality in this relationship nor test for reverse causal order<sup>3</sup> (Gerhart et al, 2000; Wright and Haggerty, 2005). Most studies in this area have been cross-sectional in nature (Wall and Wood, 2005), although it has been found that there is a time lag between HR implementation and actual changes in performance (Hope-Hailey, Farndale, and Truss, 2005; Vanhala and Tuomi, 2006). Only three studies to the best of my knowledge (Cappelli, and Neumark, 2001; Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prensushi , 1997 and Piening, Baluch and Salge, 2013)

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<sup>3</sup> Reverse causal order implies that it is not HR that leads to organisation performance but organisational performance that leads to more investment in HR

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employed authentic longitudinal design and were able to infer causal relationship. Wright and Haggerty (2005) suggest that this meant that data should be collected at multiple points in time. Further significant issues in data collection are discussed below.

Next, the questions raised are: *From whom were the data collected?* and *How were the practices measured?* Wall and Wood (2005) bring to our attention that the least satisfactory method of data collection vis-à-vis HR practices, is the use of single respondents (mostly HR managers) for data regarding HRM; nonetheless, in their review of 25 articles they find that most of the studies employed this approach. The studies of Gerhart et al. (2000) and Wright et al. (2001) both highlight the measurement errors in the HR-performance relationship as a result of only seeking data from single respondents, i.e. HR executives. Survey data collection was directed towards HR managers or a ‘person responsible for HRM’ (Tregaskis, Mahoney, and Atterbury, 2004) and missed out on employee voice (Gerhart 2005; Truss 2001; Wright et al., 2005). Considering that HR practices are supposed to have an effect on performance, through the employees, data need to be collected from employees on what their perception of the HR practices is (Wright and Nishii, 2007). Studies on HRM and on the specific relationship between HRM and organizational performance specifically have overlooked the response of workers to HRM (Guest, 2002). Several articles investigating the HR-performance relationship have called for building employees into the HRM-Performance equation (Gerhart 2005; Guest, 2002; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Wright and Haggerty 2005).

By gathering data from HR managers, researchers gather information on intended practices rather than perceived practices (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Khilji and Wang, 2006; Wright and Nishii, 2007). This is significant to note as gaps between intended and enacted practices have been accepted as legitimate in this research domain (Gratton and Truss, 2003; Truss, 2001). Khilji and Wang (2006) mention that inconclusive findings in the SHRM literature regarding the relationship between HRM systems and organizational performance have arisen for the most part from methodological weaknesses and a failure of researchers to distinguish between HR practices intended by organizations and those actually implemented. Because of the impact of HR practices (organizational level) on employee motivation, ability, attitudes and behaviour (individual level) (Boxall and Purcell 2003; Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prensushi, 1997), identifying the correct sources is absolutely crucial. The multitude of levels proves the need to include data from different

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sources and levels of analysis (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Arthur and Boyles (2007) and Kepes and Delery (2006) make a case for the use of more multi-level measures of HR systems. Boxall (2012) highlights that targeting the right employee in relation to understanding the effects of any HPWSs is paramount, because different groups experience the HR system differently. Hope-Hailey, Farndale, and Truss (2005) also advise that any study examining the mediating mechanisms within the black box necessitates different organization actors (employees, LMs, senior management, HR employees etc.) to be included as all of them have a different part to act out.

Some studies look at the presence and number of practices in use, some at the percentage of employee coverage and others at the effectiveness of the practices. In addition, discussion is also centred on the kind/type of jobs the HR practices impact on/affect and which employees, therefore, are best placed to provide valid and reliable information (Wright, Gardner and Moynihan, 2003). This then leads to understanding from the employees about how they perceive the practices as discussed above.

The next question surrounds the issue of *What organizational outcomes were actually measured?* As discussed previously in Section 2.1.2, most of the performance measures in HR and performance research has involved organizational outcomes (Boselie, Dietz, and Boon, 2005). Guest (1997) raises the matter of the large proximal distance between the firm measures and the ‘employees’ who are actually the recipients of the HR measures. The effect of HR interventions on business performance might be diluted by other business interventions. So far, research investigating the HR-performance linkage has afforded only partial insight into how HPWSs affect the more proximal individual-level employee outcomes (Dyer and Reeves, 1995). Consequently, this leaves gaps in our understanding of how HR affects performance, thus calling for research in this field (Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak, 2009). In addition to including employees’ perspective in the investigation of the HR-performance relationship, there have been calls to include employee-level outcomes, too (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Becker et al. (1997) and Dyer and Reeves (1995) posit that a comprehensive knowledge of the manner in which HR practices affect proximal outcomes is paramount in a better appreciation of the people-performance chain.

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Other questions that have been raised include those concerning the HR practices that have been used in assessing the extent of HR's impact on performance. This has been discussed in an earlier section (Section 2). A further important issue that has been raised, associated with this field of study, is about identifying the underlying mechanisms through which HR affects performance, known as '*the black box issue*'. This has also already been discussed in depth in Section 2.1.3.1. These two points will therefore not be discussed again here.

In response to the issues raised earlier in this section, HR researchers have responded with research that has started examining employee perceptions of HPWSs (Aryee et al., 2012; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith, 2013; Liao et al., 2009). SHRM researchers are beginning to focus on implementation issues (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009), leading to LMs' views becoming critical in understanding how policies are actually implemented or 'brought to life' rather than how they were intended to be (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2003). Research examining the LM's role has established that it is indeed crucial in bringing HR policies to life (Alfes et al, 2013; Frenkel, Restubog, and Bednall, 2012; Harney and Jordan, 2008; Knies and Leisink, 2014). Research by Liao et al. (2009) highlights that managers' accounts of HR practices differ significantly from employees' perceptions and this also validates claims to include multi actors in any study. Similarly, Den Hartog et al. (2013) establish that variations exist between employees' and managers' perceptions of HRM; thereby suggesting a difference between implemented and experienced HRM (Wright and Nishii, 2007).

In my appraisal of the literature, in almost all of the articles, hypothesis testing was used to test for the relation between HR and performance. In selecting HR practices, most research has tended to start with the most common HR practices and then tested the effect of those practices on performance. The problem with this is that if there is no agreement on the list of HR practices, then how can we be sure that the specific list of practices actually applied to the context of the research study? There *might* be HR practices that are in use by organizations operating in a particular context that are not being included in the research. Guest (2011, p. 10) concludes that HR-performance research is "*riddled with error both with respect to data on HRM and on outcomes.*"

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To conclude, even though the latest research has addressed calls to include the employee experience of the HRM system and has ventured to look within the black box (Purcell et al., 2003), there still remain some methodological questions. Most research in this area is quantitative with the quantitative analysis growing in its level of sophistication. Even though research has indeed progressed in this field Guest (2011, p. 10) observes that this in itself could be an issue by continued focus on existing measures.

A different methodology is recommended by Hesketh and Fleetwood (2006) who call for more in-depth interviews and case studies in order to unravel the underlying causal and interrelated mechanisms in the social practices underlying the HR practices (Paauwe, 2009) and they make a convincing case for employing a different approach to the study of the association between HRM and performance. They note that present day research in the study of HR and performance is dominated by ‘the scientific’ method which uses empirical analysis to demonstrate the link between HR practices and performance. These empirical observations, even though they assert that there exists a relationship between HR and performance, do not deepen our understanding of how HR practices actually translate into observable performance measures and there have been calls to look into the black box (Purcell et al., 2003). Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006, p. 1978) reiterate that the “*scientific approach to studying the HRM-performance link is under-theorized*” and lacks “*explanatory power*”. They add that most researchers in this area confront this problem of under-theorisation by conducting more and more empirical work and believe that theory will emerge as a result of this scientific work.

They further comment (p. 678) that a statistical relationship between measures of HR and measures of performance by no means “*constitutes a theory nor an explanation*”. They argue that empirical research in the area of HR and performance lacks explanatory power (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006) and therefore they are opposed to this view of examination of the HR-performance link (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008). They add that organizational settings, wherein HR ‘enables’ organizational performance, are characterised by “*open*” rather than “*closed*”<sup>4</sup> systems (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008, p. 140). They criticise the current research on the HR-performance link as assuming that organizations are closed systems wherein events occur at regular intervals They also add

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<sup>4</sup> Systems are defined as “closed” when they are characterized by event regularities, and “open” when they lack event regularity.

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that contemporary research assumes simplistic organizational HR structures, thereby ignoring the multifaceted and complex relationships between the different elements of the entities at work in the generative ensemble HR system (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006). They suggest critical realism as a way forward to study the effectiveness of HR in open systems and define these open systems where there are interlocking mechanisms at work involving the social actors in them as generative ensembles (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008, p. 141). Within this discussion, they have proposed the use of intensive case studies (Sayer, 1992) as they offer a ‘thick’ explanation.

Crucially, the contextually-based understanding of human resources furthermore enables attention to be drawn unequivocally to the factors that facilitate the design of the HR system in today’s organizations. To the best of my knowledge only two studies have investigated the HR-performance link through qualitative means employing an intensive design: Harney and Jordan (2008) and Monks et al. (2013). Monks et al. (2013) further state that their choice of qualitative research allowed them to answer the ‘how’ question rather than the ‘how many’ [boxes] question. This then emerged as very useful *in “understanding the world from the perspective of those studied (i.e. informants); and for examining and articulating processes”* (Pratt, 2009, p. 856) that translated HR into performance. Nonetheless, despite the significance of processes within HRM systems, little research has been undertaken in this area, possibly because processes are intangible and cannot easily be measured by the scientific approach employed in most HR-performance studies. Both Harney and Jordan’s (2008) and Monks et al.’s (2013) findings are significant in that they have both identified factors that have been, so far, neglected in the HR-performance discussion. This reinforces Bowen and Ostroff’s (2004), Guest’s (2011) and Paauwe’s (2009) calls for a more contextual and analytical theory of HRM. Boxall, Ang, and Bartram (2011) through their study in a standardised cinema setting, confirm that practices cannot be transferred easily across sectors and therefore HR-performance studies need to be contextualised. Analytical HRM starts from descriptive research *“addressing the what, why, how and for whom questions”* (Boxall, 2012, p. 49) – what are the HRM practices relevant in a certain context and why are they relevant; and how do they link to the performance outcomes? Employee responses are crucial in answering these questions and therefore employee responses and attitudes are fundamental to analytical HRM. These learnings have influenced the selection of

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methodology in answering the research question for this study and this will subsequently be discussed in the methodology chapter which follows.

### 2.1.5 Summary of the HR-performance discussion

The two main reviews of research in the area of HR and performance (Boselie, Dietz, and Boon, 2005; Combs et al., 2006) confirm that the bulk of available studies establishes a relationship between HRM and performance; *“but both also emphasised that their analysis provided evidence of an association rather than causation”* (Guest, 2011; p. 3). Wall and Wood (2005), in their review of academic articles in the HR-performance area, comment that most of the inter-linkages between HR and performances should be ‘treated with caution’ because they employ inadequate methodologies. Previous research has demonstrated that HR has an effect on firm performance in some form, but we do not yet have adequate information on how this link really works (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Bowen and Ostroff 2004; Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006; Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Wright et al., 2001). Hesketh and Fleetwood (2006) similarly posit that there appears to be some agreement that a relationship exists but not on how or why the HR practices affect organizational performance. The measurement of HRM has now adopted a systems perspective and it is acknowledged that different HR systems operate at different levels and have different impacts on different groups of employees (Guest, 2011; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Wright and Boswell, 2002). Boxall and Macky (2009, p. 7) advocate that *“for true progress to be made in examining the black box, academics need to move beyond the established list of practices and endeavour to uncover the mechanisms that the practices influence”*. Paauwe (2009) and Guest (2011) call for a more contextual and analytical investigation of this relationship.

Researchers have started questioning the HR-performance linkage as a consequence of methodological issues. With most of the studies being quantitative (Boselie, Dietz and Boon, 2005), involving numerical associations between HR and performance, they confirm an association but are limited in offering explanations as to how or why these associations occur. Even though some of the concerns of measurement (such as who provides data on HR, measurement of perceptions of the HR system, employing multi-

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source, multi-level research) have been expressed and some efforts have been made to look inside the black box, key questions remain about the processes through which HR translates into performance and this could warrant a different methodological approach employing case studies as put forward by Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006).

More recently, studies have started looking into how and why the HR and performance relationship occurs. So, how does HR affect performance? The model now is that HR practices (organizational level) affect the attitudes and behaviour of employees (individual level), which in turn, when aggregated, affect HR behavioural outcomes, which then could lead to organizational outcomes (Paauwe, 2009). Wright and Nishii (2007, 2013) elaborate on the differences between intended, implemented and perceived HR practices and explain how it is the employees' perception of HR practices that affects their subsequent attitude and behaviour. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) utilised this model and found through their research that both independently and additively, satisfaction with HR practices and leadership practices affected FLE commitment to the organization and to the job. This was the first paper of its kind to include the perceptions of HR practices and perceptions of the FLM in the HRM-Performance causal chain and serves as the foundation for this study.

#### 2.1.6 Developing the research question

The main strand of my research is looking into the black box to uncover the mechanisms by which HR translates into performance. Taking into consideration the weaknesses identified in the quantitative methodology employed in extant literature and the rationale provided by Fleetwood and Hesketh (2008) to adopt an alternative methodological paradigm, I wish to investigate through a qualitative case study, the mechanisms at play in the black box. To counter some of the issues presented in the earlier section within the HR-performance research field, my research investigating the black box issue will include how employees' perceptions of people management (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007) practices affect an employee-level outcome (proximal outcome), i.e. a particular attitude or behaviour. I will also include LMs' accounts of people management practices that they believe help employees with respect to the employee-level outcome being investigated in

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order to increase the reliability of the data. To this end, this doctoral study will utilise the work of Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) as a basis on which to investigate in more depth the mechanisms by which employee perception of people management practices (both HR driven and line driven) are related to a specific employee outcome. My research question after this section of the review is: *How do perceptions of people management practices translate into employees' attitudes and behaviours?* The question that still remains is to specify which employee outcome to select for this study in service settings. This will be clearer after a review of the literature in the area of HRM in services, where I will identify the most relevant service outcome. The next section will therefore focus on uncovering literature in the area of HR and performance in a service setting.

## **2.2 Literature review on HR-performance in services**

### 2.2.1 Introduction to services

Berry (1984, p. 29) defines service as, “*a deed, a performance, or an effort which is rendered by one party for another*”. The service sector is the fastest growing and most competitive section of the economy (Derby, 2005). Services are characterised by inseparability, intangibility, heterogeneity and perishability (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2009). The inseparability of service production and consumption implies in-service interactions with services being produced by the employee whilst at the same time being consumed by the consumer. Frenkel (2000) explains that service work involves interactions amongst people and these interactions convey information, knowledge, attitudes and emotion. He further highlights that service work entails notable implications for HRM in the areas of work standardisation, behaviour of service employees, managing performance at the frontline and managing the customer role during service delivery. Frontline staff are also known as ‘boundary spanners’ (Schneider and Bowen, 1985) or ‘customer-contact workers’ (Bowen and Hallowell, 2002). The interaction of the customer with employees is also considered to be a ‘moment of truth’ (Carlzon, 1987) whereby the customer has an opportunity to form an impression about the organization (Albrecht and Zemke, 1985). Employee attitudes and behaviours affect the perception of

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the service encounters (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger 1997). Hence, service firms today have to focus on how their FLEs can create the best experience for their customers. FLEs' interaction with customers affects customers' perception of service quality and consequently the management of FLEs is crucial for most service organizations (Liao and Chuang, 2004), and more so for high-contact service businesses. Furthermore, studies have shown that service quality is related to customer satisfaction and financial returns (Schneider et al., 2005; Heskett, Sasser, and Schlesinger, 1997).

### 2.2.2 HRM and service

Strategic differences between manufacturing and service firms mean that employees in the two categories of firms need to be managed differently (Boxall, 2003). Bowen and Ford (2002, p. 459) note that “*managing the service employee is different from managing the manufacturing employee in several important ways*”. Service employees are expected to interact with customers and are central to the production process. Service work means work whereby an employee interacts with a customer or another service recipient. It involves both a tangible and an intangible element. The intangible component includes the people aspect of the job whereby the customer and employee interact with each other which affects the service quality (Korczynski, 2005). The work organization in service work, conceptualised by Korczynski (2001) as the ‘*customer-oriented bureaucracy*’, is informed by two contrasting principles : the logic of bureaucracy focusses on cost minimisation and efficiency, whilst the logic of customer-orientation anchors around the structuring work to satisfy the customer or through service quality. Because service employees interact with customers whereby the service is produced and consumed at the same time, Bowen and Ford (2002, p. 460) remark “*This co-production role means that the employee must be not only task capable but interactively skilled. In this role, the employee must supervise the customer co-producing the experience*”. Equally, because of the intangible nature of service, the interaction with the FLE leading to customer experience of the service is key. Thus, FLE behaviours emerge as crucial in a service setting (Peccei and Rosenthal, 1997). Specifically this implies that FLEs need to be able to use their judgement in response to customer requirements and performance, and often

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this may take place away from the eyes and ears of the front LMs and may indeed require them to engage in discretionary effort and OCBs to influence a positive perception of service quality (Berry, 1999), whereby service quality is described as the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman, Zeitham and Berry, 1985). Thus, organizations need to create a service climate (Schneider, 1980) or service culture (Berry, 1995) to engender environment within which FLEs are guided by environmental norms and values to engage in discretionary effort to satisfy customers (Bowen and Ford, 2002). In service jobs, employees have a great deal of discretion in deciding how to act when working with customers (Bowen and Ford, 2002). However as Liu et al. (2007) make explicit, *"Many of the HRM practices advocated by researchers and practitioners were devised and refined in manufacturing settings. Thus, it is possible they fit better with manufacturing work. Perhaps a different set of practices is needed to help service workers deliver the best performance"* (p. 510).

In services marketing, the behaviour of service employees plays a vital part in relation to a customer's perception of satisfaction and service quality (Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Sergeant and Frenkel, 2000). This is because the experience of the service encounter, i.e. the interaction between the service provider and the customer, affects the customer's assessment of the service and perception of service quality and ensuing customer satisfaction. Employees who provide that service are key to delivering excellent service and therefore implementing effective HRM practices to manage these contact employees becomes paramount (Browning et al., 2009). As Batt (2000) stresses, one can recognise management's approach to HRM by looking at what transpires at the employee-customer interface. Hartline and Ferrell (1996) suggest that the employee-customer interaction is the most important contributor of customer-perceived service quality. When employees interact with customers during the moments of truth (Carlzon, 1987), they bring to the forefront their perception of the company's HR policies (Ulrich, 1991). Bowen, Gilliland and Folger (1999) advocate the term *"spillover effect"* whereby employee attitudes tend to spill over to customers during moments of truth. They then make the point that *"since employee attitudes strongly mirror employee reactions to HRM practices, (...) it is clear in service firms, HRM affects employees directly and then, customers indirectly"* (p. 19). They propose that *"Fair HRM leads to Fair service"* (p. 19). Schneider and Bowen (1985) advocate that a good awareness of HR practices practised by a firm can eventually

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influence customers' service experiences, i.e. if managers treat their employees well and look after them, then the employees will also care for their customers well. As a result of designing service-focused HR practices in a truly service-focused organization, besides managers demonstrating a focus on quality service and jobs that are designed to support the delivery of excellent service, employees are more committed to their work and this leads to positive customer service outcomes (Michel, Kavanagh and Tracey, 2013). Also, Tsaur and Lin's (2004, p. 478) study confirms that when "*employees perceive their organization as one that has sound HRM functions and activities such as recruitment and selection, training and career development, compensation, performance appraisal, and so on, they are then enabled to do the organization's main work of serving customers*".

Several authors have pointed out that the broad classification of services, and the differences in customer interactions with different types of service, imply that service studies need to be targeted strategically to meet specified service settings (Batt, 2000; Tzafirir and Gur, 2007). Batt (2000) suggests that probably high involvement practices are concentrated amongst the top end skilled workers.

Schneider (1980, 1985, 1994, 1998, 2004, and 2005) along with other authors has been one of the main contributors to the discussion of managing people in services and its relationship to service quality. Schneider's main research in services has been in the areas of service climate, defined as "*employee perceptions of the practices, procedures, and behaviors that get rewarded, supported, and expected with regard to customer service and customer service quality*" (Schneider, White, and Paul, 1998, p. 151). Research has shown that in companies whose customers report that they experience high-quality service, employees report that the HR practices promote employee well-being. Schneider and Bowen (1993) define climate for well-being as an environment where the needs of employees are met through quality human resource practices (p. 43). This implies that employees feel that when they are being treated well by the organization, customers report high levels of service delivery.

I felt that it was important to review literature surrounding service climate as it would provide me with a good understanding of the role it plays within the HR-performance discussion.

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### 2.2.2.1 Studies on service climate

Schneider and Bowen (1985), in their study of employees and customers in a large retail bank in the US, find that “*Employee perceptions of the human resources practices under which they work are positively related to customer perceptions of the service they receive*” (p. 425). Schneider and Bowen (1993), through their later research, conclude that “*a climate for employee well-being serves as a foundation for a climate for service*” (p. 43). Schneider and Bowen (1985) also find through their research that employee perceptions of service climate were related to customer perceptions of service quality. The rationale they provided for this is that, in service companies, where employees experience HR practices as positive, they will focus their time at work on serving that organization’s customers and will not worry about how they themselves are being looked after. Thus HR practices become crucial, as the same practices have an effect on employees, which in turn seems to affect customers’ perception of service quality (Schneider, Gunnarson and Niles-Jolly, 1994). Schneider, White, and Paul (1998) conclude, “*The presence of foundation issues does seem to provide a basis for a climate for service*” (p. 158). They go on to say that “*management cannot simply make service quality an emphasis and establish a strong climate for service without first laying a foundation for such a climate*” (p. 160).

Organizations can create a service climate by establishing procedures for efficient and effective service delivery and also by rewarding service excellence (Bowen and Schneider, 1988). In a similar vein, Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel (1998) conclude from their study of airline passengers that “*there seemed to be a relationship between employee perceptions of HR practices and service behaviour and also that HRM contributes to the creation of a service culture and HRM and service culture independently and additively contribute to service behaviour*” (p. 176). Therefore, HR practices seem to be a crucial ingredient in what Schneider, White, and Paul (1998) term ‘service climate’ (also referred to as service culture, see Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel, 1998), which is in turn related to service behaviour (Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel, 1998). More recently, Towler, Lezotte and Burke (2011) in their study of automotive service stores confirmed the service climate (concern for employees and concern for customers)/ customer satisfaction/ customer retention/ firm performance relationship. Towler, Lezotte and Burke (2011, p. 402)

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conclude their study by commenting “*The support for our theoretical model for the service climate – firm performance chain underscores the importance of focusing on human resource management practices as the basis or grounding of firm performance. In this sense, the employee needs to come first*”. Hong et al. (2013) in their meta-analysis of service climate studies, establish that HR practices and leadership affect employee attitudes and performance via service climate, and that employees outcomes are then subsequently converted into customer satisfaction and firm-level financial measures. Furthermore, Ehrhart et al. (2011) find through their study of bank branches that high-quality internal service is necessary for a branch service climate to yield superior external customer service quality. The concept of internal service is akin to the *concern for employees* used by Chuang and Liao (2010) and Towler, Lezotte, and Burke (2011). Bowen and Schneider (2014) name leadership, HRM practices and systems support from IT, Operations and Marketing as antecedents of service climate, and quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty as consequences of service climate.

Studies on service climate have clarified the role that HR practices can play in generating a strong service climate and subsequent service behaviour. Therefore, my proposed research into the perception of people management (HR and LM behaviour) practices seems to be a good line of investigation for a service organization.

#### *2.2.2.2 HR and Performance research in service setting*

Research into HRM in service settings has been overlooked (Haynes and Fryer, 2000) with most of the research within the HR-performance setting conducted in manufacturing settings (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Arthur, 1994; MacDuffie, 1995). Batt (2002) comments that findings from manufacturing contexts may not be transferable to service settings because of the differences between service and manufacturing work. The studies of Batt (2002) and Bartel (2004) were the earliest to locate the HR-performance within a service setting. Service employees are also closer to customers, so the effects of HRM practices on employee behaviour should more directly affect quality (Bartel, 2004; Batt, 2002). In a service setting, most of the research has studied and confirmed a relationship between HRM practices and service quality (Schneider, 1985; Schneider et al., 2005; Schneider,

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White, and Paul, 1998; Tzafrir and Gur, 2007; Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel, 1998); service behaviour (Browning 2006; Tsaur and Lin, 2004; Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel, 1998) and service performance (Liao and Chuang, 2004). Liao and Chuang (2004) suggest that managerial perceptions of certain HR practices affect employees' service performance. From an HR-performance perspective, organizational level outcomes in a service context would be service quality and customer satisfaction, and the individual level outcomes would be service performance/behaviour. Liao and Chuang (2004) propose that HR practices can play a large role in employees providing excellent service by providing them with the *ability* to deliver quality service and also making them more *willing* to provide good service. They conclude that employee involvement, training, and performance incentives are the salient practices for managing employee performance in service contexts synonymous with the concept of "foundation issues" (Schneider, White, and Paul, 1998). Tsaur and Lin (2004) later established that employees who interpret HRM practices of recruitment, selection, training and development and compensation and benefits in a positive light, display positive service behaviour and furthermore, this service behaviour relates to service quality. They find no relationship of this kind for the HR practice of performance appraisal. Browning (2006) also finds that employee perceptions of HR practices affected employees' service behaviour directly, in addition to indirectly affecting behaviour through organizational commitment. The HRM practices that were found to be most influential for service behaviour were selection, training and performance appraisal. Specifically for the latter, the LM's feedback and ability to listen to employees played a positive role in perception of appraisals. As can be observed, the studies above relate perception of HR practices to either service, which is an organizational level outcome, or to service behaviour. Employee-level outcomes focus more on behaviours in service settings, as it is the actual behaviour of FLE in a service setting that affects customer evaluation of service.

Chuang and Liao (2010, p. 155) cite that "*front-line employees have a tremendous burden of responsibility*" because of the implications of their customer interactions on the evaluation of customer experiences. Bartel (2004) finds that employee satisfaction with the incentive dimension of the HPWS is related to retail bank performance. However, recently there has been a move to study the relationship between HR and organizational outcomes within a service setting (Aryee et al., 2012; Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011;

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Chuang and Liao, 2010; Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014; Liao et al., 2009; Messersmith et al., 2011; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Yang, 2012).

Research investigating the effects of HR systems on service outcomes have been conducted across a range of service industries ranging from airlines (Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014); theme parks (Hickman and Mayer, 2003); banks (Bartel, 2004; Liao et al., 2009), hotels (Haynes and Fryer, 2000; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Tang and Tang, 2011; Tsaur and Lin, 2004;), hospitality (restaurants) (Cho et al., 2006; Yang, 2012); hospitals (Boselie, 2010; Gittell, Seidner, and Wimbush, 2010; Lee, Lee and Kang, 2012) and retail stores (Gavino, Wayne, and Erdogan, 2012). (See Appendix 3 for a table summarising the articles that have tested the HR-performance relationship in a service setting. The criterion for inclusion of an article in this table is that the context of the research is in a service sector). Most of these studies also adopt a quantitative methodology similar to the HR-performance studies with specific variables identified and then employ stringent numerical analyses to examine relationships. Organizational level outcomes within these studies include turnover rates (Cho et al., 2006; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; labour productivity, return on assets (Cho et al., 2006); customer satisfaction (Baluch, Salge, and Piening, 2013 ; Chand, 2010; Piening, Baluch, and Salge, 2013), firm performance (Chand, 2010; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Piening, Baluch, and Salge, 2013); intention to leave (Alfess et al., 2012; Boon et al., 2011; Frenkel, Restubog, and Bednall, 2012; Kuvaas, 2008); intent to remain with the organization (Kehoe and Wright, 2013).

Individual employee-level measures incorporated in the studies investigating the relationship between HR and Performance include job satisfaction (Boon et al., 2011); commitment (Boon et al., 2011; Boselie, 2010; Browning 2006; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Veld, Paauwe, and Boselie, 2010; Knies and Leisink, 2014); task performance (Alfes et al., 2013); psychological empowerment (Aryee et al., 2012; Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Ehrnrooth and Björkman, 2011; Liao et al., 2009); POS (Snape and Redman, 2010); OCB (Boon et al., 2011; Boselie, 2010; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Snape and Redman, 2010); in-role behaviour (Snape and Redman, 2010); extra-role behaviours (Knies and Leisink, 2014) and service-oriented OCB (Sun, Aryee, and Law 2007; Yan, 2012). In particular, there is a focus on employee behaviours, and more precisely on OCB, in-role and extra-role behaviour (Alfes, Shantz and Tuss, 2012; Boon et al., 2011;

Boselie, 2010; Karatepe, 2013; Knies and Leisink, 2014; Snape and Redman, 2010; Yang, 2012). It can also be noted that most HR-performance studies in service contexts (See Appendix 3) follow a quantitative route as the HR-performance studies, thus leading to the same methodological questions as discussed under Section 2.1.4. Table 3 lists the studies that have specifically acknowledged the service context and incorporated theoretical concepts from the services literature within the HR-performance discussion. As mentioned previously and can be seen from Table 3, most of these studies also adopt a quantitative methodology similar to the HR-performance studies. It can be seen that studies which specifically test the HR-performance linkage in a service setting typically select employee or organizational outcomes that fit the service context. Turnover rates are an important organizational outcome in services because traditionally this sector has high turnover rates. Behaviour, including OCB, service-focused OCB and in-role/extra-role behaviour is highly relevant in a service context as it is the actual behaviour of the frontline staff when interacting with the customer that is regarded to impact on perceptions of service quality (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2009).

Table 3: HR-performance in service settings incorporating specific service outcomes

Author	Sector	Method	Independent variable	Mediating variable	Performance outcomes
Tsaur and Lin (2004)	Hotels	Quantitative	Employee perceptions of HR practices	Service behaviour (extra-role / role prescribed)	Service quality
Browning (2006)	Car rentals, hospitality, retail	Quantitative	Employee perceptions of HR practices	Organizational commitment	Service behaviour
Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007)	Hotels	Quantitative	High performance HR practices	Service oriented OCB	Turnover Productivity
Liao et al. (2009)	Bank	Quantitative	Employee experiences of HRM	Employee capital Employee psychological empowerment Employee perceived organizational support	Employee individual service performance
Chuang and Liao (2010)	Range of service retail stores	Quantitative	HPWSs	Concern for employees Concern for customers Service performance helping behaviours	Market performance

Author	Sector	Method	Independent variable	Mediating variable	Performance outcomes
Husin, Chelladurai and Musa (2012)	Golf course	Quantitative	Perceptions of HR practices	OCB	Perceived Service quality
Aryee et al. (2012)	Banks	Quantitative	HPWSs	Experienced HPWS Psychological empowerment	Individual service performance Branch level performance
Yang (2012)	Restaurants	Quantitative	HIWPs	Affective commitment	Service OCB

Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) established, through their empirical research, that the HR-performance link is also applicable in service settings. They found from a study of hotels in a Chinese context, that service-OCBs operate as a noteworthy mediator of the connection between high-performance HR practices adoption and organizational performance. Tzafrir and Gur (2007) found that compensation and feedback are related to service quality, whereas promotion, training and leadership are not. Boselie (2009) through his study concludes that employee development and employee involvement are principal HR practices in creating a high-performance climate in a healthcare context. Yang (2012) investigated the relationship between high-involvement HR practices, affective commitment and OCB in a service setting and established that high-involvement HR practices have a crucial role to play in shaping FLEs' affective commitment which subsequently impacts upon employees' display of OCBs. Liao et al. (2009) established that employees' perceptions of HPWSs are positively associated with individual service performance through employee human capital: psychological empowerment and POS. Chuang and Liao (2010) found in their study of service stores across Taiwan that the climate of concern for customers mediated the relationship between HPWSs and employee service performance, whereas the climate of concern for employees mediated the relationship between HPWSs and employee-helping behaviour provided to co-workers. Husin, Chelladurai and Musa (2012) established that support at work, a reward system, supervisory assistance, and performance appraisal were related to OCBs, which in turn influenced perceptions of service quality. Aryee et al.'s (2012) research confirmed that branch-level HPWS promotes psychological empowerment through the creation of a climate for empowerment and experienced HPWS, resulting in service performance.

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Gavino, Wayne, and Erdogan (2012) learnt from their study of retail stores that performance management process, promotional opportunities, participation, and involvement in decision-making impacted on how employees act towards customers and the extra-role behaviours they displayed. Karatepe and Vatankhah (2014) observed that HPWSs (career opportunities, empowerment, selective staffing, rewards, job security, teamwork, and training) cultivate POS and diminish turnover intentions.

As mentioned, employee behaviours are important in service encounters, as they either disappoint or delight the customer and it is the actual behaviour of the FLE that plays a part in customer perception of the service, especially in service settings where interaction between employees and customers is frequent. Having said that, the next section proceeds to present an examination of service behaviours critical to service encounters. The aim of this section is to enable me to select the employee behaviour most appropriate to the service context of this research.

### *2.2.2.3 A focus on employee service behaviours*

The quality of the employee-customer interaction during the ‘moment of truth’ affects perceptions of service delivery (Yang, 2012), thus making FLEs vital to these interactions (Schneider and Bowen, 1985). Specifically, some of the employee behaviours investigated in relation to HR practices have also examined service behaviour (Browning 2006; Tsaur and Lin, 2004; Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel, 1998) and customer-oriented behaviour (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). Even though Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel (1998), Tsaur and Lin (2004) and Browning (2006) all refer to service behaviour, Browning’s (2006) and Zerbe, Dobin, and Harel’s (1998) measure of service behaviour incorporates employees’ display of positive emotion towards the customer whereas Tsaur and Lin’s (2004) is concerned with in-role and extra-role service behaviours originally conceptualised by Bettencourt and Brown (1997). Furthermore, Bienstock, DeMoranville and Smith (2003) advocate that boundary spanners’ discretionary behaviours not formally set by the firm – OCB – affect the service provided to the customer. This forms the basis for a number of other OCB-based behaviours studied in a service setting but not considered in relation to HR practices. As mentioned earlier under the HR-performance

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discussion in Section 2.1.2, OCBs are discretionary employee behaviours that are directed only towards colleagues (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). Most research in the area of OCB has focused on the manufacturing sector (Wang, 2009), in spite of the fact that more than 70% of employment is in the services sector (Gronroos, 2007). Because of the intangible nature of services, and the resulting importance of customer-contact personnel, extra-role behaviours such as OCB could be very important in service quality. OCBs are highly relevant in service jobs as the employee-customer interaction necessitates work behaviours that may not be part of their job descriptions in order to be able to deal with unique customer demands (Wang, 2009). Service-oriented OCBs that customer-contact staff may display in dealing with customers are loyalty OCB; participation OCB (Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch, 1994) and service delivery OCB (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988; Bettencourt, Gwinner and Meuter, 2001). Bettencourt and Brown (1997) conceptualise the notion of PSSBs; PSSBs are similar to OCBs but can also be directed towards customers and can be in-role or extra-role behaviours (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). The original idea of PSSBs emanates from prosocial organizational behaviour, which is defined as *“helpful behaviors of employees directed toward the organization or other individuals”* (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997, p. 41). Prosocial organizational behaviours can be directed either towards employees or customers, or furthermore can be in-role or extra-role (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997). This comprises in-role customer service, extra-role customer service and cooperation behaviours which together add value to the organization (Please refer to Appendix 4 to see the scale items for PSSBs). Specifically, extra-role customer service behaviours are discretionary behaviours displayed by boundary spanners in interacting with customers that are not prescribed with formal organizational roles; they are those behaviours that are not mandatory for FLEs and may be spontaneously displayed by FLEs in response to customer requirements. In-role customer service behaviours are those that are explicitly outlined in formal organizational documents or are expected as a result of implicit organizational norms. Cooperation behaviours encompass helpful behaviours directed towards other employees in the organization and are considered crucial for the provision of service quality (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997). However, Bettencourt and Brown (1997) also argue that cooperation behaviours could be considered extra-role, as

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employees are not appraised on this aspect of their work. In a service context, where boundary-spanning FLEs are involved in interactions with customers, PSSBs are a better measure than simply looking at OCBs (Bettencourt, Brown, and MacKenzie, 2005). Even though Tsauro and Lin (2004) use Bettencourt and Brown's (1997) measure in their measure of service behaviour, they do not provide any explicit discussion surrounding the HR-performance setting for their study.

Within the marketing and human resource management literature we have seen the emergence of a body of work that seeks to identify the organizational factors that affect employees' customer-oriented behaviour (Hartline et al., 1996; Peccei and Rosenthal, 1997, 2001). Ackfeldt and Wong (2006) conclude from their study that internal communication and empowerment affect PSSBs of customer-contact employees. Kim et al. (2004) find that both distributive and procedural justice influence workers' customer-oriented behaviours. However, they note that there may be other conditions and situations that may inform employee willingness to engage in customer-oriented behaviour. Kang and Bartlett (2013) also find leader member exchange to be influential in employees engaging in extra-role behaviours. An organizational factor that affects employees' display of customer-oriented behaviour is interestingly perceived as external prestige (Kang and Bartlett, 2013).

Research conducted by Bettencourt, Brown and MacKenzie (2005) shows that PSSBs of boundary spanners aided the understanding of the concept of 'spillover effects' (Bowen, Gilliland, and Folger, 1999) of employee attitudes on customer outcomes. PSSBs can result from 'spillover' effects of OCB (Yoon and Suh, 2003); their study suggests that contact employees' job satisfaction affects their OCB and they also found that employees who engaged in OCB impacted on customers' perceived service quality positively. Pelled, Cummings and Kizilos (2000) conceptualise this as customer-oriented prosocial organizational behaviour. Studies on customer-oriented OCB (Bienstock, DeMoranville, and Smith, 2003) and extra-role service behaviours (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter, 2001) have endeavoured to broaden the concept of work performance in the service context further than in-role behaviours. Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) conceptualise this in a slightly different way, calling them customer-oriented behaviours and this captures behaviours from a continuous improvement and effort perspective. On comparing these two constructs, I am more inclined to suggest the

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use of Betterncourt and Brown's (1997) measure for PSSBs, as it incorporates both the in-role and extra-role components and in addition, has not been explicitly studied within the HPWS-Performance discussion.

### 2.2.3 Summary of the HR-performance discussion in a service setting

Research into HRM in service settings has been overlooked (Haynes and Fryer, 2000). However, recently there has been a move to study the relationship between HR and organizational outcomes within a service setting (Aryee et al., 2012; Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Liao et al., 2009; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007; Yang, 2012). Studies investigating the HR-performance link have looked at several organizational and employee-related measures of performance. Organizational level outcomes include turnover rates (Cho et al., 2006; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007); labour productivity, return on assets (Cho et al., 2006); customer satisfaction (Baluch, Salge and Piening, 2013; Chand, 2010; Piening, Baluch, and Salge, 2013); firm performance (Chand, 2010; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Piening, Baluch, and Salge, 2013); intention to leave (Alfes et al., 2012; Boon et al., 2011; Frenkel, Sanders, and Bednall, 2013; Kuvaas, 2008;); intent to remain with the organization (Kehoe and Wright, 2013). Individual level outcomes include commitment (Boselie, 2010; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Veld, Paauwe, and Boselie, 2010) and service performance/behaviour (Aryee et al., 2012; Liao et al., 2009). Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) established through their empirical research that the HR-performance link is also applicable in service settings. Liao and Chuang (2010), Gavino, Wayne, and Erdogan (2012) and Yang (2012), established that the perception of HPWS affects employees' service behaviours. However, this stream of quantitative research displays the same methodological limitations identified earlier in Section 2.1.4.

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#### 2.2.4 Refining the research question

At the end of the literature review on HR-performance (See Section 2.1.6) I outlined the research question as *How do perceptions of people management practices translate into employees' attitudes and behaviours?*

My doctoral study will utilise the work of Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) as a basis to investigate in more depth the mechanisms by which employee perception of people management practices (both HR driven and line driven) are related to a specific employee outcome. Having critically discussed the specificities inherent in the context of service in this section, I have been able to further refine my research question. First, I have established the crucial role of FLEs in a service setting and thus, they become the target employee group for this doctoral study. Furthermore, since in a service setting the actual behaviour of the FLE during his/her interaction with the customer is that which creates a positive or negative impression, it has been decided to examine the perceptions of people practices on employee-level behaviour. The employee behaviour that I have chosen is PSSBs (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997). PSSBs are similar to OCBs but are directed towards customers and include not only in-role components expected by the organizations but furthermore include extra-role behaviours (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997). Extra-role customer service behaviours are important in addition to in-role customer service as customer requirements and expectations during service encounters may necessitate that FLEs have to go beyond their normal job roles to satisfy the customer, further linking customer loyalty and subsequent profits (Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger., 1997).

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## 2.3 The research question

The main research question that has emerged out of the literature review is

Research question: *How do frontline employees' perception of people management practices affect their prosocial service behaviours?*

In reaching the final question, the literature also suggested some sub-questions which will now be presented and discussed.

Sub-question 1a: What are the perceptions of the people management practices that lead to frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?

Sub-question 1b: What, from the line managers' perspective are the people management practices that lead to frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?

Sub-question 1c: Are there any other factors that affect the people –performance discussion?

Addressing these questions begins to answer the call made by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Guest (2011) to focus on process within the black box. Guest (2011, p. 10) concludes on the research methods used thus far in HR-performance studies – “...*It also leaves room for considerable doubt about the processes at play*”. Furthermore, most research in this area is quantitative and involves hypothesis testing with independent, mediating/moderating and dependent variables. These research findings, though insightful, are not able to look at the process of how HR actually translates into employee-level outcomes. By incorporating the LM, this research endeavours to develop a more holistic understanding of the relationship between people management and employee-level performance.

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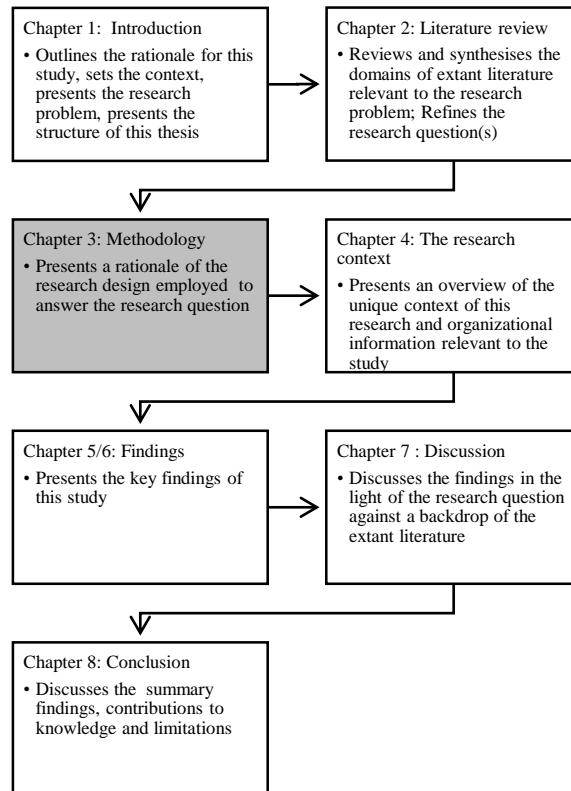
## 2.4 Conclusion

The literature review chapter has located the research question within the HR-performance discussion in a service setting. It has explored the current conversations within these topics with the specific view of presenting to the reader the key debates that surround these academic disciplines. Provisional research questions were developed at the end of the first main section (HR and performance) and then refined to reflect the engagement with literature in the area of services management. The final research question will endeavour to enrich our understanding of *how* the people management-performance linkage works in a specific service setting. Having identified the research question specific to this study, I will now embark on presenting the research approach I followed to specifically answer the research question.

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### 3 Methodology

The first two chapters have introduced this doctoral study, introduced/reviewed the relevant extant literature and finalised the research problem and questions. Following on from this, it becomes imperative to consider the philosophical choices that influence this study. This chapter will explicate the link between theory and research and provide a discussion on the rationale chosen for this research. The chapter is shaped as follows: Section 3.1 starts with a conversation around



the philosophical choices available with a decision made on choosing critical realism as the way forward for me as researcher; Section 3.2 outlines the rationale for adopting a case study approach in line with a critical realist philosophy; Section 3.3 outlines the fieldwork undertaken, along with the sample considerations; Section 3.4 features the data analysis stage including how the NVivo software was employed and Section 3.5 provides a conclusion to this chapter.

#### 3.1 Philosophical approach

Research methodology requires the researcher to develop an understanding of the ontological (nature) and epistemological (ways of gaining knowledge about reality) viewpoints. Creswell (2009) terms this as a worldview incorporating a “basic set of beliefs that guide action”. This worldview guides the researcher to conduct quality

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research using suitable research methods (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). Research paradigms differ, mainly based on ontological (beliefs about the nature of social reality) and epistemological (beliefs about how knowledge of this reality can be gathered) assumptions. Blaikie (2007, p. 13) identifies ontology as answering the question ‘What is the nature of social reality?’ The key here is whether social entities can be considered objective entities (realism) or whether they might be considered social constructions built on perceptions of social actors (idealism) (Bryman, 2012). Constructionists (subjectivists) believe that the external world has no existence apart from our thoughts, i.e. it is our thoughts that make the reality and therefore the reality will be different for everyone. Objectivists believe that the social world exists independent of the activities of the human observer. A person’s ontological beliefs guide the manner in which he/she goes about finding out about this reality. Epistemology answers the question ‘How can social reality be known?’ (Blaikie, 2007, p. 18). It makes claims about which scientific methods produce reliable knowledge. These range from positivism at one extreme to interpretivism at the other (Bryman, 2012). Positivists prefer collecting data about an observable level and look for regularities and causal relationships in the data to generate law-like generalisations (Gill and Johnson, 2010). This is akin to the way current research in the HR-performance domain is positioned, whereby hypotheses are generated, data are gathered about variables and then quantitative analysis is conducted to establish relationships of some sort between these variables. Interpretivists argue that as human actors, we need to acknowledge that social beings cannot be treated as objects and a researcher’s own views and beliefs form part of the interpretation process. Within the HR-performance discussion, this would mean that my personal views would affect my interpretations of the research findings. Different beliefs about ontology and epistemology necessitate different research paradigms. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) provide a comprehensive overview of these two extreme positions as shown in Table 4 highlighting the differences in ontology, epistemology, axiology and the methods used within this philosophical stance.

Table 4 : *Opposing research philosophies in management research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012, p. 119)*

	Positivism	Interpretivism
<b>Ontology</b>	External, objective and independent of social actors	Socially constructed, subjective
<b>Epistemology</b>	Only observable phenomenon can produce credible facts; focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomenon to simplest elements	Subjective meanings and social phenomena; focus upon the details of the situation, a reality behind the details, subjective meanings motivating actions
<b>Axiology (researcher's view of the role of values in research)</b>	Research is undertaken in a value-free way; the researcher is independent of the data and mechanisms, and maintains an objective stance	Research is value-bound; the researcher is part of what is being researched; cannot be separated and will be subjective
<b>Data collection techniques often used</b>	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative but can be qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative

As can be seen from Table 4, the two extreme positions affect the type of research that is pursued and subsequently, the kind of data that is collected. Blaikie (1993, 2007) and Symon and Cassell (2004) suggest that the researcher should select the research methodology according to the researcher's own view of the world or by the nature of the research project itself. Furthermore, Creswell (2009) stresses that in addition, the researcher, his/her past experiences, as well as the audience for whom the research is being conducted, will also influence the final choice of research approach. I feel that I need to explain my personal background and beliefs to establish a research approach suitable to answer the question that I have constructed.

### 3.1.1 Beliefs

According to the Hindu scriptures, there is only one supreme self – the *Paramatman* or *Brahman* or *Paramasatya*. This Absolute Truth *Paramatman* manifests itself in many ways. We individuals all come from this supreme self and each one of us is powered by a little portion of this absolute Truth, which is referred to as *atman*. I turn to the ancient

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systems of Indian philosophy for answers to my questions on what is Truth. The various philosophical schools of India rest on the belief that ‘within man is the spirit that is the centre of everything’ i.e. engaging, understanding and realising the *atman* will lead us to the *Paramatman*. The ideal of the Indian quest is to realise the One Absolute Truth – in a sense to ‘abolish’ the limited sense of self. I am therefore convinced that there is One Absolute Truth out there and this is put together piece by piece by the different works carried out in the quest for this Truth. This implies that each one of us (*Atman*) will seek to uncover knowledge to contribute to understanding the Truth (*Paramasatya*) and therefore there are many journeys that one can take whilst searching for the Truth (Radhakrishnan, 1993). I am aware that I will not be uncovering the whole Truth but only attempting to contribute to realising a very small fraction of the Absolute Truth. In management research terms, this is analogous to two main concepts, i.e. *ontology* and *epistemology*. Therefore as we can see, my concept of reality is that there exists a reality that is external and out there for everyone to see; and how we perceive that reality is different for each of us.

Having looked into several research paradigms, the one approach that best matches my own philosophical belief is critical realism and I will describe in the next section how that fits this particular body of research.

### 3.1.2 Critical realism as an option

A philosophical perspective that sits amidst these extreme stances is critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978) or social realism (Blaikie, 2007). Reed (2009) refers to it as a ‘third way’ approach in addition to positivism and social constructionism in organizational research. Critical realism as a meta-theory (Danemark et al., 2002) is most commonly associated with Bhaskar (1978, 1997, 2002) who first discussed his philosophical perspective on realism in his book ‘*The Realist Theory of Science*’ (published in 1978). The key writers in this area in addition to Bhaskar are Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000), Archer (1995), Collier (1994), Fleetwood and Ackroyd (2004), Outhwaite (1987) and Sayer (1992, 2000). Realism proposes that there *exists* a reality independent of our knowledge of it and that the facts are theory-dependent but not theory-determined (Danemark et al.,

2002). In realist ontology, there is but one ‘Truth’ and it exists independently of researchers and their identity. It is an ontology of intransitive structures and systems which is different from the transitive theories that set out to explain/describe them. Critical realism employs ontological realism (objectivism) and epistemological relativism (interpretivism). Critical realists take ontology seriously (Reed, 2009) and argue that the manner in which the world is defined will have repercussions on how we acquire knowledge about it (Danemark et al., 2002). The key ideas in critical realism are shared in Table 5 whereby Reed (2005) draws attention to the key beliefs underpinning this research philosophy.

Table 5: Adapted from Reed (2005, pp. 430-448)

Domain assumptions	Critical realism
Social ontology	Stratified ontology – empirical, actual and real
Social causality and explanation	Emphasis on real, generative mechanisms that produce observable events; attention to the relationship between ‘structure’ and ‘agency’, importance of context
Research strategy and design	Ontology precedes epistemology; favours retroductive rather than deductive, inductive or abductive strategy and intensive rather than extensive research design

Essentially, the key aspects of critical realism is stratified ontology, the focus on exploring the real mechanisms and favouring a retroductive research strategy. Bhaskar (1979) proposed that experiences, events and mechanisms form three ontological domains of reality: empirical, actual and real. The empirical consists of observable and measurable events/experiences (this is the part that positivists focus on); the actual consists of events irrespective of whether they can be observed or not; and the real encompasses the mechanisms and systems which need to be in place for the events to occur (Blaikie, 1993). As shown in Table 5, “Each level has distinctive objects and mechanisms with its own powers, capabilities and tendencies that come into a highly complex interaction with each other to produce certain outcomes rather than others” (Reed, 2009, p. 431) and these stratified layers cannot be reduced into each other. Table 6 presents how the empirical, actual and real domains affect the kind of events we observe (or not). The real level is the intransitive ontological dimension, since the causal structures endure independently of

men (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 42). The actual level is composed of events which occur as a result of the underlying structures and mechanisms that trigger them and this is the transitive dimension where things can change. The empirical domain is one in which we experience events and is differentiated from the actual domain in which events occur, irrespective of whether we experience them. What we experience or study in the world (at the empirical level) is different from what in fact ensues (at the actual level) (Danemark et al., 2002). Data that we gather are centred on the empirical level and are subject to our own interpretations and therefore theory-laden and concept-dependent (Danemark et al., 2002).

Table 6: Adapted from *Domains of reality* (Blaikie, 2007, p.147)

	Empirical domain	Actual domain	Real domain
Experiences/Perceptions	✓		
Events/activities		✓	
Mechanisms/ unobservable structures and powers of objects			✓

Critical realists' understanding of causality challenges the empiricist view that causation is equivalent to regular observation of visible events. Instead causality in this tradition implies the relationships between events and their generative mechanisms (Danemark et al., 2002). Critical realism is a search for generative structures and mechanisms (Blaikie, 2007, p. 147). The business of science is to investigate the connections between the empirical, actual and real domains. Causal analysis helps to form these interrelations and explains why what happens actually does happen (Danemark et al., 2002) through the quest for these generative ensembles. To ask what has caused something (i.e. the cause) is *"to ask what makes it happen, what produces it, what creates it or what determines it or what enables it"* (Sayer, 1992, p. 104). On understanding what may be causing something, we can then say that the object has the tendency to act in a certain way. More than one mechanism may be involved in a particular situation and the context decides which of the mechanisms are active and cause a particular outcome as displayed in Figure 12 . This makes the context highly pertinent in any discussion of critical realism.

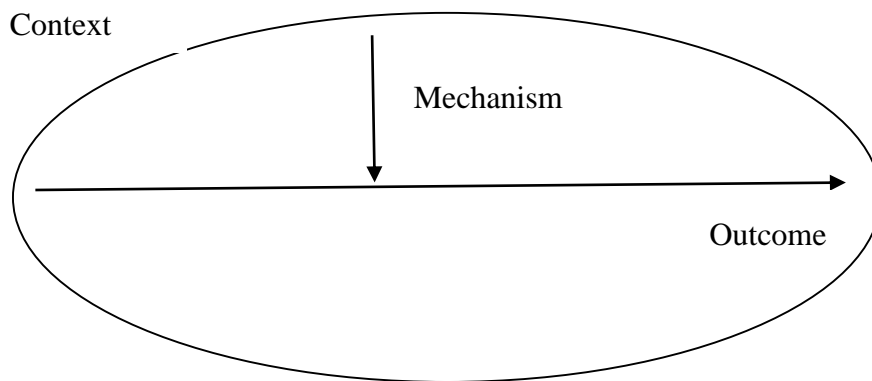


Figure 12: Representation of realist explanation (Robson, 2011, p. 33)

It is not sufficient to make empirical observations; these rarely succeed in capturing the underlying mechanisms producing phenomena. Bhaskar (1978) conceptualised the notion of epistemic fallacy that occurs when empirical, actual and real are reduced to one domain, i.e. what we know becomes what is. To avoid this, it is the task of the researcher to postulate and identify generative mechanisms which make the empirical event possible (Danemark et al., 2002) i.e. to examine the relationships between what we experience, what actually happens and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events. Danmark et al. (2002) explain that generative ensembles consist of structures, powers and capacities that interact to give rise to events that we can observe. The fundamental question in critical realism is “*What properties do societies and people possess that might make them possible objects of knowledge?*” (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 13). The main aim of the realist is to explain observable phenomena with reference to underlying structures and mechanisms (Blaikie, 1993, p. 98). Thus, realist epistemology is based on creating models of structures that need to be in place so that one can observe those events. Critical realism regards all knowledge as fallible, in the sense that a scientific account of a phenomenon is an incomplete explanation of certain aspects, intentionally selected and due to change (Jeppesen, 2005). It aims to explain relationships between the experiences, events and mechanisms (Jeppesen, 2005). Thus, in my study it is my task to uncover the generative mechanisms that are producing the phenomenon of engaging in PSSBs at the empirical level within an ownership context.

Danemark et al. (2002) suggest that critical realism assumes social science research to be situated within open systems, that reality is made up of different layers with emergent powers, that it has ontological depth and that all facts are theory-laden. This influences the choice of design and method and a researcher who is influenced by this line of reasoning might find some research methods to be more productive than others. They further suggest the term ‘critical methodological pluralism’, in which the choice of design method is to be found in the interrelation between meta-theory and method.

Because “*reality contains a dimension, not immediately observable*” (p.10), Danemark et al. (2002) argue that by simply observing phenomena alone, one cannot explain events; instead data need to be coupled with underlying beliefs and assumptions to give true meaning to them. Thus one needs to tap into underlying concepts such as assumptions, beliefs, values and feelings to understand better how the perceptions of HR practices actually impact on PSSBs. In terms of critical realist ontology, my study endeavours to investigate beyond the experience of events (at the empirical level) and aspires to discover and reveal the underlying structures and mechanisms from the level of the real, in the intransitive dimension, which trigger the events at the levels of the actual and empirical. This is pictorially depicted in Figure 13 below.

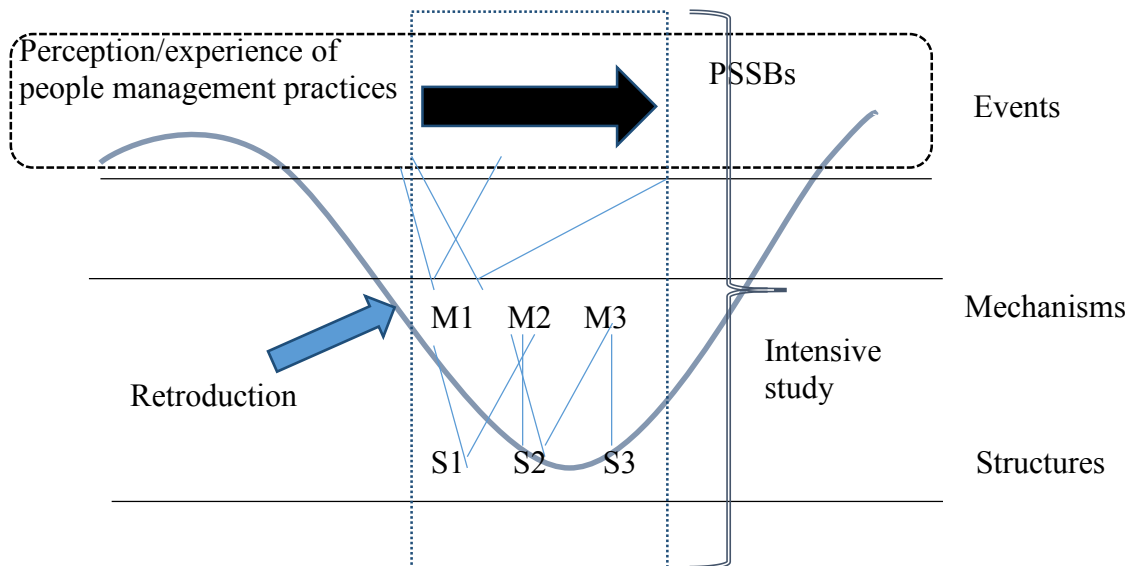


Figure 13: Applying critical realism to this study

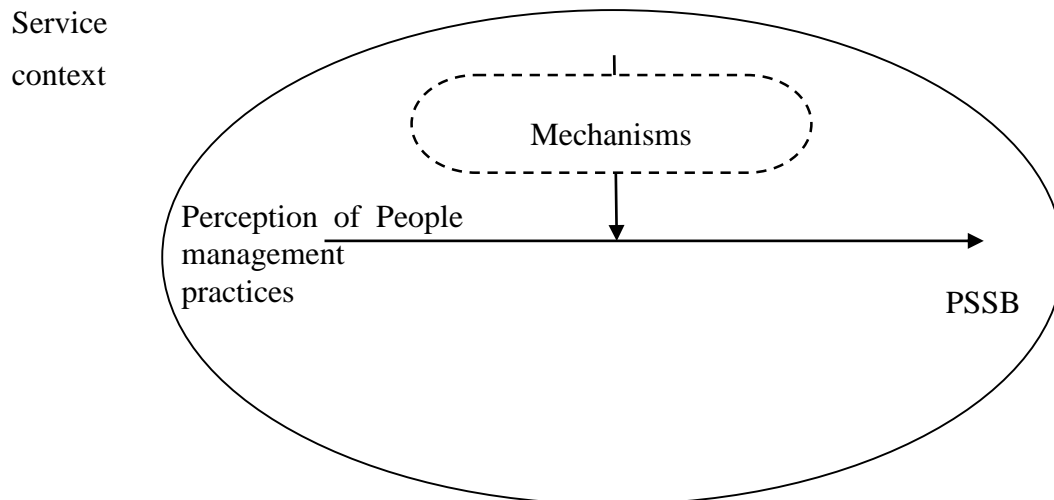
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This, therefore, entails employing abduction and retroduction in addition to induction and deduction. The central issue in abduction is “*What meaning is given to something interpreted within a particular conceptual framework?*” and in retroduction “*What qualities must exist for something to be possible?*” (Danemark,2002, p.80). More specifically, in a retroductive strategy the underlying processes and generative mechanisms of the social world are extracted by iteratively testing theoretical concepts with empirical data. Reed (2009, p. 432) conceptualises retroduction as “*a form of description and analysis, involving conceptual abstraction, and theoretical model-building and evaluation, geared to understanding and explaining concrete phenomenon by reconstructing the conditions (generative mechanisms) under which they emerge and become the entities they are*”. This commitment to retroductive analysis lends itself to an intensive research design with its focus on the context-specific condition.

Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006) summarise the key principles of critical realism in the context of management studies. The social world is transformational whereby the social actors (agents) interact with the social structures to transform these structures. An organization is a social entity composed of sub-clusters such as social structure, resources, mechanisms, rules, norms, habits and procedures, along with the agents in this organization that activate them. This has been termed as the generative ensemble (p. 686). High performance work systems or a cluster of HR practices as a whole also act as a social entity, whereby different causal components within this entity interact with each other to result in particular outcomes. Social entities (including humans and structures) possess powers that have the potential to lead to certain outcomes but not others. Powers may be possessed with or without being exercised and may be exercised with or without being actualised. Power exercised is power triggered and generates some sort of effect/output. Actualised power differs from exercised power by resulting in an effect without having its powers reduced by other exercised powers. Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006) also stress the importance of ‘personal power’ – powers possessed by social actors by virtue of their biological, physical, social, psychological and physiological make-up. Particularly, in a work context, HR practices are put in place with the intention of triggering powers such as imagination, customer service, etc. A configuration of HR practices (a social entity) will not always bring about the same outcomes but has a tendency to cause those outcomes. From an HR viewpoint, when a critical realist would

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looks to uncover social structures that workers can draw upon and contribute to better performance, there will at least be a theory that explains organizational performance. In relation to this research, the facet of organizational performance chosen is PSSBs and my research is looking into uncovering causal mechanisms within social structures in a service setting as represented in Figure 14 below.



*Figure 14: Applying the realist explanation to this research study (adapted from Robson, 2011, p. 33)*

Danemark et al. (2002) suggest a 6-stage model for explanatory research within the critical realist paradigm, which is portrayed in Figure 15. They maintain that this model is not linear and stages may be intertwined and may not follow in a perfect chronological order. They present this model as a research path that moves between concrete, abstract and then concrete again.

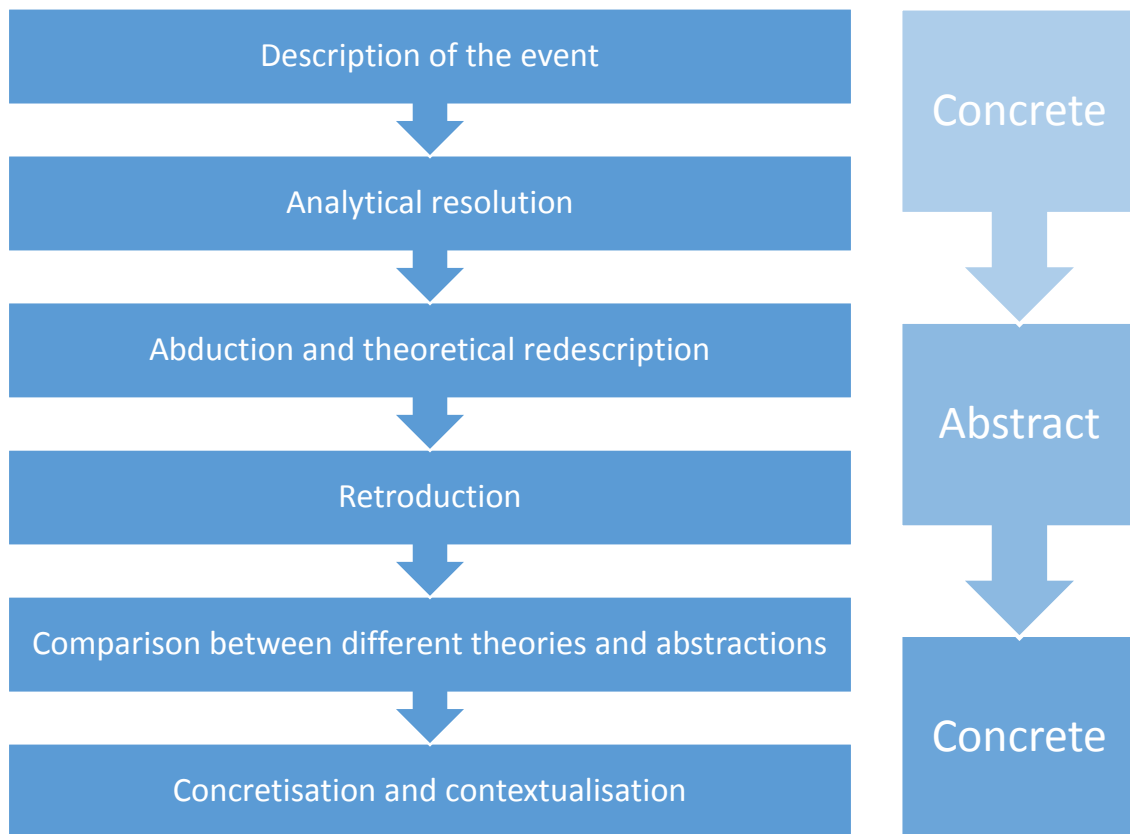


Figure 15: Stages in explanatory research in critical research (Danemark et al., 2002)

Keeping my research question in mind, which seeks to explain how the perception of people practices affects employees' PSSBs, it seems appropriate to use the 6-stage method (Danemark et al., 2002) to understand the generative ensembles that would allow for an explanation of how the perceptions are translated into behaviours. Specifically, abduction would help in understanding the meaning attributed to HR perceptions by FLEs and how this results in the display of PSSBs. Retrodution would help in comprehending what processes must be in place or what structures must exist for HR to generate employee PSSBs. The current research investigation necessitates the recognition of patterns of individual (and thus, subjective) interpretations and experiences in view of organizational practices that result in employees engaging in PSSBs. However, simply understanding and discovering these patterns would be insufficient; therefore, my research also entails utilising analytical abstraction to account for the generative ensembles that may describe these patterns.

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### 3.1.3 Philosophical viewpoints in the field of Human Resource Management and Performance

In my search for literature (knowledge) in the area of HRM and performance, it seems that only two researchers (Fleetwood and Hesketh 2006; Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008; Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006) have specifically engaged in a philosophical discussion even though it would seem that philosophical perspectives inform the methodological choices that other researchers make in pursuit of knowledge. In the last decade, there has been some discussion by academics in the area of management and organization studies on challenging some of the philosophical underpinnings in the pursuit of ‘truth’. Specifically, Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000), Contu and Willmott (2005), Fleetwood (2005), Fleetwood and Ackroyd (2004), Kwan and Tsang (2001), Miller and Tsang (2010), Reed (2005) and Reed (2009) have all engaged in a dialogue calling for a paradigm shift to critical realism as an alternative in this pursuit of knowledge. As Fleetwood and Hesketh (2006) highlight “*The professional HR literature is currently awash with articles dedicated to measuring, and reporting upon, the alleged measurable link between an organization’s HRM practices and its performance – referred to hereafter as the HRM-P link*” (p. 1977). They refer to this as the scientific approach consistent with the positivistic perspective. They suggest that this manner of conducting research over the last (nearly) two decades has not really allowed for any significant breakthroughs in this domain. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) in the same vein argue that the widespread use of identifying a research gap implies that academics today are not challenging assumptions that underpin existing literature and the search for new knowledge.

As the literature review chapter suggests, most empirical research in the HR-performance field demonstrates a positivistic underpinning. The most common form of research in this field involves the following steps:

- ✓ Using some theoretical framework (Best practice, AMO etc.) to decide a set of HR practices that will be used in the study as independent variables.
- ✓ Selecting some organizational performance indicators (mostly financial performance measures in the earlier studies and more recently employee-

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related outcomes, such as organizational commitment, OCB, employee turnover etc.) as dependent variables.

- ✓ Employing some form of sophisticated software analysis (such as LISREL or Structural Equation Modelling) to establish some sort of relationship amongst the variables identified.

This research responds to the call to investigate the HR-performance relationship with a new philosophical assumption that does not focus on variables but on the process of how HR translates into performance.

As a critical realist, I believe that HRM as an entity operates within the organizational entity and within a network of structures, with interrelationships across the key actors (agents). The perception of these HR practices is constructed by people in their minds which could be as a result of individual values, beliefs, context, etc. These individuals also interact with the context and are influenced by it which results in informal processes, which further results in certain events. Because perceptions differ across people, it is not the practices that matter but the perceptions, and indeed an understanding of the mechanisms via which these perceptions manifest as observable behaviour in the empirical layer of the stratified realist ontology. This, therefore, would require a retroductive approach in establishing these mechanisms, by adopting a critical realist approach.

Having identified my philosophical view as being consistent with that of a critical realist, I will now go on to discuss the research designs available within this approach. Within the critical realist world view, case studies emerge as a useful research strategy for intensive analysis and I chose this as the way forward in my data collection. A pictorial diagram is shown in Figure 16 which portrays the methodological journey in relation to current research in the HR-performance domain.

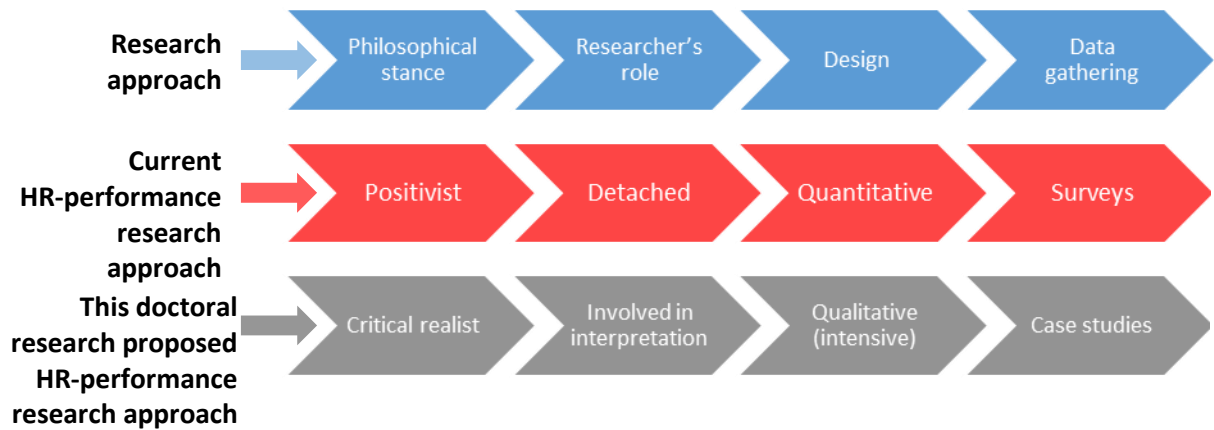


Figure 16: Comparison of methodological journey (my study vs. extant research)

### 3.2 Research designs for a critical realist approach

Research design is a blueprint that guides the researcher in the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Yin, 2008). Danemark et al. (2002) reiterate that there should be congruence between the object of study, the assumptions about society and the conceptions of how knowledge is possible, and one’s choice of design and method – what they term as ‘practical logic’ (p. 150). A critical realist philosophical position does not involve an obligation to follow particular research methods. Interestingly, because of its layered ontology, critical realism permits the choice of either qualitative or quantitative methods, or an amalgamation of both approaches. This is as a consequence of viewing both these approaches as allowing for identifying the generative mechanisms that result in visible events (Danemark et al., 2002). As a result of the mechanisms being able to explain the observable events within a given context, one must take the context into account for any scientific analysis (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Explanation of regularity =  $f$  (mechanism and context)

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.55-82)

The realists’ ontological beliefs influence them to undertake research that might penetrate below the surface to discover social mechanisms. As case studies allow for the provision of identifying the generative processes, they are considered the most relevant research

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design for a critical realist research paradigm (Ackroyd, 2009, Easton, 2010). This is reiterated by Eisenhardt's (1989) definition of a case as a research strategy that concentrates on gaining insight into the dynamics inherent in a precise setting. This case study approach fits in with the understanding that the context is also highly relevant in explaining causalities from a critical realist position. Critical realists favour retroductive research strategies (Blaikie, 2007; Sayer 2000; Danemark et al., 2002) and intensive research designs. The intensive approach predominantly utilises qualitative methods and the extensive design uses largely quantitative means (Jeppesen, 2005). The intensive case study is the preferred option for realists today. Yin (2008, p. 13) defines the case study as:

*"An empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."*

Thomas (2011, p. 23) adopts the following definition for case studies:

*"Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates."*

Utilising Thomas's definition, the organization would serve as the subject and the analytical frame is the processes by which FLEs' perceptions translate into PSSB.

The extensive and intensive approaches differ in that the extensive study sets out to look at all processes at work and their interactions, whereas the intensive orientation focuses on specific generative mechanisms and makes beneficial use of the organizational context (Ackroyd, 2009). Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010) comment that the main difference between these two approaches is not quality but procedure. Realists are cognizant that even though they are actors with their own meaning, they need to gather data that seek to discover the meanings ascribed to experiences by other actors (agents) in order to investigate the causal mechanisms. This requires them to be reflexive in their style.

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The research design which is the overall plan of how to translate the research problem into practical research (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010), will therefore need to answer the ‘how’ element in the research question. But there must be a reason underlying the choice of research, otherwise it may not result in the ‘correct’ solution. Edmondson and McManus (2007, p. 1155), suggest the concept of “*methodological fit as an overarching criterion for ensuring quality field research*”.

The research problem in this study is concerned with a “how” rather than a “what” problem and empirical research needs to be carried out to answer a specific research question. Thus, an intensive research design (Sayer, 1992) is suggested, employing predominantly qualitative methods (Jeppesen, 2005). In addition, qualitative research is aptly suited to studying individuals (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and my question does necessitate collecting data at an individual level of analysis. Employing qualitative means also fits calls from critical realists for a methodology that works in open systems as opposed to closed systems (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006) and also allows the researcher to gather subjective interpretations in the context within which the study is situated. Intensive research is unlikely to be generalisable or representative but because critical realism is concerned with explanation rather than prediction, the fact that intensive research is not representative, is not a concern. Since this study is about exploring how perceptions at an individual level translate into PSSBs, the unit of analysis is the individual, within the single case study.

The research question in this study, “How do perceptions of people management practices translate into PSSBs” necessitated a choice of design that would help to uncover the mechanisms by which perception of people management practices translates into PSSBs. Because a case study is considered a useful research approach to uncover mechanisms (Ackroyd, 2009) and also because it allows for the investigation of a real-life phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2008), it was chosen as the most suitable design for this doctoral study.

The context is pertinent in this scenario because different organizations have different practices and employees perceive the practices within their work context and give meaning to these practices within this context. Case study-based research in the HR-performance discussion has repeatedly shown that how employees experience policies is

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as critical as the policies themselves in understanding an organization's HRM system (Guest, 2001; Truss, 2001). Redman and Mathews (1998) suggest the use of a case study research to better explore the HR-service quality relationship. In addition, this mode of enquiry would answer calls for research into the HR-performance 'black box' wherein it involves using in-depth case studies to understand the 'hows' and 'whys' in the HR-performance equation. Fleetwood and Hesketh (2008) call for the use of in-depth interviews and case studies for an in-depth understanding of the inherent causes of the relationships in the HR-performance chain. Thus, a case study was considered appropriate as this was a study whereby the phenomena needed to be seen within its context (Vaus, 2001 cited in Boselie, 2009).

The research areas (*what and how*) that have been developed for this research are concerned with exploration, description and understanding. The case study method was particularly suitable because the form of the research questions centred on explanatory 'how' and 'why' questions within a context (Yin, 1994). The 'what' question in this study will seek to explore employee perceptions of the HR practices in the organization and Yin (1994) articulates that as long as the question is 'what' and not 'how many' or 'how much', then it is indeed valid to include the question in the case study method. The benefit of this case study method is its ability to 'close in' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.19) on real life situations and examine interpretations of phenomena within their context.

### 3.2.1 The rationale for a single case study

A single case study using an intensive design was considered the best design for my research (Yin, 1994). Considering that the research question explores the perceptions of people management practices, it was thought that using one organization would allow for some uniformity in relation to the people practices and the context. In addition, because the research question also aims to explore the mechanisms by which these perceptions translate into PSSBs, the intention was to find an organization that was renowned for its service. By focusing on a single organization, the context of people practices and understanding customer service could be kept as similar as possible for employees and therefore one could explore in-depth how perceptions of HR affected FLEs' PSSBs. The

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single case study site, where I was allowed to conduct this research was the John Lewis Partnership (JLP), reputed for its customer service. Since the JLP offered such a distinctive research site in terms of access, it was felt that it would be of benefit to investigate the organization in as much depth as possible.

My initial thought in choosing an organization was simply to investigate how HR practices translated into employees' PSSBs. However, my exploratory study identified that the ownership context of this chosen organization emerged as significant and hence I ended up with an intrinsic case (Stake, 2005) and unique case (Yin, 2008) having initially thought of it as an instrumental case (Stake, 2005). Intrinsic case designs lead researchers towards a more nuanced comprehension of what is important regarding the case within its distinct context and leads to a 'thick description' (Stake, 2005). The fact that it is only a single case is not an issue in the search for underlying mechanisms as the goal of conducting a case study for this purpose is not statistical generalisation but analytic generalisation (expanding and generalising theories), also known as theoretical generalisation (Mitchell, 1983 cited in Bryman, 2008).

Critical realists believe that there is one reality but many perceptions of that reality. So the more perceptions of reality, the clearer the 'true' picture of that reality. This leads me to propose the use of sub-cases within a large case study. The case itself is singular but it has sub-groups (FLEs and FLMs), referred to Stake (2005) and Yin (2008) as embedded cases (as shown in Figure 17). Thomas (2011) argues that because these sub-units are *fitted in* within the larger unit, they should be referred to as *nested* cases, and suggests that each sub-group, if large enough, needs to be sampled.

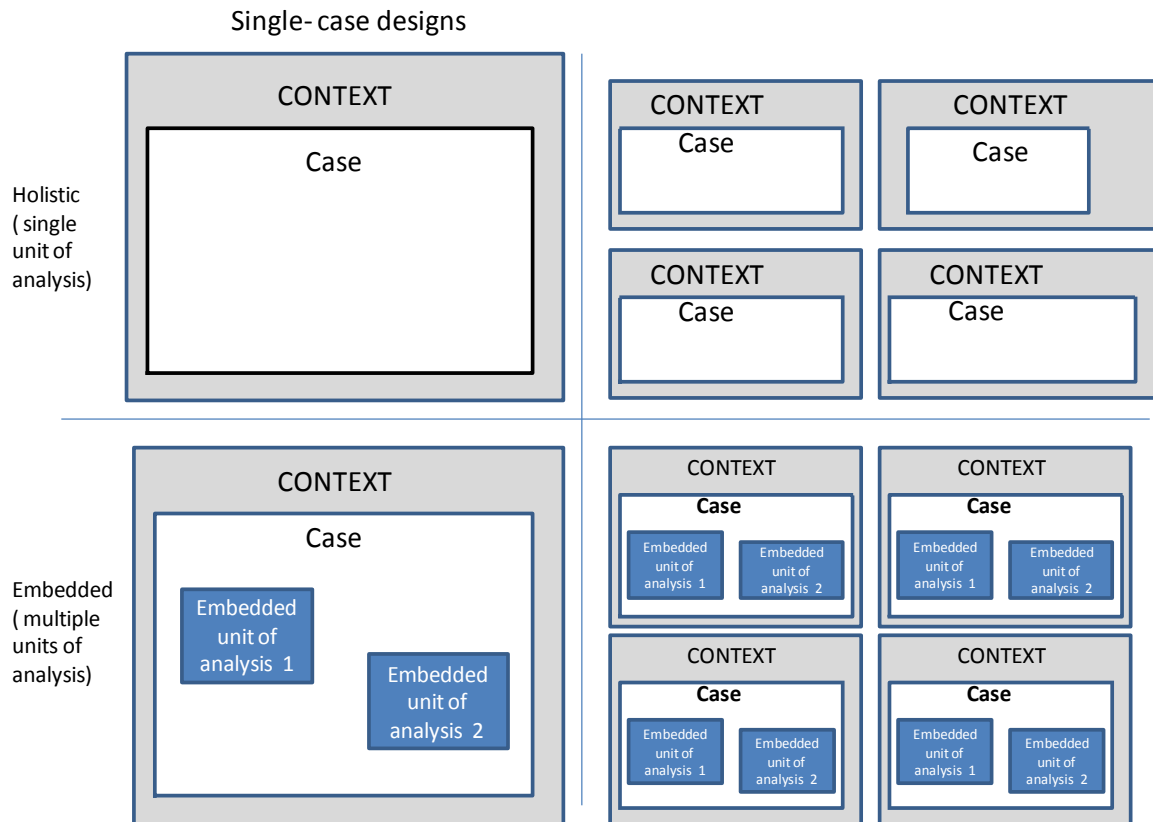


Figure 17: Types of case study designs (Yin, 2008, p. 46)

The intensive research design (Sayer, 1992) was employed and this utilises predominantly qualitative methods (Jeppesen, 2005) which is aptly suited to study individuals (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and my question does entail collecting data at an individual level of analysis. Intensive research is unlikely to be generalisable or representative but because critical realism is concerned with explanation rather than prediction, the fact that intensive research is not representative, should not be an issue.

### 3.3 Fieldwork

As a critical realist, there were several choices of data gathering avenues available to me (see Table 7 for a list of available options). Even though observation was a possibility, it was not chosen not only because it would be difficult to organise but also that the

employees observed might have behaved differently as a result of being observed. Within qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were selected as the main method to elicit information in the empirical domain. Source triangulation (using more than one source) was achieved by interviewing FLEs and FLMs. In addition, data were also gathered through company documentation and physical artefacts. Triangulation has been suggested as the most effective way to increase reliability, validity and generalisability (Flick, 2006).

Table 7: Sources of evidence in case study research and their strengths and weaknesses (Adapted from Yin, 2008 cited in Gray, 2014)

Source of evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	Stable Unobtrusive Exact Broad coverage	Access Reporting bias
Archival records	(same as above for documentation) Precise and quantitative	(same as above for documentation)
Interviews	Targeted – focus directed on research topic Insightful – provides original and illuminating data	Danger of bias Response bias Inaccuracies due to poor recall Reflexivity – interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear Time-consuming and costly
Direct observation	Reality – covers events in real time Contextual – covers context of events	Time-consuming and costly Narrow focus Reflexivity – event may proceed differently because it is being observed
Participant observation	(same as direct observation) Insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives	(same as direct observation)
Physical artefacts	Insightful into cultural features Insightful into technical operations	Selectivity

### 3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were considered to be most suitable for this study; they differ from unstructured interviews in that the topics to be covered and questions to be asked

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are decided beforehand (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010). Kvale (2013) defined a research interview as an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (p. 8-9). Particularly for my research, this would imply understanding employees' experiences of people practices and how those experiences related to their engaging in PSSBs and then interpreting the information. This was done through the creation of themes and within those themes outlining questions and further probes to uncover the deeper mechanisms. Different forms of semi-structured interviews exist and these serve varying purposes – factual, conceptual, focus group, narrative and discursive (Kvale, 2013). In the interview guide that was finally adopted, different questions served different purposes. The first part of the interview was to establish a rapport and understand the respondent's background and role, and provide an account of which practices they thought helped them engage in PSSBs (factual interviewing). Once this information was gathered, probes were used to uncover the deeper mechanisms on how perceptions translated into behaviour (conceptual interviewing). For particular questions, the interview took a narrative form whereby respondents also shared a story (specifically in response to the question on extra-role behaviours). Kvale (2013) also discusses the seven phases of interviewing as thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying, and reporting. I will now explain each stage and its relevance to my own research study as demonstrated in Table 8.

Table 8: Seven stages of interviewing (Adapted from Kvale (2013) and applied to the current study)

Stage	Purpose	What did I do?
<b>Thematizing</b>	Congruence between research topic, strategy and method i.e. interviews need to be aligned with the research question.	Based on my research question on the relationship between HR perceptions and PSSBs, I listed the key themes that were relevant in answering the research question. Specifically, after consultation with an expert researcher in this area (Dr. Lisa Nishii), four broad categories on how best to capture HR perceptions were elicited.
<b>Designing</b>	Ensure fit between themes and the questions asked and the order in which they are asked.	I used the themes to design questions in both the key areas and then ordered them so they did not come across as random but in a considered sequence. The key themes were: exploring which people practices contributed to employees engaging in role-prescribed and extra-role service behaviours, exploring the role of the LM in employing and displaying customer service behaviours, probing how these identified practices translated into PSSBs; understanding relevance of personnel in terms of customer service and the ownership elements that influenced employees in their service delivery.
<b>Interviewing</b>	Conduct the interviews based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and the interpersonal relationship of the interview situation.	All the interviews started with a briefing which introduced the purpose of the interview, along with ethical considerations. At the end of the interview, a debriefing was carried out summarising the main points, by asking interviewees if they had anything else to add with respect to what had been discussed.
<b>Transcribing</b>	Preparing the interview material for analysis, to include transcription from oral to written material.	Interviews were transcribed fully after each interview was conducted.
<b>Analysing</b>	Decide, based on the purpose and topic of the investigation, and on the nature of the interview material, which methods of analysis are appropriate.	Data were analysed using NVivo (9.0) and codes were initially created based around key people management practices. Then further child nodes were created to accommodate emergent themes in these areas. Things that did not fit into these codes were also coded into another category so as to have them available if needed at a later stage.
<b>Verifying</b>	Ascertain the generalisability, reliability and validity of the interview findings.	This was done in the best way possible throughout the interview process, by using techniques which will be discussed further in the next section.
<b>Reporting</b>	Communicate the findings of the study that live up to scientific criteria, take ethical steps into consideration and produce a quality document.	Initial findings have been discussed with the JLP briefly and provisional findings have been sent to them. In the report, ethical issues such as anonymity and confidentiality have been addressed by allocating pseudonyms to the interviewees.

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Two rounds of semi-structured interviews were held, the first being the exploratory study and the second, the main study. The interview guide was substantially changed for the main study and this will be discussed in the exploratory study section.

For the exploratory study, the interview protocol was devised based on the research question, the extant literature and conversations with subject experts. Specific discussions were had with Dr. Nishii (author of seminal paper, Wright and Nishii, 2007) on how best to capture perceptions of HR practices. Meetings were also held with a JLP representative, to ensure that the terms used in the interview guide were understood clearly by JL employees. The main change made at this stage was changing the HR department to the Personnel department, as in the JLP they refer to the HR department as Personnel. The interview guide that was finally employed for the exploratory study is shown in Appendix 5. The actual discussion of this stage will be provided later, in Section 3.3.4. The interview guide adopted for the main study was an amended version of the exploratory interview guide.

### 3.3.2 Documents

Yin (2008) comments that documents can be useful to any kind of case study. For the purposes of this study several types of documents were used. This included company documents that provided an understanding of the specific context of the study, those that explained job roles and their focus, and others that stressed specific aspects related to customer service. In addition, published company magazines were also used. This was found to be particularly useful in understanding the current state of affairs within the organization and also helped understand the democratic nature of the business.

### 3.3.3 Physical artefacts

Physical artefacts or any form of physical evidence may also be collected in case study designs (Yin, 2008). In this study, I was able to collect some physical evidence (works of art) in the form of visual images and information that were portrayed on the walls of the

corridors in the research site. Again, this was a very useful approach in helping to contextualise this doctoral study.

Even though company documents and physical artefacts were not used for in-depth analysis, they were extremely useful in providing an in-depth understanding of the context of this research. In reviewing these sources of data, I developed a greater appreciation of the boundaries within which this case study was positioned. To summarise, the main considerations leading to the final research design adopted are shown in Figure 18.

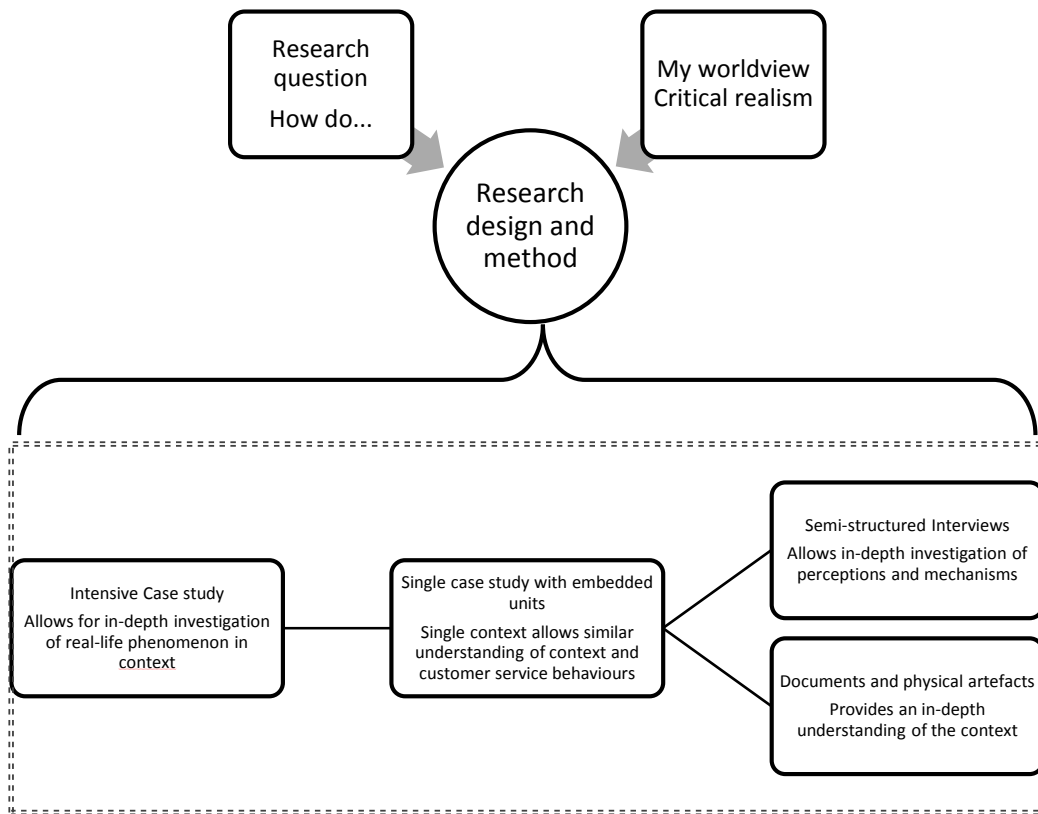


Figure 18: Research design used for this research

### 3.3.4 Exploratory study

The research setting was the John Lewis Partnership (JLP), the UK's largest employee ownership company (John Lewis Partnership, 2015a). An exploratory study was

considered helpful to assess whether the research interview instrument was appropriate in this ownership context. Data were sourced from only one department within the JLP as it was thought that enough data from interviews could be gathered from one department to test the research instrument. This department was selected after discussions with the Recruitment and Development Manager.

Sampling in qualitative research has a different role to play than in quantitative research. Since the aim is not to generalise to a greater population, sampling needs to be more purposeful than probabilistic. Theoretical sampling was conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who defined it as “*the process of data collection where the researcher decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges*” (p. 45). The basic premise of theoretical sampling is to select cases according to concrete criteria rather than on their representativeness. The FLEs or selling Partners (as they are known in the JLP) were chosen by the Department Manager, with guidance from me. Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was carried out to reflect varying levels of PSSBs, in order to gain a broader range of responses. In addition, the selling Partners were specifically selected to reflect a range of employees in terms of age and years of service. This was done to obtain as diverse a set of selling Partners as possible so that a wide range of perspectives could potentially be covered.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine selling Partners from the Menswear Department and three Partners from Personnel. Table 9 shows the sample; all the interviewees have been allocated pseudonyms.

*Table 9: Interviewee pseudonyms and demographics*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Working hours</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of years with the company</b>
<b>Amy</b>	F	Part-time	31-40	11-15
<b>Sean</b>	M	Full-time	31-40	6-10
<b>Maya</b>	F	Full-time	21-25	1-5 years
<b>Naomi</b>	F	Full-time	21-25	1-5 years.
<b>Kai</b>	M	Full-time	Above 50	More than 20 years

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Working hours</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of years with the company</b>
<b>Jia</b>	F	Part-time	31-40	Less than a year
<b>Louisa</b>	F	Part-time	16-20	Less than a year
<b>Joanna</b>	F	Full-time	41-50	6-10 years
<b>Sitara</b>	F	Part-time	16-20	Less than a year

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled over two weeks in July/August 2010 to solicit information from the frontline employees (also referred to above as selling Partners) on their perceptions of Personnel practices and documentary evidence was requested where needed to understand organization-specific information on HR practices, customer service, customer feedback, performance of different departments, etc. All the interviews were recorded after permission was sought from the respondents.

Having discussed the methods used for the exploratory study, I will now move on to discuss the findings in brief.

#### *3.3.4.1 Exploratory study findings*

The exploratory study was extremely beneficial to this doctoral study. The relevance of the context of ownership emerged as an important finding. The findings from the exploratory study will not be presented here in order to avoid confusion. However, the key learning points and how they amended and informed the research journey will be outlined here.

The key messages from the study were: 1) that employees perceived certain practices, such as having a voice, decision-making power, being kept informed about organizational performance etc. which they grouped under ownership practices, as critical to them engaging in PSSBs; 2) employees perceived these ownership practices as part of the broader people management domain; 3) the questions that were designed to probe for the mechanisms had not worked in as much depth as was required to answer my research question.

In discussions with representatives from the JLP for their feedback on this interview guide, it was felt that role-prescribed customer service behaviours would be better understood as excellent customer service behaviours and extra-role customer service behaviours would be better understood as ‘going the extra mile’. This was then piloted in interviews with three selling Partners and a final interview guide created (See Appendix 6). Specifically, to address the learnings from the exploratory study, the following amendments were made:

- 1) Instead of HR practices, focus was broadened to explore perceptions of people management practices (this included practices that emanated from Personnel, LMs and general ownership-related practices).
- 2) Questions were posed to establish which practices contributed to: 1) their role-prescribed customer service behaviours (excellent customer service) and 2) their extra-role customer service behaviours (going the extra mile).
- 3) Specifically, the role of the LM emerged as pivotal to employees engaging in PSSBs and therefore more in-depth questioning of this aspect was added.
- 4) A laddered approach (Baker, 2002) was applied in exploring the mechanisms of how perceptions translated into PSSBs (as shown below in Table 10).

*Table 10: Sample question with probes to explore mechanisms (laddered approach)*

Type of main question	Probes using laddering technique
<p><b>1. What help does John Lewis give you to provide excellent customer service? Or How does John Lewis help you to provide excellent service?</b></p>	<p>Probe on each tool/practice identified in the question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is it done in practice? How does it contribute to your providing this high level of service?</li> <li>2. Probe: LM’s role and involvement (if any).</li> <li>3. What is your overall perception of your experience with this practice?</li> <li>4. How would you explain how this perception affects you in how you provide excellent service?</li> </ol>

In addition, it was also realised that even though employees with varying levels of service performance were chosen as a sample for the exploratory study, they all considered themselves as high-performers in terms of customer service. This was identified to be possibly because of their self-perception of working in an organization that was renowned

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for customer service. As a result, it was decided that for the main study it would be best to focus solely on top performers (in relation to customer service). On a personal level, I learnt how to use NVivo effectively and this allowed me to develop my skills as a researcher.

### 3.3.5 Main data collection

As mentioned before, within the case study method, semi-structured interviews were selected as most appropriate to provide answers to the research question at hand. Semi-structured interviews sit between structured and unstructured interviews (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010). Semi-structured interviews deal with minimising bias by careful design of the technique itself. They allow more structure by having a set of themes organized in a set sequence but also allow the researcher to investigate or probe when the response requires him/her to do so. Specifically probes were designed around the main themes to delve deeper into the mechanisms that translate perceptions of people practices into observable customer service behaviours. Since the interview protocol was amended following the exploratory study, a detailed rationale will be provided of the amended protocol.

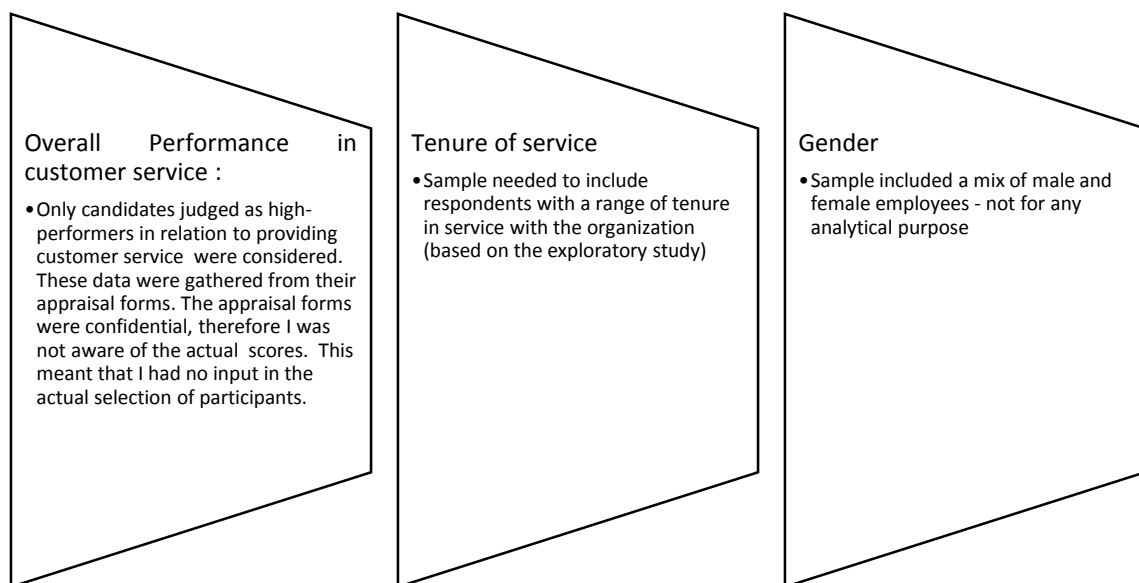
The key amendment in relation to the exploratory study interview protocol was to incorporate questions that address the fact that people management practices may come from sources other than HR/Personnel. In addition, questions were also added that would provide answers to “how” people management practices affect customer service behaviours, i.e. the questions are allowing the mechanisms to surface. Appendix 7 shows the rationale behind each question in the interview protocol and clarifies the purpose for that question. I have done this to highlight how each question contributes to answering the research question.

Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to ensure that respondents were chosen who would be able to provide answers to the research question in this study rather than being selected so as to represent a larger population. It was felt that because the research question was aimed at uncovering the mechanisms of how perceptions led to FLEs’ pro-social behaviours (both in-role and extra-role), it would be beneficial to focus only on

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high-performers in customer service within the JLP. I advised the JLP about the considerations that needed to be kept in mind when selecting the respondents. The final sample of frontline selling Partners (respondents) and managers was provided by the Personnel department of the JLP.

The aim was to select frontline Partners and front LMs across the operational departments so as to be able to compare the findings. Following the exploratory study it was felt that age, gender and type of employment (full-time or part-time) were not relevant factors in sample selection. However, length of years of service (tenure) was felt to have some effect on perceptions of people management practices and hence this was considered in the sample selection. Gender was considered relevant purely to reflect a mix of respondents and not for any analytical purpose. Figure 19 below shows the three key selection criteria for the sample.



*Figure 19: Sample selection criteria*

The main operating departments in the JLP are Home, Fashion, Commercial Support and Personnel and within these departments, there are sub-categories. Even though it was not the intention of my research to look at any level of departmental analysis, it was felt that every effort should be made to select the sample from as broad a range of departments as

possible. It was also felt that capturing both FLEs' and managers' views was relevant as that would allow for multiple sources of evidence within the single case study. A final sample of 23 frontline selling Partners and 8 FLMs was used for this study (refer to Appendix 8 for a demographic breakdown of the interviewees). In addition, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with Partners from the Personnel department for a more detailed understanding of the people management practices before the main data collection.

The final sample of Partners used for the fieldwork is shown in Table 11 with a more detailed description based on the departments. The tenure of service ranged from 1 to 32 years.

Table 11: Sample from departments

	Selling Partners	Section managers
Male	9	4
Female	14	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>

SPs	Fashion	Home	Commercial support	section managers	Fashion	Home	Commercial support
Male	3	5	1	Male	1	2	1
Female	6	7	1	Female	1	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the sample of respondents in two phases: Stage 1 (September 2012) and Stage 2 (February-March 2013). This was not my preferred approach; I was faced with access issues, as a result of which this ended up being the

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most suitable approach. The key reasons for the collection of data across these two time periods were:

1. The specific store that was being used as the data gathering site embarked on a major refurbishment project in 2012. This led to both selling Partners and managers not being available for long periods due to work commitments related to this refurbishment.
2. In addition, November and December were considered too busy a retail period to allow Partners to leave the shop floor for interviews.

As I was aware of this time gap in data collection, I compared the interview data from the first few interviews in February 2013 with those in September 2012. There did not seem to be any significant differences between the data, except from expected individual differences. This meant that this set of interviews could be used along with the previous set for fieldwork. All the interviews were conducted in a quiet meeting room within the JLP (Milton Keynes) premises that was made available to me by the Personnel department. Each interviewee was brought to this room by someone from Personnel. All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and ethical consent was sought for the same. Before each interview the respondent was guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity for themselves. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 75 minutes. The average number of pages per transcribed interview was 17. All the interviews were transcribed over a period of three months.

During the actual interviewing process even though the JLP had allocated an hour off the shop floor for each respondent, in several cases the interview ran slightly longer than an hour. I found that the employees found it easy to answer the questions that focused on identifying the people management practices that allowed them to engage in PSSBs. However, I had to probe and persevere with exploring the mechanisms. I did this by identifying the practice that they had highlighted and then asking them the probing questions separately. I refrained from giving my interpretation even though sometimes I had an understanding of the mechanism, based on my own experience.

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### 3.3.5.1 Reflexivity

In managing this research study, I was conscious my own subjectivity might have affected the research study. Adopting a critical realist stance, allowed me to be mindful of this and acknowledge this.

My background in luxury hotels influencing my beliefs on what service excellence is was something I was conscious of from the very beginning. However, the employee-ownership aspect that I encountered with my research site was something I had no prior knowledge of and had had no exposure to. It was positive in that I did not approach this concept with any pre-conceived notions of what it should be, but it was also a challenge because it was something I had to spend considerable time understanding. Furthermore, my skills as an interviewer improved as the process developed leading me to relax more and better engage in conversations with the interviewees.

## 3.4 Data analysis

Once the interviews were conducted and transcribed in MS Word, they were subsequently imported into NVivo (version 9.0). Reliability during the transcription process was maintained by transcribing all the interviews in the same manner (full transcription). Once in NVivo, manual codes were created to analyse the data in stages. A kind of thematic analysis called “*template analysis*” (King, 2011) was used to analyse the interview data. Template analysis involves the creation of a template or skeleton that acts as a template which is to be used to assign items from the transcripts. King (2011) proposes that a hierarchical template be first produced and then narrower sub-themes created to accommodate the data gathered. King (2011) also posits that the template can be used from a realist position, when underlying causes of observable phenomena are being investigated. This fitted well with my research investigation. King (2006) suggests that for a solo researcher, it might be worthwhile to involve one or more subject specialists to determine whether the template is comprehensive and clear and requires no amendments. To increase reliability in the analysis stage, I shared full transcripts for the first level of interviews with another doctoral researcher and compared the codes assigned

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independently by both of us. The *'final'* template that ensued was used for the analysis and interpretative stages.

### 3.4.1 Developing the template

The key stages involved in the development of the analytical template include creating the initial template, revising the template and finalising the template. As stated earlier, template analysis commences with some established pre-defined codes which kick-start the analysis process. Coding in qualitative research is essentially a means of 'tagging' text with codes that are then utilised later for data analysis. Without this process of coding, raw data become too overwhelming. My aim in this stage was not to have either too many pre-defined codes or too few, as starting with too many codes could limit my ability to notice themes that had not been thought of by me and starting with too limited a set of codes could overwhelm me in terms of which direction to start. The approach I used was to build a preliminary template which included a broad code for people management practices that resulted in PSSBs. At this stage I requested another doctoral researcher to create higher order codes that fitted my research question. We decided to add sub-themes (as they emerged from the data) such as recruitment, training, LM role. Subsequently, applying this template to the full set of transcripts, issues were identified in the text that were pertinent to the research question but were not captured by any existing code and consequently it was necessary to add a new code. An example of this was the role of the co-worker in displaying extra-role behaviours; this was added as an additional code. Also when ownership was found to be influential in displaying PSSBs, it became necessary to add it as a higher order need with sub-categories to include references in the text that helped uncover the mechanisms that allowed perceptions to be translated to PSSBs. I considered the template to be final when after going through the text I found that all relevant text had been coded that helped answer the research question, i.e. there was no section of text related to the research study but not assigned to a code. I read and re-read the texts three times before I was happy that this final template had been reached as shown in Table 12. As mentioned earlier, NVivo (version 9.0) was used as the software for analysis. In as much as it was useful in allocating text to themes finalised through the

coding process, NVivo by itself does not make any judgements on the data but simply allows a more efficient handling of the masses of text that I had transcribed (King, 2011).

Table 12: Coding Structure

<i>Tree node</i>	Customer service meaning			
	<i>Tree node</i>	In-role		
	<i>Tree node</i>	Extra-role		
<i>Tree node</i>	People management practices			
	<i>Tree node</i>	Training and Development		
		<i>Tree node</i>	How it happens	
		<i>Tree node</i>	Other partners	
		<i>Tree node</i>	Other influences	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Performance management		
		<i>Tree node</i>	How it happens	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Job autonomy		
		<i>Tree node</i>	Line manager	
		<i>Tree node</i>	Organisational systems	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Communication		
		<i>Tree node</i>	Role of the line manager	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Employee voice		
		<i>Tree node</i>	Having a say	
			<i>Tree node</i>	Role of the line manager
		<i>Tree node</i>	Participation in decision	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Non-financial recognition		
		<i>Tree node</i>	Organisational –level	
		<i>Tree node</i>	Role of the line manager	
			<i>Tree node</i>	Recognition
			<i>Tree node</i>	Praise
		<i>Tree node</i>	Role of other partners	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Financial rewards and benefits		
		<i>Tree node</i>	Financial rewards	
		<i>Tree node</i>	Leisure benefits	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Registry		
<i>Tree node</i>	Line-manager related			
	<i>Tree node</i>	Support		
	<i>Tree node</i>	Role model		
	<i>Tree node</i>	Being nice to employees		
<i>Tree node</i>	Partnership-related			

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	<i>Tree node</i>	Work environment		
		<i>Tree node</i>	Family feeling	
	<i>Tree node</i>	Interactions at work		
	<i>Tree node</i>	Partner		
	<i>Tree node</i>	Co-owner		
<i>Tree node</i>	Other factors			
	<i>Tree node</i>	Individual dependent		
	<i>Tree node</i>	Service focus		
	<i>Tree node</i>	External reputation		

### 3.4.2 Quality in case studies

Easterby, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) identify that the issue of research validity, reliability and generalisability depends on the philosophical perspective of the research. Because this study adopted critical realism which accepts an objective reality but allows for an interpretivist epistemology, the purpose of this study is not to generalise the findings from a sample to a population but to understand the processes in the ownership context that translate perceptions into behaviour. Yin (2008) suggests the quality tests of validity and reliability should be applied to case studies. Validity in case studies refers to construct, internal and external validity. Construct validity was sought by using the Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) framework for HR-performance and using operational measures from that (perception of people management practices). In addition, the other operational measure (PSSB) (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997), has also been researched and referenced by other authors. It was also increased by using multiple sources of evidence (interviews with frontline employees, FLMs, documents and physical artefacts). Internal validity has also been identified as a key concern for explanatory case studies such as this one. It asks questions such as *“Is the inference correct; Have all the rival explanations and possibilities been considered?”* (Yin, 2008, p. 43). To increase this type of validity, pattern matching was used (Yin, 2008) whereby the findings on the practices and processes were compared against established concepts. It was found that some of the practices and mechanisms fitted well with predicted patterns (list of practices and mechanisms such as psychological empowerment, POS etc. which will be discussed in depth in the findings chapter).

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The concept of the external validity of case studies has been a major barrier in conducting case studies. External validity in case studies has a different connotation from that of its meaning in survey research. With reference to a case study, external validity asks “*Can the findings be generalised beyond the study itself?*” (Buchanan, 2012). Generalizability, or external validity is the relevance of findings to contexts other than the one researched. Buchanan (2012, p. 12) asserts that it is a myth in case study research and comments “*The claim that, ‘you can’t generalise from a single case’, displays a lack of understanding of both case study research and concepts of generalisation*”. No claim is being made in this study to depict wider generalisability but simply to explain the processes that translate perceptions into behaviours within the confines of this context and how this would broaden our understanding of certain theories. Miles and Huberman (1994) and Stake (2005) discuss the notion of transferability, asking if the findings will be applicable in another setting. Even though the context of this research study is unique, the outcomes illustrate that to some degree these findings can be transferred to other settings and this will be discussed later in this thesis.

Reliability in the case study design was ensured as best it could be by keeping a database of respondents and a diary of when the interviews occurred so that it would enable another person to know who the respondents were and when the interviews were conducted.

### 3.4.3 Quality in interviews

Within case studies, because semi-structured interviews were used as the main data gathering mechanism, I sought to ensure validity in the interviewing process by careful research design in discussion with subject experts and employees of the JLP, to ensure what I was measuring would actually help in answering the research question. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe internal validity in interviews as the legitimacy of individual accounts. I explained to the participants in depth about confidentiality. I also framed the interview in such a manner as to establish a rapport first which made them feel more comfortable in being honest with me. In addition, by following Kvale’s (2013) stages of interviewing, I was able to be transparent in the creation of the research instruments. I also increased validity by using multiple sources of investigation to enable a more

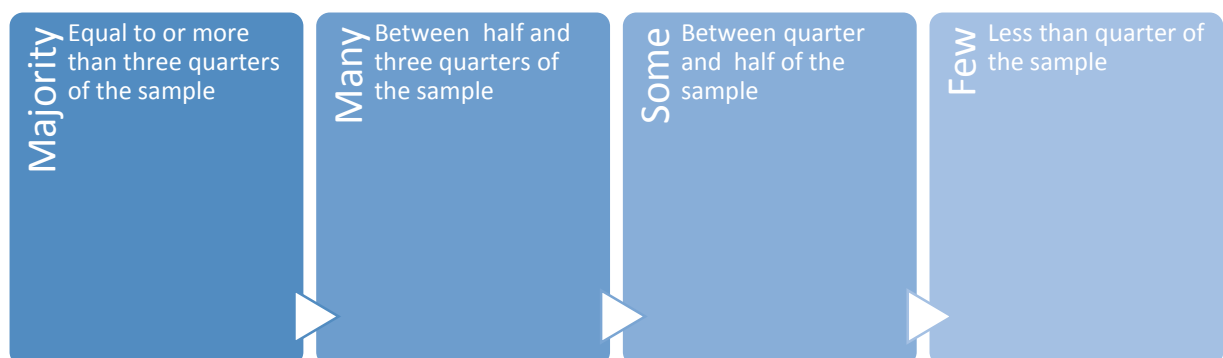
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comprehensive understanding of the study in its context (interviews with frontline employees and their managers, documents, physical artefacts). Reliability was sought by transcribing all the interviews fully and then cross-checking the codes with a second researcher and by outlining the key steps in this process.

Nonetheless there are limitations that are evident from the inherent research design. Even though they will be discussed in depth in the Conclusions chapter (Chapter 8) , a few key limitations will be briefly presented here. Key limitations are inherent in the use of a single case study site; in the selection of respondents (both FLEs and managers) by the organization and in the use of semi-structured interviews. Equally, being employees of a reputed customer service organization could have led to employees presenting a favourable view of the organization.

Having discussed in depth the methods used for the study, I will now move on to discuss the findings. I have used participants' quotes where appropriate to validate themes. To demonstrate the intensity of the findings, I have used the rationale explained in Table 13 below to ascertain how often a topic was discussed by the Partners.

*Table 13: How I will present the data to reflect different levels of intensity of the findings*



### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter elaborated on the philosophical perspective of the study and subsequently, outlined the research design congruent with the chosen philosophical stance with the aim

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of providing answers to the precise research questions identified. It then provided a detailed guide to how the data were collected and analysed to answer the questions set. It also made explicit how the data collection process was organized to ensure quality in the data collected. The next chapter commences by presenting the data from the study; these data have been collected through the use of 23 semi-structured interviews with FLEs, i.e. non-management selling Partners in the JLP.

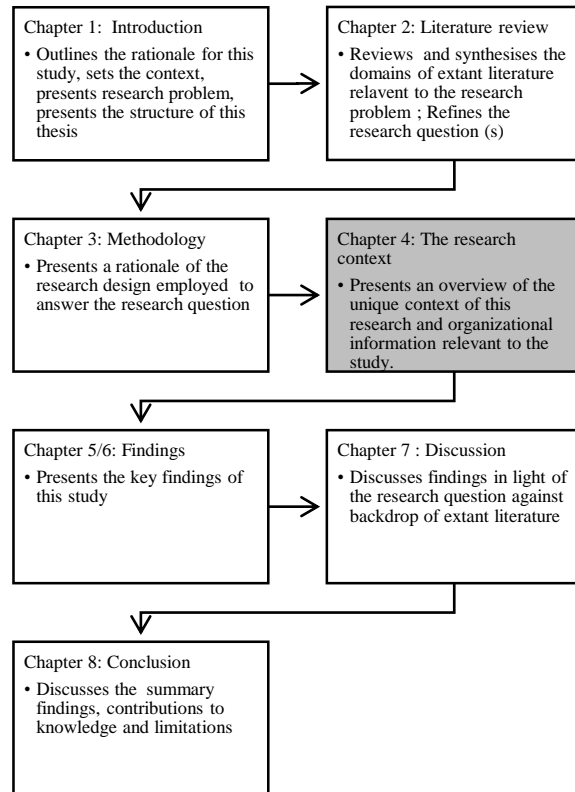
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## 4 The research context

Having discussed the methodology adopted for this study in order to answer the research question, this chapter will seek to present a more in-depth picture of the research site within which this HR-performance discussion for a service organization is positioned. Essentially the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) was chosen as the research site for its reputation in customer service, specifically to investigate how perceptions of people management practices translated into PSSBs. The JLP won the Which? award for The Best High Street

Retailer for the second year running in 2014, and also won the Verdict customer satisfaction awards in the same year (John Lewis Partnership, 2015b). However, because of its ownership nature it provides a different setting from that in which research has typically been conducted for HR-performance studies.

This chapter is arranged as follows: Section 4.1 will present an overview of the specific case study site, i.e. the John Lewis Partnership. This is followed by Section 4.2 which gives a critical discussion of the literature surrounding ownership organizations specifically relating to managing people in employee-owned organizations such as the JLP. This will be done to afford a more nuanced appreciation of the intricacies of this unique context in addition to the service setting within which this HR-performance research is located. Finally, in Section 4.3, I present relevant organizational information pertaining to my study that allows for a better understanding of the findings in this unique context.



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#### 4.1 The case study site in its context: John Lewis Partnership

The John Lewis Partnership is a retail organization. The retail and wholesale trade sector (referred to as the retail sector) contributed £151 billion to the UK's economic output in 2012, accounting for 16% of the total. This sector employed 4.3 million people in 2012, making it the main industrial group in UK by the number and proportion of employees. For retail alone, 2.7 million people were employed in the UK, about 10.2% of total employment (Rhodes, 2014). Retailing is a major, labour-intensive industry. People are the key players in all transactions that occur in retail stores (Merkel, Jackson and Pick, 2010). Bozkurt and Grugulis (2011) comment that retail work remains understudied (p. 2) but it deserves attention.

The research context for this study is one of the retail stores of the UK's largest co-owned business, the JLP (John Lewis Partnership, 2015a). The JLP is also the largest department store in the UK (John Lewis Partnership, 2015c). The Partnership is owned in trust for the benefits of its members, who are Partners from the day they join the organization. At present in this retail organization, there are 93,800 Partners who own 43 John Lewis stores across the UK, 336 Waitrose supermarkets, an online and catalogue business, a production firm and a farm (John Lewis Partnership, 2015d). The Partnership has annual gross sales of more than £10bn, with profits having grown by almost 10% from the previous year (John Lewis Partnership, 2015e).

Their approach to customer service is demonstrated by the following statement:

*We are committed to attracting, retaining and deepening relationships with our customers. We want to build their confidence in our reputation for quality, price and service (John Lewis Partnership, 2015f).*

Their commitment to their customers is “*Never knowingly undersold – on quality, price and service*” (John Lewis Partnership, 2015f). John Lewis has been the recipient of several awards in the area of customer service in 2014, namely Verdict Customer Satisfaction Awards, Best Overall Retailer, Best Online Retailer Overall, Best Retailer for Online Fulfilment, Best Homewares Retailer and Best Electricals Retailer (John Lewis Partnership, 2015c).

The JLP was set up by John Spedan Lewis in 1929, with the ultimate purpose of balancing a successful business with the happiness of its Partners (employees as we know them in a non-owned business).

*“The Partnership’s ultimate purpose is the happiness of all its members through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business.” (John Lewis Partnership, 2012, p.7)*

The Partnership has a written Constitution which sets out both the vision of the Partnership principles and the rules for how it should operate. This is unique to this employee-owned organization and a copy of the Constitution is attached in Appendix 9. The six principles guiding the JLP in how it and its members conduct business are elaborated upon below in Table 14. These include how power and profit are distributed, the Partnership’s commitment to its members, customers, business relationships and community.

*Table 14: The John Lewis Partnership’s principles, The Constitution (John Lewis Partnership, 2012, pp. 7-8)*

Principles	What does it mean?
<b>Purpose</b>	Happiness of all its members, through satisfying and worthwhile employment. The Partnership is owned in trust and all Partners share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power.
<b>Power</b>	Power is shared across three governing bodies – the Partnership Council, the Partnership Board and the Chairman.
<b>Profit</b>	The Partnership endeavours to make reasonable profit to finance its continued development, to distribute a share of those profits each year to its members and to enable it to undertake other activities in line with its purpose.
<b>Members</b>	The Partnership aims to employ and retain people of ability and integrity, who are committed to working together and to supporting its Principles. Relationships are based on mutual respect and courtesy, with as much equality as possible within the limits of job and task responsibilities. The Partnership aims to recognise individual contributions and reward them fairly.
<b>Customers</b>	The Partnership aims to deal with customers honestly and endeavour to secure their loyalty and trust by providing outstanding choice, value and service.
<b>Business relationships</b>	The Partnership aims to conduct all business relationships with integrity and courtesy and scrupulously to honour every business agreement.
<b>Community</b>	The Partnership aims to obey the spirit as well as the letter of the law and to contribute to the wellbeing of the local communities.

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The Partners share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power (John Lewis Partnership, 2012, p.7). John Lewis Partners have a constitutional right to ownership. As owners, Partners not only have the responsibilities of ownership but also the rights of ownership; a right to knowledge (how the business is doing and what it is planning to do in the future); a right to share power (have a say in who leads the business and influences it) and also a right to share profit (they are rewarded for all their efforts).

The Partnership has at its heart the notion of democracy, which is described as giving a voice to the people. This can be done through informal routes involving talking to managers and colleagues but also includes more established, formal channels made up of elected Partners from all levels of the business. The profit element of reward incorporates not only the annual Partnership bonus but also leisure benefits for all Partners. The knowledge aspect is evident through open communication via the company publications which provide regular information on business developments and also promote the unique democracy. There are two in-house magazines – the Gazette which is published at Partnership level and the Chronicle which is at store level. The Gazette is a platform for Partners to write letters to senior management and expect a response. In addition to the Partnership magazines, another vital contributor to open communication is the Partner Opinion survey which is an anonymous survey whose objective is to “*create a working environment where all Partners feel valued and can achieve their full potential*” (Wolfe, 2013, p. 14). (Refer to Appendix 10 Welcome booklet for a more detailed explanation of how this works in practice). On the other hand, responsibilities to customers include offering the best value in the marketplace for goods and services of comparable quality and availability; keeping prices low but consistent with achieving sufficient profit; dealing honestly, fairly, courteously and promptly with customers, and responding generously to complaints or claims in good faith; not taking advantage of a customer’s ignorance, and doing everything reasonably possible to put matters right (John Lewis Partnership, 2012, p.29).

MacLeod and Clark (2009) in their report “Engaging for success – enhancing performance through employee engagement”, write that the JLP as a company is clear

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that its model of shop-floor *voice* and engagement, which is such a critical factor in its continued success, is not simply a function of its ownership structure, but stems from a profound belief, first articulated by its founder, that people working in the business are central to its success. This implies that *voice* can be a feature of even non-owned organizations if the organization considers employees to be important contributors to the organization's success. The JLP incorporates a high standard of corporate governance which is the core foundation of the business. Democratic structures such as the Partnership Council, the divisional and branch level democracy and the system of registrars ensures the democracy and integrity of the business. At a divisional level, there are divisional councils with elected councillors, whose responsibility is to represent Partner opinion and at branch level, there are Branch Forum members, who are elected to represent fellow Partners. The integrity of the business is upheld by a system of Registrars and Counsellors, who essentially act as Ombudsmen in ensuring that the Partnership is true to its principles.

## **4.2 The context of employee ownership**

Employee-owned businesses are totally or significantly owned by their employees. The monetary contribution of employee ownership in the UK is noteworthy in contributing £30bn (equivalent to 4% of UK GDP) annually. Furthermore, the employee-owned businesses achieve higher productivity and are more resistant to the unsettled economic climate (Employee ownership association, 2015b). The following section provides an academic overview of employee ownership.

### *4.2.1 Employee ownership and performance*

Kaarsemaker and Poutsma (2006, p. 670) define employee ownership (EO) as:

*“Employee ownership is defined as the amount of stock in their employing company that employees own directly or indirectly through some kind of trust – as in employee stock ownership plans – or through share options.”*

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Freeman (2007) states that despite its economic appeal and extent of use, the concept of employee ownership sits on the edge of academic research with very few studies being published in peer-reviewed management journals. Mainly, research examining the effects of EO has established that it has an impact on corporate performance (Caramelli and Briole, 2007). The most beneficial recipients of employee ownership are the employees themselves on whom the ownership is initially conferred. Wagner, Parker and Christiansen (2003, p. 868) established that EO plans “*encourage employees to think and act like owners and this enhances organizational performance.*”

Research suggests that EO is positively related to employee attitudes and behaviours (Kaarsemaker, 2006; Rosen and Quarrey, 1987). Kruse and Blasi (1997), however, add that it is not fully understood how that happens. Freeman (2007, p. 21) goes on to say, “*It does limited good to say that employee-owned firms achieve better performance unless one is able to say when, how and why.*” In fact, Freeman (2007) identifies a gap in the ownership literature regarding the mechanisms by which employee ownership leads to better performance.

Kaarsemaker (2006) mentions that there are over 130 quantitative studies investigating the effects of employee-shared ownership. A study of the findings indicate that “*straightforward negative effects on employee-level and company-level outcomes have not been found, but positive effects do not always and/or automatically come about either*” (p. 327). The key factors that have emerged in relation to ownership studies include the part of workforce philosophy (Klein, 1987; Long, 1982) and that of psychological ownership (Kaarsemaker, 2006). HRM practices in particular that have been examined in relation to employee ownership are participation in decision making and information sharing (Freeman, Kruse and Blasi, 2004) and profit sharing. Nonetheless, researchers have been unable to establish which HRM practices would be important to the ownership context (Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2006). They established that the HRM practices that should be incorporated into an HRM system within an ownership system include “*participation in decision-making, profit-sharing, information-sharing, training for business literacy, and mediation*” (p. 69) and were the first published attempt to put ownership within the Strategic Human Resource Management framework. They state that owners of any asset have the right to use it, the right to its return and the right to sell it. It is fitting to consider employee ownership with

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HR practices beyond just participation in decision making. For employee owners, this translates into HRM practices. From an HR perspective, the right to use an asset can be translated into participation in decision making and providing information of how best to use it. Employees may also need training in how to participate effectively in decision making and learning more about the business. Whilst participation in decision making is important, this could sometimes result in conflicts, which would imply that in ownership organizations, formal mechanisms to resolve conflicts should also be in place. The right to return an asset implies financial returns or profit sharing, and the right to sell an asset translates into participation in decision making and sharing of information about the employee-shared ownership itself (Kaarsemaker, 2006).

In examining the relationship between EO and employee-level outcomes, several researchers in this area have investigated the effects of employee ownership on organizational commitment. Employee share options are helpful in increasing levels of employee participation and control in decision making (Long, 1978; Tannenbaum, 1983). Klein (1987) shows that management commitment to ownership has a strong bearing on employee attitudes. French (1987) argues that employees' financial investments and their subsequent returns add considerable value to the employee-owner. Culpepper, Gamble and Blubaugh (2004) find in their study of airline pilots that perceived empowerment, employer commitment and perceived financial value all affect employees' affective commitment to the organization. Sengupta, Whitfield and McNabb (2007), through their findings, postulate that perhaps the sheer presence of financial participation does not generate more committed employees. So, the more fundamental question is *How does ownership affect employee-level outcomes?*

Employee ownership involves three things: 1) the degree to which ownership is held by employees within the organization; 2) the extent to which all employees participate in this ownership; and 3) the extent to which ownership is distributed equally across employee-owners (Long, 1980, p. 728). Long (1977) suggests that employee ownership operates by first affecting organisational identification, which is an interplay amongst three related ideas – organizational integration, involvement and commitment. Klein (1987) categorizes the influence of employee ownership on employee attitudes and behaviours into three main categories: intrinsic, instrumental and extrinsic. The intrinsic path suggests that the fact that employees own shares in the organization is enough to affect

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their attitudes and behaviours. This is also known as the direct effects of employee ownership (Tannenbaum, 1983). But there is no real evidence from research studies to support this route (Buchko, 1993; Klein, 1987).

Most studies show the impact of ownership on employee attitudes as a result of greater control on decision making and higher financial returns (Freeman, 2007; Kruse et al., 2004). The three routes via which employee ownership influences employee attitudes are shown in Figure 20. The instrumental route posits that there exists an indirect effect from ownership on employee attitudes whereby shareholding ownership creates a sense of ownership and participation in decision making which in turn affects employee commitment (Ben-Ner and Jones, 1995; Buchko, 1993; Long, 1980). In such a case, the firm must adopt a culture of information sharing and participation across all levels (Blasi, Kruse and Bernstein, 2003; Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2006). However, in some cases organizations did not manage to fully harness the ownership potential by creating the feeling of belongingness (Kruse et al, 2004) or giving employees more influence and control over organizational matters (Pendleton, Wilson, and Wright, 1998). In these situations, organizations were unable to see the effects of ownership on employee attitudes. The third route via which ownership affects employee attitudes is the extrinsic route. In this route, employees perceive a direct connection between their work-effort and the monetary returns they get back from the share-ownership scheme which then affects employee performance (Buchko, 1993; French, 1987).

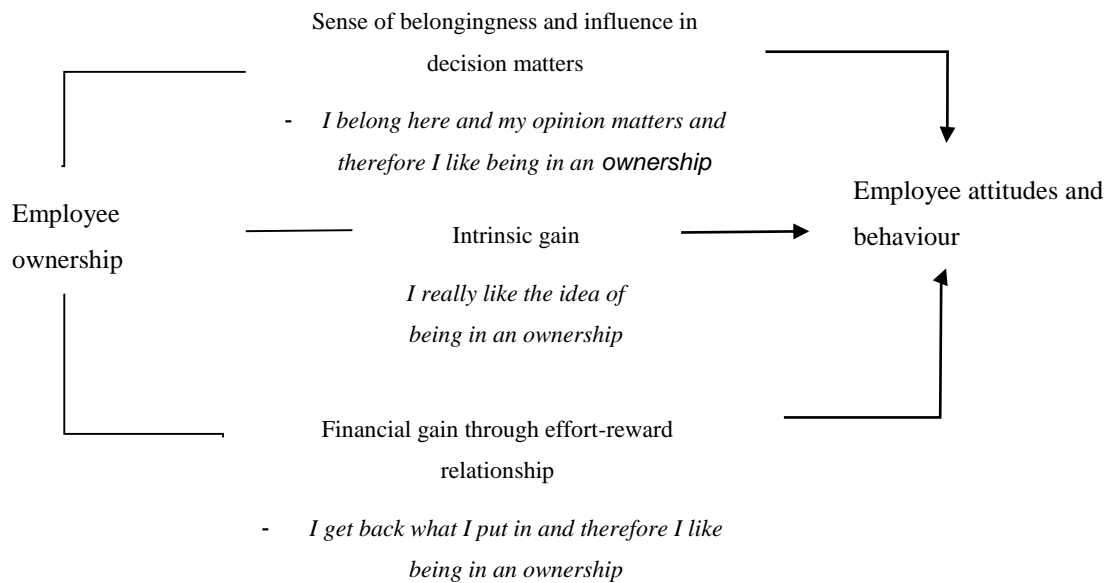


Figure 20: Employee ownership and employee attitudes (adapted from McCarthy, Reeves and Turner (2010))

Klein (1987) concludes that employee ownership in itself is not intrinsically rewarding. Nonetheless, a lack of support for direct effects of formal ownership (Tannenbaum, 1983) does not eliminate the option that ownership could give rise to more positive attitudes towards the organization, over and above what the instrumental and extrinsic effects can account for. Buchko (1993) through extensive analysis of the literature in the area of employee-ownership and employee-level outcomes finds that the instrumental route of perceived influence exerts more of an influence on employee attitudes. Taking into account the extrinsic and instrumental routes, for employee ownership to be fully realised, means that employees must see a significant financial return related to their individual perception of effort put in and they must feel a greater sense of belongingness where they sense a culture that encourages participation and cooperation (McCarthy, Reeves, and Turner, 2010).

The academic objection to employee ownership and its positive effects stems from the ‘free rider’ problem (Kruse et al., 2004) which occurs as a consequence of the weak link between an individual’s performance and financial rewards as the size of the workforce increases. Weitzman and Kruse (1990) suggest that this may be countered by the development of an organizational culture that fosters *esprit de corps*. Kruse et al. (2004)

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suggest a blend of three crucial ingredients: i) meaningful incentives to drive employees; ii) meaningful participation which actually affects critical decision; and iii) a work environment or company ethos that reduces the effects of the free rider problem, to maximise employee performance at an individual level. Kruse et al. (2004) propose that human resource practices might be part of that *'something more'* needed to create a cooperative solution (p. 4). HR-performance studies have been conducted largely in non-ownership firms (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Liao et al., 2009; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007) with no mention of any ownership organization explicitly, apart from Kaarsemaker (2008). Kruse et al. (2004) find that the sense of ownership and an index of HR policies (involvement, information sharing, other policies such as employee surveys and employee share option variables) are both positively linked to employee reports of workplace performance, which is itself related to company performance.

Kuvaas (2003, p. 193), in his study on employee ownership, states that *"Employee ownership could have intrinsic motivating effects on employees by way of a mediating mechanism, whereby the effects of ownership on organizational commitment depend on how employees evaluate and perceive formal ownership plans."* Pierce, Rubenfeld and Morgan (1991) claim that formal ownership affects employee-level outcomes via 'psychological ownership' which is how employees feel about being in an ownership. This concept of psychological ownership was investigated by Pendleton, Wilson, and Wright (1998) who found support for this concept in their study. They found that formal ownership affected employee-level outcomes (organizational commitment) through the intermediary effects of 'psychological ownership' (How much do they feel like an owner of the company?)

#### *4.2.1.1 The role of psychological ownership*

The idea of psychological ownership for the organization (i.e. the possessive feeling that some object is 'MINE' or 'OURS') has received increasing attention from scholars and practitioners as a potentially important predictor of employee attitudes and behaviours (Pierce, Kostova and Dirks, 2001; Pierce, Rubenfeld and Morgan, 1991; VandeWalle,

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Van Dyne and Kostova, 1995). Psychological ownership is defined as “*that state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (material or immaterial in nature) or a piece of it is "theirs" (i.e. "It is MINE!")*” (Pierce, Rubinfeld, and Morgan, 1991, p. 86). In the organizational context, the target is the organization itself. Pierce, Kostova and Dirks (2003) differentiate between the “roots” of (i.e. why), and the “routes” to (i.e. how) psychological ownership. The roots of psychological ownership can be found in three main motives: (1) efficacy and effectance, (2) self-identity, and (3) “having a place” (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks, 2003). Employee ownership schemes facilitate the fulfilment of such needs and this, in turn, affects the feelings that the employees have towards their work or their organization (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004). Pierce, Kostova and Dirks (2001, 2003) stress that psychological ownership results from the amount of control that members of the ownership feel they have over the specific factor that is the object of the ownership feelings (the organization in this case), the in-depth understanding about the organization that employees obtain over time, and employees’ level of self-investment in the target.

Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) assert that psychological ownership is, to some extent, an affective attachment to the organization that transcends the simple cognitive assessment of the firm itself. This leads to attitudinal and behavioural change. The target of ownership could be the job itself or the organization in its entirety. Psychological ownership is not to be confused with some employee attitudinal constructs, such as organizational commitment, organizational identification, psychological empowerment, etc. The key question that psychological ownership of the organization asks is “*How much do I feel this organization (workplace) is mine?*” (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004, p. 444). Their study revealed that psychological ownership of the organization affected organizational citizenship behaviours and discretionary extra-role behaviours, over and above job satisfaction and commitment. VandeWalle, Van Dyne, and Kostova (1995) also find that psychological ownership is positively related to both in-role and extra-role behaviours but the extra-role/psychological ownership relationship is stronger. They extend this finding by adding that a sense of ownership may be especially important for service employees with direct customer contact. They also find that psychological ownership is a stronger predictor of extra-role behaviour than job satisfaction.

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Psychological ownership will result when employee-shared ownership is blended with the highlighted human resource practices. In these circumstances, another consequence will be that individual sentiments of ownership would signal a collective “ownership culture” (Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2006). They also argue that the message sent out to employee-owners is consistent and strong, only if the ownership and HRM practices are combined. This has similarities to the discussion by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) on the strength of the HRM system. The message is one which says to the employee that the ownership is a “*serious affair*” and that management takes the employee-owners seriously (Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2006, p. 328), which in turn would reflect on the level of psychological ownership developed amongst the employee workforce. Kaarsemaker’s (2006) study finds that psychological ownership mediates the influence of employee ownership on employee outcomes (i.e. organizational citizenship behaviour OCB).

#### 4.2.2 Summary of the Employee ownership literature

Studies have confirmed that employee ownership is related to firm performance and positively related to employee attitudes and behaviours (Rosen and Quarrey, 1987; Kaarsemaker, 2006). Kruse and Blasi (1997) and Freeman (2007) comment that how and why employee ownership firms achieve better performance is not fully understood. In fact, Freeman (2007) identifies a gap in the ownership literature regarding the mechanisms by which employee ownership leads to better performance. Recent studies have investigated the effect of individual-level outcome psychological ownership in being a mechanism that translates ownership practices into firm-level outcomes (Kaarsemaker, 2006). Psychological ownership has also been validated by studies to affect commitment and in-role/extra-role behaviours (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004; VandeWalle, Van Dyne, and Kostova, 1995).

Following on from the discussion of employee ownership, it seems that the questions about how ownership affects performance reflect similar conversations about how HR affects performance. Within this ownership organization (as identified by extant literature in this section) HR practices, such as employee share options or some form of profit

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sharing, participation in decision-making, information-sharing, mediation and training, might be present (Kaarsemaker and Poustma, 2006) and could emerge in the HPWSs that influences FLEs' PSSB.

Having presented the literature surrounding management of people in ownership organizations, I will now present contextual information on the specific case study site in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the findings.

### **4.3 John Lewis (Milton Keynes) – the store setting**

The JLP store in Milton Keynes which is a full-line department store was opened in September 1979. This store underwent a large scale refurbishment in 2013 which added another 20,000 sq. ft. to the existing 140,000 sq. ft. of selling space in the store. Last year its sales turnover hit the £10 million mark. There are 745 employees in this store, with approximately 60% of them in full-time employment. The intensive demands of the Christmas period for temporary workers adds to the part-time staff requirement for this store. The staff turnover for this store is 19%, with staff turnover at 17 per cent for the JLP as a whole (Wolfe, 2015). Sir Charlie Mayfield, Chairman of the JLP comments that even though this figure may be high for many businesses, this is lesser than the retail norm (Dunnett, 2015). The retail industry is characterised by high staff turnover, which is an unavoidable outcome because retailers underinvest in labour, employing low-skilled personnel on part-time contracts and who therefore, have little or no commitment to their work (Ton, 2012). On the other hand, in an employee-owned organization as a consequence of being co-owners, employees are more committed to their organization. Furthermore, because of the unique role that employees perform in employee-owned businesses, these businesses are better at recruiting and retaining talented staff (Employee ownership association, 2015c).

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### 4.3.2 Understanding the role of participants for this study

The FLE and the FLM targeted in this study are referred to within JL as non-management selling Partner and selling section manager respectively. The section manager is the immediate LM of the FLEs or selling Partners in this case and the section managers have direct responsibility for the selling Partners. The purpose of the two roles are presented in Figure 21. The key responsibilities related to their roles can be found in Appendix 11.

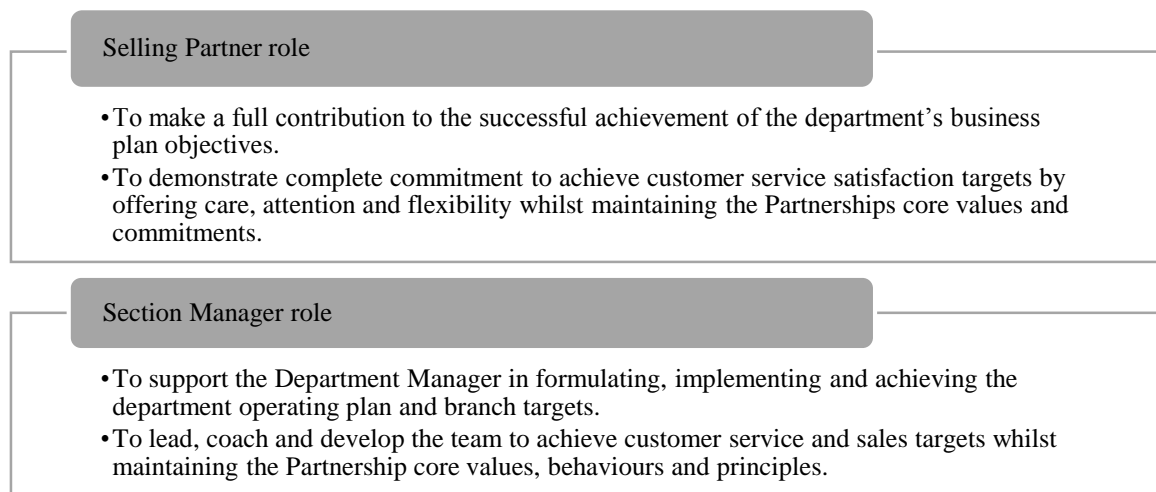


Figure 21: Purpose of selling Partner and section manager roles (Wolfe, 2013)

Nonetheless, I would like to highlight the specific responsibilities of the selling Partner with regard to customers as this is pertinent to this doctoral study. Specifically related to customers, they are expected to *“Deliver outstanding service to every customer, both internal and external, through all channels”* (Wolfe, 2013). Partners are also required to *“Take every opportunity to achieve more, and go the extra mile for customers and other Partners”* (Wolfe, 2013). Please refer to Appendix 12: p.6 for a more detailed description.

### 4.3.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the employee ownership literature with a specific focus on the management of people and issues surrounding it. The specific setting of the case

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study site of the JLP was presented and within that, data were provided to allow for a better appreciation of this specific context and employee-owned organization. I will now move on to present the findings from the interviews of the selling Partners. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3 (Methodology), to demonstrate the intensity of the findings I have used the following groupings:

- Majority (Equal to or more than three quarters of the sample)
- Many (Between half and three quarters of the sample)
- Some (Between a quarter and half of the sample)
- Few (Less than a quarter of the sample)

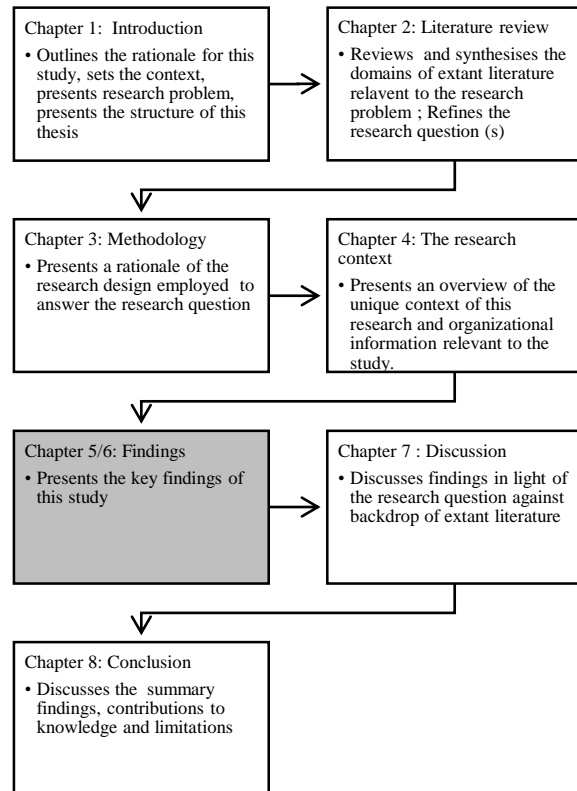
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## 5 Findings: People Management practices that enable the delivery of PSSBs – the *selling Partners*’ perspective

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings related to the research question: *How do perceptions of people management practices influence frontline employees’ prosocial service behaviours?*

The key objective therefore is to explore the underlying mechanisms by which perceived practices are translated into PSSBs. To achieve this objective, interviews were conducted with 23 frontline selling Partners across a range of customer-facing departments at the JLP. The interviews were expected to provide

an in-depth understanding of how people management practices are instrumental in influencing Partners to engage in PSSBs. This chapter will provide a discussion of the practices that were identified by the Partners with reference to PSSBs. Considerable use of respondents’ words and quotations have been used throughout the findings to retain the voice of the respondents. The quotations that are presented here are provided directly (even though grammatically they may be incorrect) as I did not wish to tamper with them in any way that might affect the context and subsequent interpretation of the same. Every quotation is associated with a respondent who made the comment by referring to the pseudonym allocated to the respondent to maintain anonymity. Those interviewed were frontline selling Partners who had been with the JLP for a range of years (from less than a year to a maximum of 32 years) and were well suited to provide the information required.



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The reason why Partners were chosen across a range of years of service was as a result of the exploratory study, which suggested that length of service had some bearing on the findings. I will commence with a discussion around the meaning of customer service within this particular service context. Once I have done that I will present an introduction to the practices that affect PSSB followed by a description of how perceptions of these practices affect PSSB. In doing so I will then be able to answer the main research question.

A note to the reader: I have chosen to use the terms ‘selling Partner’ / ‘Partner’/’employee’ and ‘section manager’/’manager’/’line manager’ (LM) interchangeably for the presentation and discussion of findings.

## **5.1 Customer service conceptualised**

Amongst the Partners, the appreciation of what excellent customer service meant showed consistency of understanding of this concept. The majority of Partners agreed that excellent customer service meant providing not only very high levels of service but in addition, doing *whatever was required by them* so that the customer’s problems were resolved and the customer came back to the JLP again.

*Really good customer service and to have customers come back. I am expected to deal with any problems at all that a customer may have (Hailey)*

*What they expect which is outstanding customer service each time they visit the store because if you give a customer that they will keep returning even if you get it wrong. If that customer comes back in to complain if that’s handled correctly in any way possible, that customer will come back time and time again (Abbie)*

Many linked their discussion of discretionary effort to competitive advantage, adding that they were expected to be better than the competition and were convinced that the JLP is the leader in customer service.

*Give 110% customer service, expect to give great customer service; best possible experience; better than competitors (Greg)*

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A few Partners portrayed it not only as meeting the needs of the customer but in addition explicitly mentioned *going the extra mile*.

*We're also expected to go above and beyond what is required and give that extra customer service. (Jason)*

*As long as you go the extra mile, meet the customers' needs, if come in demanding something, enquiring about something - as long as you meet their needs, do everything you can for them then they're happy (Bailey)*

From the above quotes it is evident that the JLP expects its Partners to deal with customer problems in a discretionary manner so that customers return. It is clear that service failures are expected to be dealt with by individual Partners so as to retain customers. From this discussion it is evident that for respondents, an understanding of excellent customer service encompasses doing whatever is required to deal with customer issues so they return, which includes an open-ended discretionary element.

Overall, this is equivalent in meaning to the in-role and extra-role dimension of PSSBs as conceptualised by Bettencourt and Brown (1997, p. 41), who define PSSB as the “*discretionary behaviours of contact employees in serving customers that extend beyond formal role requirements*”. I believe that this could largely be due to the fact that the JLP formally adopts a language that includes ‘*going the extra mile*’ as part of delivering excellent service. This can be seen in the Partnership Behaviour booklet that provides the Partners with information relevant to their performance appraisal process. The Partnership behaviours are derived from Principle 1 of the Constitution which states

*The Partnership's ultimate purpose is the happiness of all its members, through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business. Because the Partnership is owned in trust for its members, they share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power*

From Principle 1, behaviour specific to customer service emerges out of “building relationships powered by our principles”, and specifically employs going the extra mile in its conceptualisation of providing excellent service (refer to Appendix 12: p. 12). Thus it seems that the concepts of in-role and extra-role are intertwined in the minds of the

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Partners. In the minds of the Partners the in-role and extra-role notions go hand-in-hand and they perform both simultaneously in order to provide the level of customer service expected by the JLP. For the eventual goal of retaining customers, the Partners are expected to go out of their way to make customers happy.

### 5.1.1 Conceptualisation of going the extra mile

During the interviews, specific questions were asked of the Partners on incidents that demonstrated how they went the extra mile for the customers. Out of the 23 incidents that were provided, 14 of them were anchored around a customer service failure. In each of these incidents, the Partner took the initiative to provide a solution to rectify the failure. In some of these stories, the Partners travelled to the customer's home to resolve the problem to prevent the customer from experiencing any more discomfort. In the residual examples, Partners described engaging in extra-role behaviours that were not connected to service failure or service recovery. Accordingly, two themes seem to be evident in the dialogue surrounding *going the extra mile (EM)*. Figure 22 presents a sample quote from each of the themes that emerged.

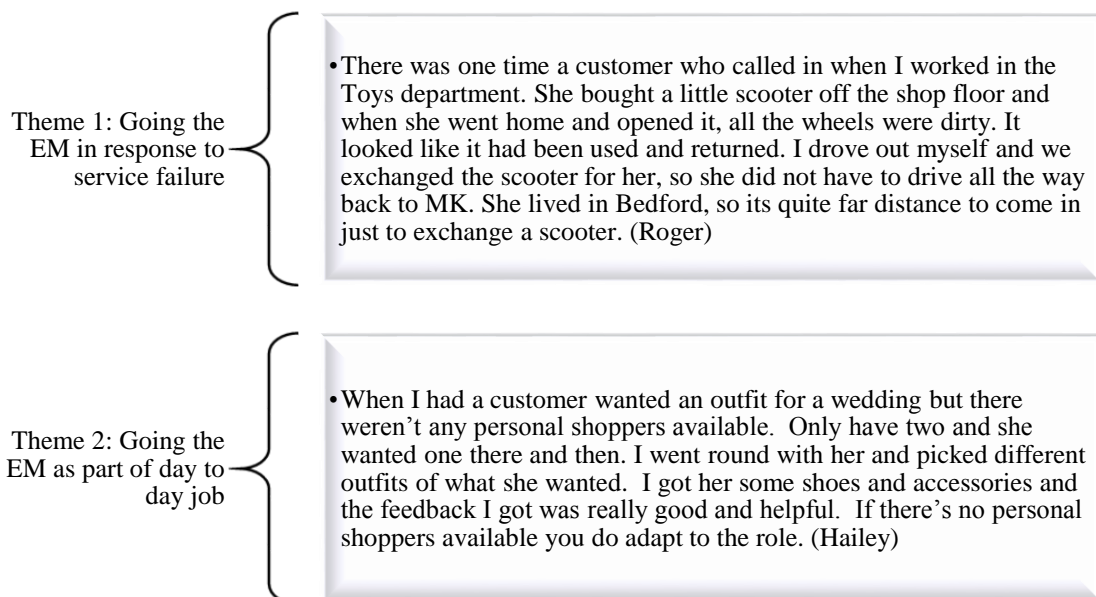


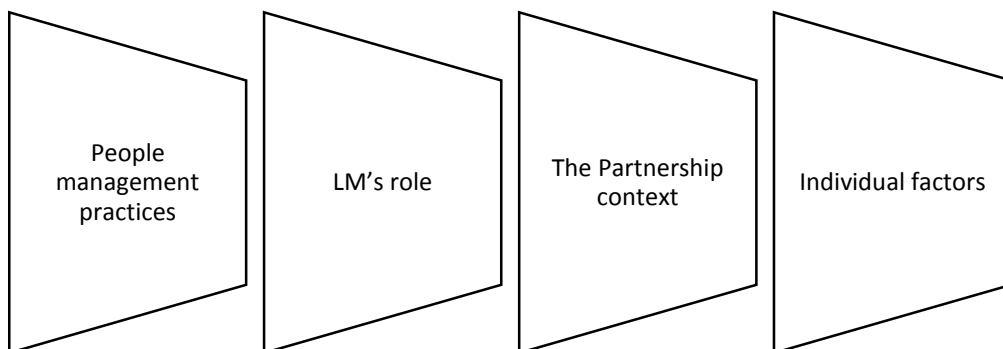
Figure 22: Sample going the EM incidents based on themes

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The first was based on going the extra mile in response to service failure and to ensure service recovery. The second was incorporating the extra mile as part of their day-to-day tasks. The end result of both these efforts led to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Data gathered therefore suggest that the majority of the Partners were able to recall more examples of going the extra mile in the event of service failures. This does not imply, however, that they do not go the extra mile in serving customers even if there were no service failure; simply that service failures provide more opportunities for Partners to go the extra mile as the majority of the Partners provided incidents involving service failure.

## 5.2 Drivers of PSSBs

Respondents discussed a range of practices that influence them to engage in PSSBs. These included discussions surrounding HR practices and their enactment by the LMs. Together these will be referred to as ‘people management practices’. The Partnership context and individual dependent characteristics were also cited by interviewees as important in their customer service behaviour. All the drivers of PSSBs are represented in Figure 23 below. Each of these will be discussed in turn.



*Figure 23: Factors affecting PSSBs*

To preserve the intertwined association between the practices and their enactment, I have presented the LM's implementation of specific HR practices within the broader concept

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of the discussion of the practices themselves. The specific people management practices identified from the interviews with the selling Partners are shown in Figure 24.

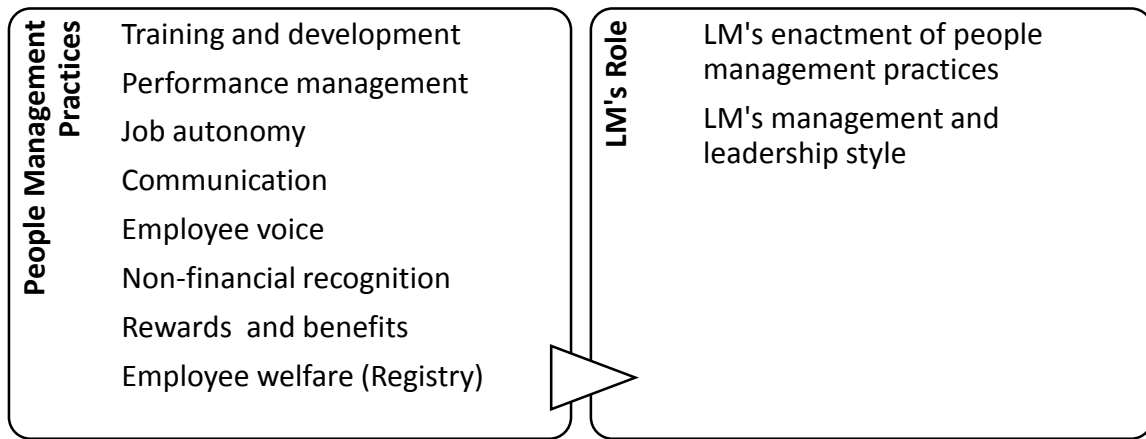


Figure 24: People management practices associated with Partners engaging in PSSBs

A point worth mentioning before I continue with an in-depth discussion of the findings is that sometimes the discussion about practices and their outcomes are not distinct. It appears that respondents did not separate these parts. This might be an indication of how, in the minds of the Partners, the distinction between practices, their perceptions and subsequent outcomes may not be discrete. In my efforts to reveal the exact path of the effects of the practices, I have tried to separate the quotes as far as possible to enable the reader to obtain a clear understanding of what leads to what. However, in some cases the boundaries between the practices and their outcomes are discussed together.

### 5.3 Perceptions of people management practices and enactment issues

The order in which the findings are presented relate to the people management practices, and is based foremost on the number of respondents commenting on them and then by the number of references made to that factor overall.

All the data presented here are in response to questions surrounding the display of PSSB and even though in some instances the link between the perception of the practice and

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PSSB may not be explicit, it was discussed by the participant in connection with the specific questions on PSSBs.

### 5.3.1 Training and development

All the Partners uniformly identified the importance of training in delivering excellent customer service and this was also the first practice that was mentioned by the majority of Partners. All the Partners have a positive perception of the role of training in the delivery of customer service behaviours. There were almost no negative views of this practice. From the interviews, discussion can be divided into three main aspects. One focused on the content of the training programmes; the second covered the process of how training occurred and its perception; and finally, the third highlighted the role of other Partners in training. These will each be discussed in turn.

#### 5.3.1.1 Content-related

The majority of the Partners identified particular training programmes, both in-house and external. Some also mentioned induction training, on-the-job training (shadowing others or learning from others); job aid cards and the Horizon suite (a place where Partners have access to training material). Few Partners spoke specifically about the induction programme in terms of providing them with confidence. When probed on how they felt when having this induction, one Partner responded:

*You still obviously come onto the shop floor nervous because you've been doing it only in practice [during induction], not in person with the customers, made me feel more confident than I had been in other jobs (Carmen)*

External programmes offered Partners product knowledge allowing them in turn to answer customer queries with confidence. This was echoed by the majority of the participants.

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*I can help the customer with answering questions, gives me confidence, makes me feel good*  
(Sophie)

Specifically, because the JLP is known for providing excellent customer service, the Partners perceived these training programmes as helping them appreciate the ethos of customer service in this setting. The following comment fittingly portrays this facet.

*Through training, through everything you do when you join here, everything is geared towards customer service. That is drilled into you, whether its training or communication or just a small group of department training rather than an official training, everything is about good customer service* (Abbie)

In connection with the above quote, seven Partners identified training as instrumental in their appreciating going the extra mile, because the focus in training programmes was always going the extra mile for the customer. One particular quote summarises this view.

*In the beginning through training they teach you: "You should always go the extra mile"*  
(Roger)

Five Partners specifically recalled the induction as important in terms of what was covered. These Partners identified the role of the induction as serving as a platform for newcomers to introduce the importance of customer service within the JLP.

*There is a focus on good customer service. General floor walk and introduction to the store, give you a generalised welcome of what customer service is to us [in JL] and customer service training as well* (Carmen)

Thus, it emerges that through the actual content of training programmes, the Partners are exposed to the importance of customer service in the Partnership. This establishes for them the expectations related to the delivery of customer service and with regular exposure to training programmes, the Partners understand these expectations.

### 5.3.1.2 *Process of how training happens*

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As regards the process of how training happens in practice, the majority of Partners discussed how they were allowed to decide the training programmes they wanted to attend and how the process was quintessentially Partner-led. Managers worked closely with Partners to suggest training needs for their development.

*We can choose the training we'd like to go on and then discuss it; they [LM] might say have you thought about doing this course. (Thula)*

Along with being allowed to decide for themselves which training programmes would benefit them, many Partners also stressed that there were no restrictions on the quantity of training programmes they were allowed to attend.

*No limit on number of courses; as long as fits in with requirements. As long as it's applicable. (Greg)*

Even though the majority of Partners focused on training positively, 5 out of the 23 interviewees commented that it was sometimes hard to get time away from the shop floor for training purposes.

*Sometimes it is hard to get the time off the shop floor. It depends who your manager is. (Hailey)*

This emphasises the role of the LM in the access to training in practice and attests that no matter how many training programmes are available to the Partners, the LM plays a part in how employees perceive this.

### *5.3.1.3 Role of other Partners*

Another theme that emerged from the data was the role of sponsors in training newcomers to the organization. One group of Partners (5 out of 23) reflected on how supported they felt as newcomers when they were assigned to a sponsor:

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*I had a really good sponsor, she was very supportive. It is good for answering questions as well, because if you are working with a sponsor it is a very good way of learning on the job. (Rupert)*

Another group of Partners who have been in the organization for at least three years (3 out of 23) remarked that they felt good when they were asked to be sponsors to newcomers. As one member said on how she felt being a sponsor:

*I like being asked to be a sponsor. I do a lot of training and do a lot of sponsoring and look after the new recruits that come in. I feel fantastic. (Ruby)*

The function of appointing sponsors thus serves multiple roles: to support the new Partners in settling in and becoming effective employees, and to recognise longer-serving Partners as good examples. In a slightly different way, experienced Partners were also recognised by a few respondents in conversations surrounding training. They were specifically mentioned as good learning tools on the shop floor.

*You learn from your other Partners you work with; there are experienced Partners on the shop floor. Sometimes even people like me who have not been here for so long, have more experience and so you are always helping others that are new. (Roger)*

Learning on the job can therefore be acknowledged as a central ingredient of training Partners and Partners felt supported by other Partners. In terms of how sponsors look after Partners when they join, Partners felt looked after.

#### *5.3.1.4 Other influences*

Some Partners reiterated that the culture of training was very strong and that within the JLP, training was taking place all the time and it depended on the Partner whether he/she wished to avail themselves of it. When asked about what was meant by culture of training, one respondent commented:

*Owned by people, not imposed upon them. Culture tells them they need to own it. (Aliyah)*

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A few of the newer Partners provided specific examples of online training tools, such as JLP.net etc., as useful resource aids. However, a somewhat different view is offered by one Partner who acknowledges that she has not used the online training tools, specifically stating “*To be truthful, I have never done it*”.

This Partner has been with the Partnership for a number of years and maybe this reflects that probably newer Partners are keener to avail themselves of training opportunities online. Whilst acknowledging that training was widely available, one particular respondent remarked that people did not necessarily want to attend training as they did sometimes not find any benefit. This was specifically discussed in respect to how training fitted in with Partners’ performance appraisal ratings:

*There are cases where people are demoralised and they won’t do something and don’t want to attend training programmes as it does not change anything [appraisal rating] and that is the situation at the moment. (Amelie)*

It emerges therefore, that for effective training to take place, both the managers and employees play a role. Even though training courses are made available and Partners perceived no limit on the amount they could attend, training may not take place either due to Partners not being released from the shop floor or due to Partners themselves not wanting to attend these programmes.

#### *5.3.1.5 Outcomes of training*

For each of the respondents, I explored the practice which, in their opinion, helps them display PSSBs – its perception – and then probed how this perception links to the display of PSSBs on the shop floor. When probed about how the training programmes affected their PSSBs, all the Partners consistently indicated that as a consequence of attending training courses they felt more knowledgeable and confident and better equipped to serve the customer by asking pertinent questions and thus offering better customer solutions. Training programmes also allowed the Partners to enhance their skills in dealing with customer service issues. They felt that being equipped with both product and customer service/selling knowledge they could be confident about selling:

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*Training may reinforce things you already know; it also gives you the confidence to sell products. Yeah, having this additional knowledge you can really do your job a lot better.*  
(Delia)

In addition, as we saw earlier, many Partners suggested that the content of the training programmes aids Partners in understanding the importance of customer service for the organization and this also helps Partners deliver that high level of customer service. This enhanced level of confidence led them to “*enjoy the job more*” (Aliya) or as Alex stated “*It just makes me feel better that I can help with things more*”.

When I probed Partners on how they felt as a result of training, some Partners felt supported. One Partner commented:

*Really good and really supported in delivering excellent customer service.* (Hailey)

The above quote suggests that being invested in made the Partner feel supported. Coupled with the support received from other Partners and sponsors, Partners clearly do feel supported.

Being supported by training initiatives and other Partners also helps Partners feel good that they can help the customer or if they themselves cannot help, they have support from other partners, as evidenced by the following quote:

*It makes you feel good. I may not have been able to help the customer, but knowing someone who does know helps.* (Roger)

Another way in which training courses help Partners is more indirect and subtle. The fact that some Partners mentioned that they are allowed to go on any number of training courses, are allowed to decide for themselves which training course they would benefit from attending, are selected to go away to suppliers for training, or are chosen to be sponsors, is perceived as an indicator of the Partnership investing in these Partners and recognising them for their contribution. As one Partner put it:

*[Training] makes you feel really good and positive. I feel valued. I want to provide good service. You're not just a number or someone that's trying to push the figures. They want to*

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*invest in you as well. They don't want you to just sit there at the same level. I think that's really good. (Hailey)*

Thus, the content of the training programmes seems to influence the actual interaction of Partners with customers as well as through enhancing job-related confidence; they feel good and supported about the training they receive and in being exposed as Partners to the importance of customer service in dealing with customers. They see these training courses as supporting their development and helping them serve customers better. The opportunity to be trained and be selected for training programmes affects employees' behaviours indirectly through their feelings of being valued, resulting in Partners feeling good in their jobs. Figure 25 presents the constructs that emerge from the previous sections in how training affects PSSBs.

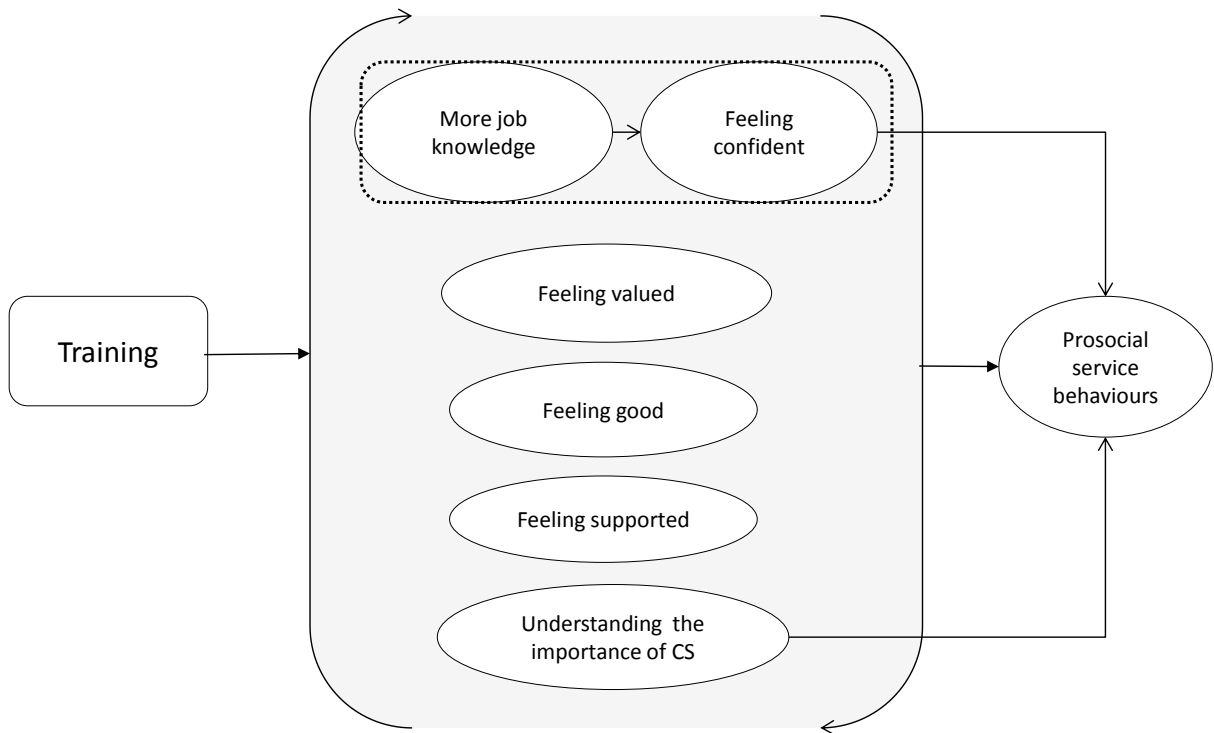


Figure 25: Inside the People-performance black box (Training)

It can be seen that the perception of training affects PSSBs both directly and indirectly. Training affects PSSBs directly by Partners feeling confident and through the appreciation of customer service; it also appears to affect PSSBs indirectly through Partners feeling good about themselves and feeling supported and valued.

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Even though linkages might be apparent between some of these constructs, if they are not represented in this diagram it implies that the data do not support that linkage. Furthermore, I have not attempted to examine or explore relationships between the uncovered constructs. It may well be that there are other inter-relationships at play simultaneously between the constructs but this has not been investigated as part of the research scope.

### 5.3.2 Performance management

Several tools that are used to manage Partner performance were mentioned by the majority of the respondents as helping them deliver excellent customer service. Performance management was identified by the majority of respondents as important in in-role PSSB, but acknowledged by only a few respondents in extra-role PSSB. It could be that even though Partners see going the extra mile as part of delivering excellent service, they still, to some extent, perceive ‘going the extra mile’ as discretionary and dependent on the individual and beyond what performance management tools can effectively manage or capture. Nonetheless, performance management emerges as central to employees’ display of PSSBs. The majority of the Partners did have a positive assessment of how this was conducted in practice. Where slightly different views were provided, these will be highlighted. Three main viewpoints emerged from this discussion. First, discussion focused around content; second, Partners focused on the procedural elements of managing performance; and third, the dialogue centred on outcomes of appraisal and their implications. These will be discussed in turn.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Content-related – on what is measured*

The discussion around content revealed that Partners perceived that performance was managed both formally and informally. Within the formal route, appraisals were cited by the majority of the Partners as an important aspect of managing their customer service performance. The main discussion about the appraisals related to what was assessed in

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the appraisal. The informal channels included informal performance-related conversations with Partners' section managers. This will now be discussed in more depth.

Within the broader discussion of appraisal content, only some Partners explicitly deliberated about the measurement of customer service in the appraisals, as reflected in the comment below.

*The ARP [annual review of performance] and point scoring will always help drive customer service because customer service is one of the key things we are judged on. (Carmen)*

However, it can be assumed that because the question was exclusively focused on customer service, this was implicit in the other Partners' overall discussion of appraisals, even though it may not have been explicitly highlighted. Even though *going the extra mile* (extra-role PSSB) is listed in the company behaviour booklets ( Refer to Appendix 12, Partner Behaviour booklet) as an important indicator in the "Delivering customer service" category, only two interviewees explicitly referred to the assessment of going the extra mile in the appraisal process in conversations around what made them go the extra mile. Nevertheless, measuring customer service explicitly allowed Partners to understand and subsequently internalise the fact that customer service is important in the context of employment. This clarified to the Partners how to serve customers better:

*If you know you're being marked on customer service, you offer better service because you know you're being marked on it. (Greg)*

The majority of the Partners stressed that at the end of the performance appraisal, they understood what they were doing well and where they needed improvement. This can be observed from the following quote from one respondent, when I asked her what exactly did it help her to do in relation to customer service:

*Makes me realise what I do well, what I need to concentrate and what I could improve on. (Thula)*

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The measurement of customer service through appraisal thus emerges as an influential motive for Partners to display PSSBs, thus focussing the Partners' attention on the aspect of customer service.

Out of the Partners who mentioned appraisals, the majority of those Partners linked that discussion with the Partner development programme (PDP) which identifies Partner developmental objectives. All the Partners who highlighted the PDP as instrumental in delivering excellent customer service mentioned how the PDP helped them identify areas for development.

*After you've had your appraisal then that you have your one to one with your LM. And then you come up with your PDP and then that's what you try and focus on for the rest of the year until your next [appraisal]. (Aliya)*

A few Partners also reiterated how (similarly to training), Partners were expected to manage their own performance, both for appraisals:

*The ARP {annual review of performance} is a two-way discussion rather than just, these are your marks. I enjoy it because it's my initiative. It's up to you to provide evidence. The LM will tell you to bring your folder. Everyone has a folder where they write down or have accrued throughout the year to show their development. (Greg)*

and also for PDPs. When asked how, one respondent noted:

*You drive your own performance. The LM explains to you in the beginning and they might prompt you on how is your PDP going and as you are doing it, you have plans as to when it will be reviewed etc. (2 wks, 4 wks, 4 months). (Kim)*

Another aspect related to the management of performance was the mention of the ABC (approach, build and close) forms by the majority of the Partners. Those who cited them as useful tools for the delivery of excellent customer service mentioned that they offered them a code of behaviours that Partners were expected to engage in when dealing with customers, with one informant stating "It's a guide that helps you to know what is expected" (Bella). This awareness of how appraisals, ABC forms, PDP and training are linked signals a proficient grasp of how the three work in tandem. Even though Partners

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discussed tools of measurement, as the conversation continued it took on a general tone of managing performance rather than focusing on the tools of performance individually.

In addition to formal channels such as yearly appraisals and monthly PDPs, many Partners also identified informal performance-related conversations throughout the year with their section managers as helping them to engage in PSSB. Partners, as a result of these conversations, felt more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and could then work on these to improve their overall performance.

*I have regular meetings [with the LM], manager says you need to work on this, this, this and then a month down the line you say, I'll say I've worked on this, this, this, how do you think I'm getting on? (Marc)*

These Partners outlined that managers supported them in achieving their performance targets. One Partner clarified the support provided by the LMs as follows:

*They'll say to you, "how do you think it's been going so far, is there anything you need more help or support in?" (Carmen)*

On probing Partners on how being supported affected customer service, one Partner mentioned:

*If you want to strive for the best you [have] got to be sitting down every six weeks and saying I would like to work on this, work on that and it does make you feel good to have this opportunity. It motivates you because you are sort of improving yourself. (Rupert)*

The above discussion surrounding the LMs' interaction with the Partners indicates that Partners perceive that their LMs support and guide them in achieving their objectives and performing better. In guiding them (by sending them on relevant training courses etc.) Partners feel that their LMs provide support in helping them to perform well.

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### 5.3.2.2 Process of how performance is managed

The other focal point of the discussion surrounding appraisals, PDPs, ABCs and informal meetings, was the process aspect. In this regard, the majority of Partners felt that they had an open and honest dialogue with their LM and emerged out of the appraisal meeting knowing what was expected of them and areas they needed to work on to become a better performer. Even though the content piece has already been presented in the previous subsection, I have retained that here, too, as the process dialogue is intertwined with the content of the discussion. One respondent specifically commented on how this was managed by stating:

*You talk about the year, you reflect on the year and what you expect to see coming. They [managers] say well done, keep it up. You know what you are doing is good. Gives me confidence I'm heading in the right direction or you need to do this, this and this to change and next time get performance higher [in relation to customer service]. (Bailey)*

A few of the Partners highlighted that the dialogue was done in a fair manner:

*I think it's fair, honest and it is up to you to provide evidence, as much as manager says this is what I think you've done. (Greg)*

A few Partners also added that it felt relaxed:

*It is actually formal but at the same time it is informal. It is not like you are under pressure; it doesn't make you feel nervous. You feel relaxed and it is actually talking about how you feel you can improve yourself at work. It is formal but like I said it is relaxing. (Rupert)*

Many specifically stated that LMs were very good at how they gave their Partners feedback in a positive, constructive manner and that the way in which the feedback was provided made it easier to accept, even though it might be negative. Within this theme, few Partners mentioned how the culture within JL was focused on providing feedback positively.

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*They give you feedback with scores for what you've done and what you could do to improve.  
Never really negative. (Hailey)*

Few Partners (5 out of 23 Partners) commented that the 'culture' (Partner-used term) was not a blame culture. 4 out of the 5 Partners were newer Partners with less than three years of experience in the JLP (out of 7 Partners in this category) and they mentioned that in the JLP it was different from their previous employment. As one Partner noted:

*It is a funny place, JL. They are an organisation where you are allowed to make mistakes.  
You do have support. Your manager does not come down you like a ton of bricks if you do  
make a mistake. It is a case of that's happened, that's done, what do we learn from it. (Max)*

These Partners highlighted how this positive view affected their desire to do better. The following quote also highlights that the language used is central to Partners' perception of how performance is managed.

*Every other company I've worked for before John Lewis has a very strong blame culture.  
With John Lewis it's much more....not relaxed but the pressure's off. They're not looking to  
concentrate on the negatives, they're concentrating on the positives. Everyone is much more  
motivated to do things because it's not just a, "Oh this needed to be done", it's much more,  
"Okay, so you struggled with that, how can we help you get through it next time?" (Jason)*

The above discussion suggests that Partners feel motivated by the LMs in how their performance feedback is provided. Many Partners also commented that the way in which the LM actually conducted the appraisal made them feel valued. When asked how, one Partner responded:

*Do feel quite valued that they [section manager] do actually care and they are trying to invest  
in you as well and they are acknowledging what you are doing. Everyone works really hard  
but I think people do like to be told about the good things you do. (Hailey)*

This perception of managers investing their time to support Partners, leads to a perception that managers care about their Partners.

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However, a few Partners had a more negative perception of how LMs provided feedback, with one particular Partner commenting:

*...it's very verbal, I've noticed this in front of everybody else ...some LMs are not very good at doing that. They will give feedback in a very rushed way, spit it out and go. (Delia)*

Some Partners commented that how much feedback was given by the LM would depend on the initiative of the Partner; with one Partner citing:

*When you ask them for feedback they tell you how you can advance and what you could do better. (Alex)*

This reveals that, similar to the observation surrounding training, Partners discuss the role of initiative in seeking feedback. One respondent noted that she felt that the follow-up from the PDP sessions was not happening as well as they should be, particularly noting:

*You sort out your PDP and then they're [LMs] meant to come back to you three months later and see how you're progressing but it never seems to happen. I only know from my department. I wouldn't say I've never achieved them but we've never gone back to discuss how's it going....it's time. They have lots to do. Maybe it's my fault too, maybe I should chase her up too and say we haven't had this meeting. (Mia)*

The above comment was made by a longer serving member of the Partnership and maybe this affects how much ownership they take in garnering feedback. It could be as a result of being a Partner for a longer period of time; they feel that they understand what they do well in relation to customer service.

Another aspect of managing performance that was gleaned from the interviews was the notion of not being under pressure. A few Partners explained that they were able to provide really good customer service as they were under no time pressures or targets. These were the newer Partners who had joined the Partnership and had less than three years of tenure in the JLP.

*They don't pressure you, as I said with time frames. You can spend as long as you need to with a customer to provide good customer service. (Alex)*

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When I asked one Partner how this made him feel, he commented:

*Here much better; relaxed, easy to concentrate, easy to work and so much less pressure.  
(Greg)*

### 5.3.2.3 Outcomes of performance

The majority of the Partners stated that the actual outcome of the appraisal made them feel confident in their job role.

*If they tell you that you are doing well and you go down and serve a customer, then you know that the LM knows about your service. So it makes you more confident with the customer.  
(Roger)*

The above comment also hints at Partners believing that their efforts are being recognised. Thus, recognition emerges as a path to being confident about having the ability to do the job well. On the other hand, if the manager were to be unhappy with the performance, a few Partners felt that this decision would affect how the Partner felt about him/herself and would affect the service this Partner provided to the next customer.

*If they told you, you were not good at the job, then you are not going to be too happy when you are serving the next customer. (Roger)*

The quote above signifies two things: one that the outcome was important in that it served a demotivational role and secondly, that there might be a more temporary aspect of feeling unhappy.

Another way in which appraisals and informal feedback sessions facilitated some Partners in engaging in PSSBs was to motivate and drive them to continue doing what they did well, when they were recognised by their managers to be doing well.

*Gave me extra lift, buzz and excitement that I am going in the right direction... good feeling....Once I'm down on the shop floor and I've done really well in something I really concentrate on downstairs; drives me to perform even better. (Marc)*

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Similar to the previous discussion on unhappiness, the quote above suggests that there could be a transient affect aspect immediately after the appraisal meeting and this would also affect how Partners dealt with customers temporarily. There is also a motivational aspect to this discussion on the effects of being recognised. Consequently, recognition seems to be central to feeling valued and being motivated.

Only one Partner commented on feeling demoralised by her appraisal scores.

*The manager has the ultimate say; my ratings were low for my previous manager but my current manager was shocked to see such low scores and I have got higher scores now. It can be a bit demoralising. (Amelie)*

This illustrates that Partners are motivated or indeed demotivated by the outcome of the appraisal to perform better or not. From the comments, it emerges that this could indeed be more pronounced at the initial stages after the appraisal decision has been reached. The Partner who felt demoralised went on to comment on the implications of this:

*Does not affect how you behave with customers but it does affect how you work. You may not want to work as fast as you used to as if they have not seen that you have worked fast for the whole year then what's the point. (Amelie)*

Even though the Partner reported that this did not affect the customer, the implication of her statement signifies that it does. For example if a customer needs to be shown a product and the Partner did not work as fast as they normally did, this would affect the customer's perception that the service was slow.

As mentioned earlier in the section, a few Partners also stressed the importance of fairness in the appraisal process and how that perception affected the Partners' attitudes.

*At [the] bank I'm not sure it was fair. It's done fairly. Makes me feel good. (Greg)*

Principally, in relation to the process of how appraisals, PDPs and feedback happen, many Partners agreed that the fact that managers made time to discuss their development made them feel valued and have a positive perception about themselves. The quote below illustrates this point well:

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*If these meetings did not happen I would be disappointed that they are not taking an interest in my development. However if he/she takes the time to do this with you, then it makes you feel valued in that you are being acknowledged for the stuff you do well (Roger)*

From the above discussion, it can be noticed that being valued implies two things; one is how Partners feel as a result of their managers investing their time in them and the other is being recognised for the work they do. Earlier in this discussion, recognition was also highlighted as a path to feeling confident on the job. Putting this together it could be inferred that being recognised is a first step to feeling confident and valued.

These Partners mentioned that they felt good after they had had their appraisal. One Partner's response expresses this view as follows:

*Sometimes you feel quite nervous going in but afterwards quite confident, quite happy, that I've got something out of it; feel valued, feel quite good after that. (Carmen)*

Partners seem to use the terms 'happy' and 'good'. As a consequence of feeling good and valued, Partners reported that they interacted with customers better, leading to higher levels of customer retention. When asked how feeling good specifically helped, one Partner responded:

*It makes me feel good and valued, [provide] good service, then the customers come back to shop more. (Roger)*

Even though the link to PSSBs is not explicit, it is implicit in that customers will only return if the service is very good and the customer is happy, signalling that good service behaviours were demonstrated.

Thus, to conclude, the performance appraisals, PDPS, ABC forms and one-to-one informal sessions, all provide Partners with a better understanding of how they are performing against what the JLP expects of them when interacting with customers. The appraisal also makes explicit to the Partners what behaviours are important to the Partnership, especially relating to customer service. Equipped with this knowledge, Partners are then able to have more clarity on what they need to do to perform better. In

addition, Partners understood what they were doing and also what they needed to do to perform better. Furthermore, Partners were also focused on the process of the performance management process. In their recollection of the process, the majority of Partners agreed that the process of managing performance and feedback was a fair one and in addition, managers having the time to sit with their Partners made the employees feel supported, valued and good/happy about themselves.

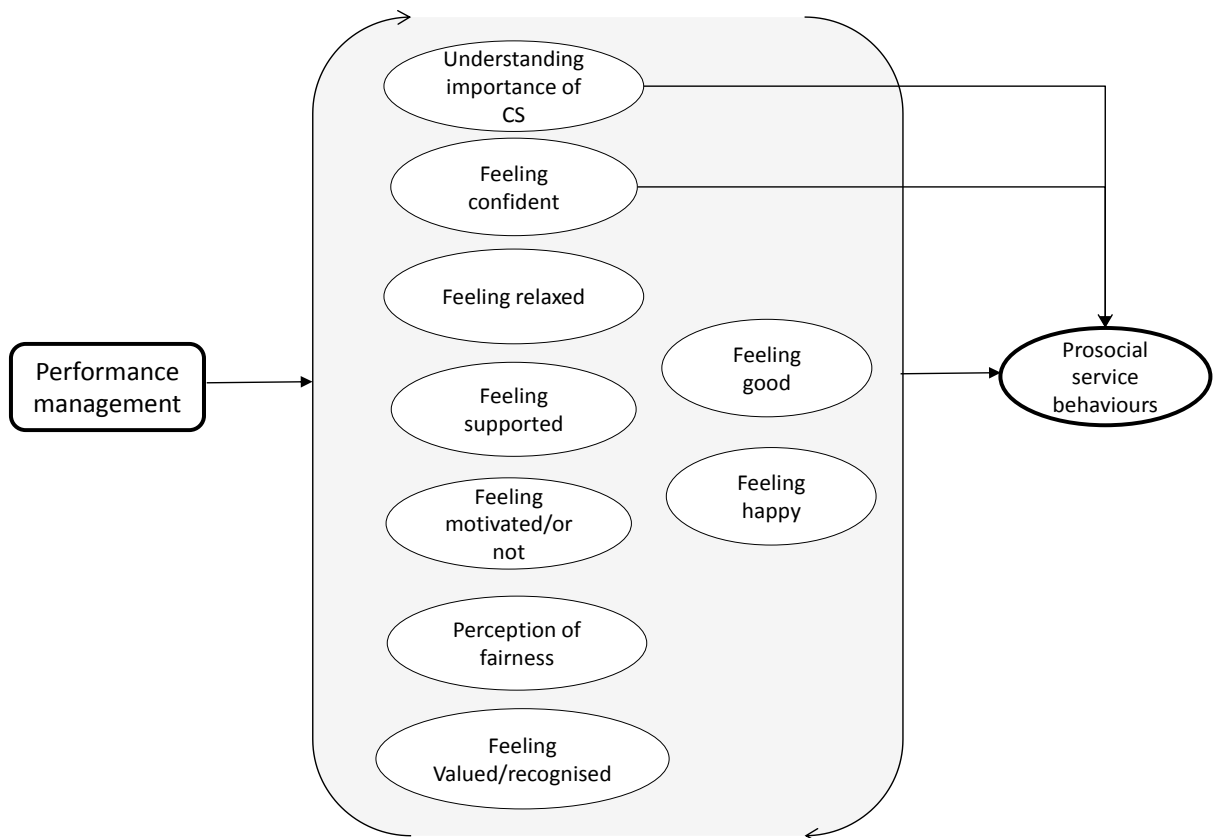


Figure 26: Inside the People-performance black box (Performance management)

Figure 26 presents the linkages across the various constructs within the People management-performance causal chain. As can be seen, perception of performance management translates into PSSBs through a complex set of mechanisms. It may be that these mechanisms in turn interact with each other leading to more complex mechanisms. It can be realised that the perception of managing performance affects PSSBs both directly and indirectly.

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### 5.3.3 Job autonomy (work practice)

A work practice (Boxall and Macky, 2009) that many Partners identified as instrumental in their providing excellent service and going the extra mile was discretion in their job, particularly in making decisions relating to customer matters. Heavey et al. (2013) include autonomy as a category of HR practices in their review of the content of HR practices in previous studies. Job autonomy has been described as the degree to which a job permits freedom, independence, discretion to plan work, make decisions, and select the means to carry out the tasks involved (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006). Information gathered from the informants covered two aspects: first that employees were allowed to take decisions themselves in dealing with their jobs and specifically customer queries, and secondly that once decisions had been taken, Partners were confident that their managers would support them. Although the support provided by LMs is not intertwined with the actual practice of taking decisions, it is a vital component of the job autonomy aspect, as without this support, Partners may not readily take decisions. Each will be discussed in turn.

#### 5.3.3.1 *Allowed to make decisions*

When Partners discussed being allowed to make decisions in relation to customers, they talked about having autonomy in taking decisions. Discussion around this theme had two main ideas: first, the organization had systems in place for Partners to deal with customer issues; and second, the importance of the LM in allowing and supporting Partners to take decisions in their job – specifically relating to customer service. Essentially, the first theme deals with the perception of autonomy at an organizational level covering systems and the next theme illustrates enactments of the practice. These will now be discussed in more depth.

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#### 5.3.3.1.1 Organizational -level systems

Some Partners mentioned that the JLP was an organization where Partners could take decisions to make the customer happy. There were specific aspects to this discussion. On probing how this happened in practice, one respondent replied:

*[We are] given so many options for how we can do it. Find out anything you need to from Internet; price matching. Ways round price matching; never knowingly undersold. Having the ability to ring this number...we have the ability to look on the Internet and confirm price difference. Partners know if there is a problem we can investigate; not just say no. (Jason)*

A few Partners mentioned that the returns policy was an indication that Partners were expected to promote good customer service.

*We have a happy returns policy; so customers can bring in anything within reason. (Maddox)*

The above quotes reflect that Partners are provided with the tools to use at their disposal to keep customers happy. As such, these serve as support mechanisms for them to do their job effectively.

However, one Partner noted a slightly negative perception of this as can be noted from the quote below:

*We now have the happy returns policy about what you can and can't do and now we have to follow that but sometimes you have to tweak it depending on circumstances with the customer. You have to show that you have done everything you could to meet their needs. Because we now have name badges, if they [customers] don't like us they can actually say that so and so Partner was very rude and JL will always take the side of the customer. (Amelie)*

This portrays that Partners are expected to do whatever it takes to keep the customer satisfied and Partners may feel a certain degree of pressure to do that, as they may not wish to be seen as not doing that.

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Three Partners mentioned the concept of goodwill in keeping customers happy, where they offer a discretionary gesture of goodwill to redeem a service failure of any kind.

*We have codes through the till purely for goodwill. Most of our Partners don't know what customer statutory rights are because that never comes into it. (Delia)*

A few Partners reiterated the importance of training programmes in helping Partners appreciate the importance of resolving customer complaints and going the extra mile to do so.

*They explain in the training why in a business we do that [goodwill]. We're giving them something, you don't have to but we're giving them something because its goodwill and because of that they'll come back and spend twice as much over the next 12 months. (Abbie)*

This goes hand-in-hand with the discussion on training when Partners stressed that through training programmes they understood the importance of customer service and how they were expected to do everything for the customer. It seems that the Partners perceive the organizational systems in place as indicators of how important it is to provide excellent service and these systems also communicate to them an understanding of the importance of customer service. In addition, having these tools in place for Partners to use supports them in providing excellent service levels.

#### *5.3.3.2 Process aspects – enactment of the actual work practice*

Job autonomy in dealing with customer problems was cited by many of the Partners in response to questions on practices that influence delivery of PSSBs. LMs emerge as the key players in Partners' perception of autonomy. There were two elements within this: autonomy pertaining to their job in general:

*My LM lets me make the decisions related to my job. (Abbie)*

and autonomy specifically relating to customer complaints. Beyond allowing Partners to make decisions, these Partners stated that their LMs were also supportive of their

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decisions. I will begin with a discussion of what autonomy means to the Partners, which will then be followed by a discussion on the supportive role of the LM.

A large proportion of the job of the selling Partner is interacting with customers. Therefore, it is highly likely that the discussion of autonomy was made in association with customer service even though it was not cited explicitly by the Partner and was more framed around their overall job. In relation to dealing with customer complaints, two Partners specifically commented on how their role had broadened and they were now expected to deal with complaints.

*We now have to deal more with queries and complaints than we used to. We used to have a whole team of people who did that and we would never get involved. So when they phone up angry, we have to deal with it. Earlier we would pass it on to complaints, but now we get them. (Laila)*

13 out of the 23 incidents on going the extra mile dealt with cases in which Partners recalled an incident where the customer had a complaint about a service failure. This validates the quote that the Partners are expected to deal with customer complaints which may then require them to go the extra mile.

Many Partners remarked that LMs allowed them to deal with customer problems in a manner they thought best.

*They kind of get you to try and deal with problems as much as you can without someone else's involvement. So if there is a refund that needs to be done, instead of going to a manager you know you can do it right there and then. If there is a problem that needs to be sorted, you can sort it. You are allowed to. (Roger)*

The term 'empowered' was employed by three of the Partners who all mentioned that they were empowered to take decisions.

*We are empowered [by our LMs] to resolve complaints in the most appropriate manner. (Bella)*

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From the above quotes, it emerges that the Partners use the term ‘*empowered*’ and ‘*allowed to*’ interchangeably, with both implying that this act affords some feeling of being permitted to do something by an authority in a position of higher power.

Another Partner provided a broader explanation stating:

*I have solved complaints that are absolutely nothing to do with me or my department because I have developed a rapport with the customer and the manager would not say you are not allowed to do that. (Laila)*

Thus, it can be seen that Partners are provided with not only the flexibility within their own job role to make decisions but are also allowed to go beyond that role to deal with a customer complaint.

The critical incidents that Partners mentioned in going the extra mile indicated that 4 out of the 23 respondents’ examples incorporated occasions where they had performed another job role to ensure that the customer’s needs were met.

*When I had a customer [who] wanted an outfit for a wedding but there weren’t any personal shoppers available. [We] only have two and she wanted one there and then. I am not a personal shopper but I went round with her and picked different outfits of what she wanted. I got her some shoes and accessories and the feedback I got was really good and helpful. I had to adapt to the role. (Hailey)*

This demonstrates that Partners use their personal discretion to offer outstanding customer service. This signals that Partners felt confident in taking that decision. A few Partners noted that even though autonomy was in place, not all Partners might want to exercise it.

*Some Partners are just more confident to deal with complaints whereas other Partners will take you straight to the manager, some people don’t like the confrontation and some people do. (Bella)*

We can infer from this quote that it could be individual-dependent. There are individuals who are naturally uncomfortable in dealing with complaints and these individuals may not be confident in dealing with customer complaints.

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Six participants did not mention job autonomy as instrumental in engaging in PSSBs, five of whom have been with the JLP for less than three years. One possible explanation could be that newer Partners may lack the confidence to take decisions by themselves and may feel more comfortable in reaching out to their managers to resolve the issue. One Partner, who has been in the Partnership for longer than nine years, commented that earlier in her employment decision-making at the frontline level did not happen, and she found this frustrating.

*Years ago you used to find the most frustrating thing was you as a Partner were not given that responsibility. (Abbie)*

In one specific case, a longer serving Partner portrayed an alternate view:

*With customer complaints they'd be there to take over if you felt you couldn't deal with it yourself. I don't think you're paid enough to get involved with irate customers. (Mia)*

It appears that autonomy is a recent phenomenon within the Partnership context and this could affect how it is perceived by Partners with different tenures in the organization.

#### 5.3.3.2.1 Supported by the LM

All the Partners who mentioned that they were allowed by their managers to make decisions, observed that if they were in a difficult situation, their LM would be there to support them. These Partners highlighted that because their immediate supervisor was supportive and was there for them to consult and seek assistance and feedback, they believed they could try whatever it took to make the right decision for the customer.

*Day to day you have the support of your section manager to deliver but who also allows you to make judgement calls if that's required but will give you support and knowledge as you go along on the shop floor to make the right decision for the customer. (Abbie)*

Partners felt that they didn't need to worry about the decisions they made and felt more relaxed in taking decisions – with one comment aptly portraying this view. Thus the

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support of the LM influences Partners' confidence which ultimately makes them feel less stressed.

*And so you know that if you have a customer that is quite angry and unreasonable and demands to see your manager you know that your LM would back you. I know that they would always try to help me. (Amelie)*

However, two Partners did discuss that generally managers stand by employees, unless of course the decision itself was wrong:

*They always have your back, for e.g. if you say something that is reasonable and the customer is being unreasonable they will stand with you generally. For example if a customer is demanding a refund that they are not meant to have, managers will stick with your opinion. Unless you are blatantly wrong. (Alex)*

One Partner reflected on this and mentioned that if indeed the decision was wrong, the manner in which the manager would discuss this with the Partner was positive.

*I can make any decision for any of the managers down there and I would have the backing from them. If I am wrong which is rare, they would tell me how I could have done it another way. I would have learned from that. I know that I can do things with confidence. I know I don't need to worry about any decision I need to make. (George)*

This support from their LMs in reaching the decision and for the decision made, resulted in Partners feeling supported in the process of making decisions. This is a form of supportive autonomy whereby the managers support Partners in reaching the final decision (if and when required). In this way, managers signal to Partners that they are not on their own and this reduces the job stress levels for Partners and leads to Partners feeling looked after. Consequently Partners feel relaxed in dealing with customers as they do not feel that they would be on their own or be reprimanded for making the wrong decisions.

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A slightly more negative view was portrayed by one Partner who described how she felt when an LM overturned a decision that a Partner had made.

*If you think it's the right judgement call do it and then when you say no to a customer and they take it higher and then that manager overturns you it doesn't make you feel very good. It makes you feel an idiot. (Abbie)*

The same Partner stressed that the level of trust between the LM and the Partner and the relationship was crucial in whether Partners were allowed to take decisions.

*In terms of the relationship you have with your LM, if that's a good relationship and that manager trusts you and knows you're doing good customer services then they will let you make the decision and if you know you are going to be backed up then you make those decisions in confidence. (Abbie)*

The discussion above goes some way in helping to unravel the meaning of autonomy within this work context. It emerges that job autonomy in the JLP is a form of supportive autonomy, whereby Partners are supported by their managers in two ways:

- 1) Providing support in reaching the final decision – perception of feeling cared for (the process)
- 2) Providing support for the actual decision reached (the outcome)

Partners feel that their managers are on hand if required but that they allow them the discretion to make the decision themselves if they wish to do so.

### 5.3.3.3 *Outcomes of job autonomy*

Many Partners mentioned that as a result of the autonomy, they felt trusted by their LM to do what was required to make the customer happy.

*LM trusts me. Not breathing down my neck but he's not too absent. He knows when he's needed. He delegates but I can make my own decisions. It's up to me to decide how jobs are done. I'm in control. (Jason)*

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Most of the Partners who commented that they felt trusted used the term ‘*trusted*’. One quote summarises the view of these participants, when asked how they feel in being allowed to make decisions:

*It makes you feel that they trust you, trusted. It helps you deliver better customer service because you can make a decision almost instantly which if somebody comes into the department and they're not very happy, then I know I can deal with that. (Abbie)*

As a consequence of being allowed to make decisions, some Partners felt important. This uniform view is reflected in the quotes below.

*Managers always say try and deal with it yourself. Makes you feel a lot more important. (Marc)*

Overall, feeling important and trusted led to many Partners feeling good. As one informant noted:

*It makes you feel good, the same thing. Then the customer goes away happy. (Roger)*

A few Partners linked this to job satisfaction:

*Gives you a lot more satisfaction in your job; yeah I am able to deal with it, that I don't have to run off and get the manager at the first sign of trouble. It gives you better job satisfaction. (Marc)*

Some Partners elaborated on the consequences of job autonomy by including both the decision and support of that decision by the LM jointly. The following quote depicts the tone of that discussion:

*They [managers] will let you make the decision and if you know you are going to be backed up then you make those decisions in confidence. Gives you more confidence to go on and make the decisions that the company want you to make. (Abbie)*

It seems that some Partners perceive supportive autonomy as a single concept and it is the perception of that autonomy that affects their behaviours. As a consequence of perceiving the LM's trust and support, a few Partners acknowledged that they feel more

relaxed in dealing with the customers as they know that they have their LM's support. They don't tend to worry about the LM not supporting them and even if the decision is wrong, these Partners are confident that their manager will be constructive in terms of feedback.

*It makes you more relaxed. Because you are confident in knowing that your LM would stick to your decision. (Thula)*

Hence, being trusted to take a decision without the ensuing support may put pressure on employees as they might perceive this as being left on their own. However, when trust and support work together, employees feel trusted and supported and this enables them to perform their tasks with confidence.

Furthermore, as highlighted earlier under Section 5.3.3.1.1, the acknowledgement of organizational systems in place, such as the happy returns policy and goodwill mentioned by some of the participants, demonstrates that Partners acknowledge them as support systems and these also communicate to the Partners the importance of customer service. Overall this makes the Partners feel more confident in making decisions when dealing with customers. Figure 27 presents the linkages across the various constructs within the People management-performance causal chain. As an aide-memoire, only linkages obvious from the data collected have been presented.

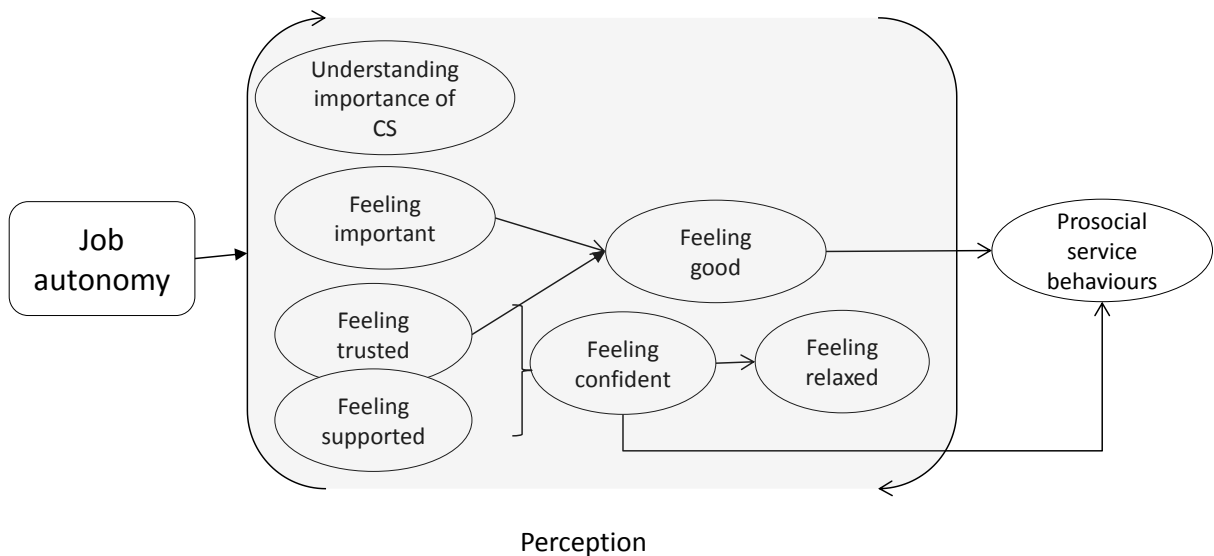


Figure 27: Inside the People-performance black box (Job autonomy)

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As can be seen, perception of supportive job autonomy translates into PSSBs through a complex set of mechanisms.

#### 5.3.4 Communication

Many of the Partners mentioned that being kept informed about information relating to the business helped them engage in PSSB. Partners essentially discussed how information was shared by the Partnership with Partners through briefings and newsletters. This does not involve interpersonal communication and that discussion will be undertaken at a later section when I present findings related to the LM. From the information gathered through interviews, two areas emerged: a stronger focus on the content of the business-related communication and a somewhat weaker focus on the LM as a conduit for this information. Each will be discussed in turn. Overall, the information gathered from the Partners was of a similar nature with no differences in perception.

##### 5.3.4.1 *Content of communication*

The discussion around the content has been presented around the formal mediums that are used by the Partnership to share information. Many Partners mentioned these in discussing the people practices that affected them in delivering PSSB. Many Partners mentioned that the Partnership communicated with its Partners via the communication half-hours every Thursday morning and the five minute morning meeting, both of which are facilitated by the section managers. A few Partners brought up the Partnership magazines (the Chronicle and the Gazette) as information-sharing mediums. First, discussion surrounding the communication half-hours and morning meetings will be presented, followed by information about the Partnership magazines.

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#### 5.3.4.1.1 Communication half-hours/morning meetings

Communication half-hours happen every Thursday and morning meetings occur every day for five minutes before the store opens. The communication half-hours provided the Partners with knowledge of what is happening in the organization, and as one Partner put it, he saw it as a “*gateway to the bigger picture*” (Jason).

*Our time to know what’s been going on in the branch, the Partnership. Maybe talk about new staff; maybe emphasise on one of the brands. (Greg)*

Partners are supplied with information on business unit performance, the department’s performance and departmental targets for the day at morning meetings, or for the week during communication half-hours.

*Different issues each week but it is section managers who do the communication half hours. How we’re doing as a department, anything we can do to improve, any important issues, new lines coming in. You know if there are any issues, you’re aware. It’s not just the managers who know. (Hailey)*

A few Partners specifically discussed how sometimes the briefings provided them with a focus on customer service:

*Ever so often they [managers] will tell us in the morning meetings how important it is to have good customer service. Making sure the service is right. So it is regular not every day but very often we are told in the morning meetings about providing good customer service. (Rupert)*

One Partner specifically provided an example of how the morning briefings were used as a platform to focus on specific issues related to customer service and how that guided them on what to do to make the service better.

*For example an email sent around managers saying we are in the top ten departments in whole Partnership that has missed customer phone calls. Bring that up in morning meeting that we’re the top for unanswered phone calls so we need to really work on that. (Marc)*

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On probing how the Partners responded to this information, he added:

*Depends on the Partners. In terms of my department it seems the younger lads are a lot more responsive to it. Some of the Partners who've been here 20-30 years are really set in their ways and don't like change. They don't like to be told. (Marc)*

Within this discussion there was uniformity amongst the responses provided.

#### 5.3.4.1.2 Partnership magazines

A few Partners mentioned the Partnership magazines – the Chronicle (in-branch) and the Gazette (company-wide) - as good sources of information of what was happening in the branch and also within the Partnership in response to the question surrounding what influenced them to display PSSB. In terms of what was published in these magazines, Partners mentioned that they included a range of information from how the Partnership was performing, to awards the Partnership had collected, to information about employees.

*Weekly newsletters [magazines] to make everyone in the branch aware of any awards you've got or anyone that's done really well or trips people have been on. Letting them know. They also include a page about figures about how we're doing and any important updates that are coming or how it relates. Makes me feel part of a bigger team. (Hailey)*

One Partner referred to it as follows:

*You have access to information you wouldn't on a day to day business have. You know as a business where we are; makes me feel good. (Abbie)*

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#### 5.3.4.2 *The manager's role in organizational communication*

A few Partners suggested that the section manager played a part in how Partners perceived this interaction, and when the LM was upbeat, Partners felt more motivated.

*Helps in the morning meetings if they are [section managers] positive and upbeat too. Five minute meeting in the morning. If they're on a downer it puts staff on a downer. Helps to have an upbeat manager in the team. (Mia)*

On probing into exactly how the manager has an influence on them through the morning meetings, this Partner also responded:

*Puts you in a positive frame of mind, want to help the customer. (Mia)*

This illustrates that the LM has an effect on Partners' motivation and how they deal with customers subsequent to the morning meetings.

#### 5.3.4.3 *Outcomes of being kept informed*

Partners receive organizational communication through several channels as discussed in the previous section. Many Partners went on to say that having access to this business information through the communication half-hours and morning meetings made them more aware of what they had to do as a team and encouraged them as a collective to meet and/or exceed these targets. On asking how they felt having this information, one Partner's response serves as a good summary:

*Feel included; part of the team; if kept in the dark it becomes us and them. Because we know we're part of it; shows that we're Partners, so it shows we're part of it and therefore we care about it. (Greg)*

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The information published in the magazines also made the Partners feel part of a team.

*You get the magazine it's not just about us here but it's about what this Partner in this or that place has done, what we're doing to expand; Chronicle and the Gazette. Lots of bits that show us we're all in it together, we're all Partners, we're all equal. (Marc)*

Feeling part of a team, was also associated with feeling good:

*Definitely gives you a sense of belonging and part of a bigger team. You feel you are part of the branch and not just a team. You feel good. (Amber)*

And this team feeling led them to do their best for the organization. Even though at this point customer service behaviours were not explicitly commented on, it was implicit in the way the questions were asked in the first instance. As one Partner's quote suggests:

*Good. It makes me feel like part of the business and whatever you do matters. (George)*

Equally another Partner commented on how team feeling specifically affected customer service:

*Helps you deliver customer service better because most people look at it as our business and you want to do the right thing by the customer and get that customer to come back so the business grows and I think that's how I perceive it. (Abbie)*

Two Partners mentioned how knowing what was happening helped them feel safer in their employment.

*A lot better than in other companies because sometimes you don't always know what's happening. A lot safer because if you know what's happening. You do want to keep on knowing rather than hearing rumours. It makes you safer in your employment. (Alex)*

The above quote, even though representing only a few Partners, warrants an explanation. At the time of conducting the interview, the JLP was in the process of undergoing redundancies for some levels of management. Obviously, this was something that made Partners question their job security and therefore, it is within this context that this quote needs to be positioned.

Specifically, when information shared in the communication meetings related to customer matters, it reiterated to Partners the importance of customer service in the Partnership. This was stated by a few Partners who provided explicit examples of how this happened.

*If your managers lets you know you are in the top ten departments for missing customer call, this focuses you and puts that seed in your mind. Next time you hear that phone call you're rushing to answer the phone. It plants that seed. (Marc)*

As a consequence of having access to business information, Partners felt they belonged to a team. This made them happier about themselves and their employment. In addition, the focus on customer comments and customer service reiterated to the Partners the importance of customer service for the Partnership. Also, how LMs delivered the information affected Partners' motivation to serve the customers for the day. Finally, at a time when the context is uncertain, Partners appreciate the information they receive and this makes them feel safer in their employment.

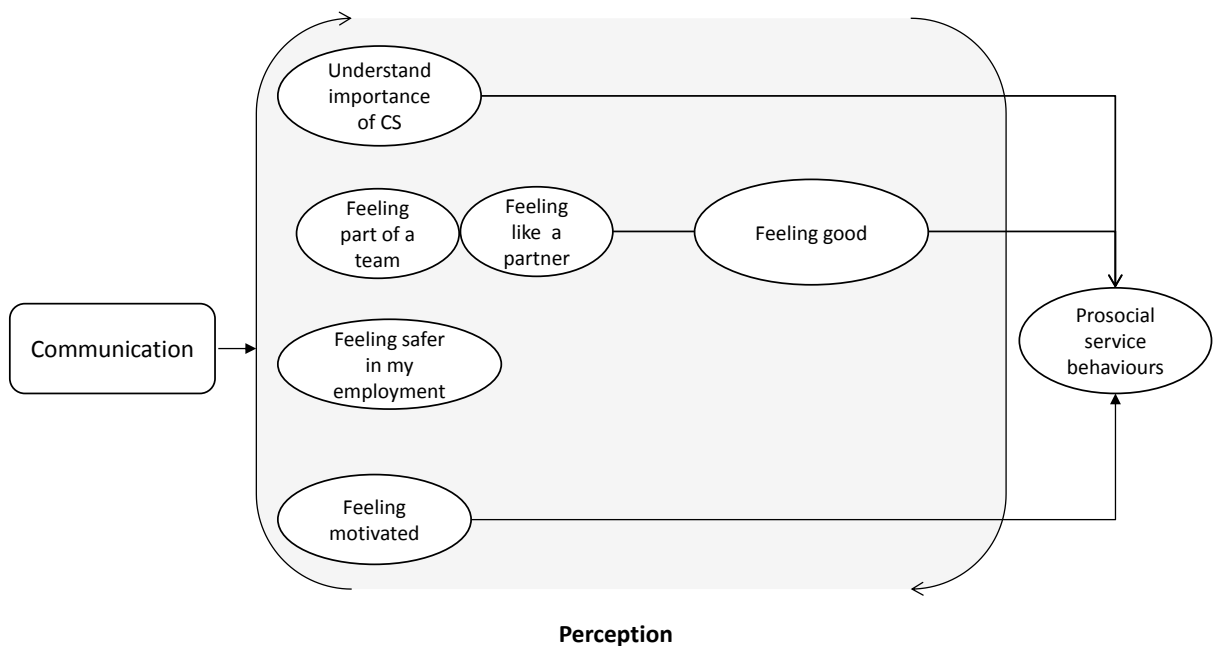


Figure 28: Inside the People-performance black box (Communication)

Figure 28 presents the linkages across the various constructs within the People management-performance causal chain. Overall, the communication of and access to

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business-related information makes the employees feel included, part of a team, and reinforces their identities as Partners in the business. This practice also serves to reinforce the importance of customer service and in addition, in an uncertain job context, signals to employees some degree of safety. Furthermore, the role of the LM in this is motivational, in how they motivate their Partners to engage in their work efforts throughout the day and since a large part of a Partners' role is to interact with customers, this has an effect on that, too. As can be seen from Figure 28, perception of communication translates into PSSBs through a complex set of mechanisms. It can be realised that this perception affects PSSBs both directly and indirectly; directly by Partners understanding the importance of customer service, feeling motivated and feeling like a Partner and indirectly through Partners feeling good about themselves.

### 5.3.5 Employee voice

One aspect that was mentioned by many of the Partners in response to questions on what influenced them to engage in PSSB was 'employee voice' and the discussion surrounding this topic produced mixed views on how Partners felt about it.

Partners referred to the concept of 'democracy' within the JLP. By democracy, Partners alluded to having a say and playing a significant role in how decisions were made for things that affected their working life.

*The democracy and powered by your principles. It is Partner-customer- profit ... we have a say in how things are run, so we have meetings and we can air views and that makes a difference. (Kim)*

The discussion surrounding employee voice covered Partners having a say and being able to participate in decision-making in organizational matters. Many of the respondents mentioned that having a say in matters concerning their employment made them feel good about the workplace. In terms of having a say, the majority of participants who talked about this remarked that the atmosphere in the JLP was one within which they felt comfortable to express their views and opinions. They mentioned that several established platforms were accessible to them for voicing their opinions. The LM was also

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highlighted as playing a role in employees' perception of whether they were heard or not. In relation to participating in decision-making, there was discussion around whether the Partners' voice affected decisions that were made. Within this discussion, there were two sub-groupings: the majority of participants had a favourable perception of how their voice played a part in decision-making whilst a few of them portrayed a more unfavourable view. The next section will begin by presenting information on 'having a say' and the channels of communication within this. This will then be followed by a discussion surrounding participation in the decision-making component.

#### 5.3.5.1 *Having a say*

By having a say, Partners were indicating two elements: for some of them it was voicing their opinions and the freedom to ask questions of their managers and senior management. For others, it was actually influencing decisions using their Partner voice. Even though both sets of Partners referred to it as 'having a say', there were slight variations in its construal in their mind and this affected their perceptions, hence, these will be discussed separately.

In terms of having their voice heard, the formal channels that were stated included the Branch Forum, the Partnership Council, communication half-hours and the Partnership magazines. These were mentioned by the majority of Partners who discussed this.

*Partnership council, you have your say on anything in the Partnership, you have your say on it. At least you have your say rather than it going over your head. (Bailey)*

One Partner commented on how he felt he could ask questions and air his views in the communication half-hour every week.

*It's like an open meeting; you are free to ask any question. Normally it is once a week. Our new manager likes to have a meeting every day for about 5-10 minutes and if you've got anything to air you are allowed to. (George)*

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Referring to the Branch Forum, one Partner added that his role as a Forum member allowed him to represent the views of his department at the Branch level.

*We have the Branch Forum; it is kind of like student council but in John Lewis. Each department has a specific number of Forum members and they discuss the bigger topics of JL for our branch. It helps people make their views known to the Forum members who then move it up to Branch level. (Roger)*

The JLP magazines (the Gazette and the Chronicle) made Partners specifically aware of senior management's commitment to employee voice. Partners could write to senior management of the Partnership about any matter that concerned them. These letters are published in the Gazette and Board members reply to these letters (sometimes about rather difficult issues). This makes the members feel that their voice is both important and taken seriously.

*We have the magazines for Partners, where there are always letters there griping about things and MDs of stores and even people from the Centre respond to the letters and we see the responses in the magazines and they don't tend to censor; occasionally they will remove something, but they will respond, so you know it gets to something and I don't think it happens in other places – it would be like hitting your head against the wall elsewhere. (Laila)*

A few Partners mentioned that they could challenge senior management.

*I could ask our Partnership counsellor burning questions and he can address them at the very highest level. That's absolutely unique. I can get a question to the highest level. (Bella)*

A few Partners specifically commented that seeing the letters that shop floor Partners wrote in the magazine questioning the senior management, reinforced Partners' perception that they had a voice. They felt that management were interested in addressing concerns.

*In the two magazines there are letters complaining but they're published sometimes with names. Somebody like the chairman responds. You wouldn't get many organisations with overly critical letters...makes me feel other people care about the business, as far as it can be its trying to be transparent. You never know if it's 100% transparent but as far as it can be it is. Much more open than anywhere else I've been. (Carmen)*

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The majority of this group of Partners portrayed the view that they felt they were being listened to.

*I do feel that here you do have more say. (Laila)*

However, many within this group also mentioned that even though they had their voices heard, what they suggested did not necessarily happen.

*Christmas hours they will mention to you, what are your views on it. Partnership council, you have your say on anything in the Partnership, you have your say on it, not necessarily goes in your favour; a lot of the time it doesn't. At least you have your say rather than it going over your head. (Bailey)*

On the other hand, Partners who had recently joined the Partnership and who had worked in other organizations before coming to the JLP felt that they had more of a voice compared to their previous employment.

*We have more of a say than other places and you hear things and you know that here there's a consultations process. (Laila)*

However, one Partner who had joined the Partnership less than five years ago, commented

*People, who have been here longer than me, feel like they get less of a say than they used to. (Laila)*

A few longer-serving Partners had a similar view with comments such as *You aren't listened to any more (Amelia)* and *Years ago had more of a say, now what they say goes basically (Mia)*. These Partners feel that they still have a say but are now more limited in their participation in decision-making and this will be discussed under the section where I present information on participation in decision-making.

Another facet of having a say involved the perception of the LM as being an authority figure to whom Partners could voice their opinions.

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#### 5.3.5.1.1 The role of the LM

For some Partners, having a say also manifested in their interaction with their immediate LMs. In essence, over and above the formal channels of voice, LMs were perceived as important agents in the perception of the ‘employee voice’.

*You can speak to your managers that comes down to branch level rather than the Partnership. So you are listened to rather than being rejected. You can propose different ideas and you are listened to, rather than put suggestions in the suggestion box. (Alex)*

A few Partners added that their managers encouraged them to challenge them and air their views on matters important to them.

*To a certain extent it is voice. I know I could approach my manager and tell him this is something I don't like and ultimately they will listen, they may not do anything about it because it might be outside their remit but they will listen and I have the freedom to do that. That makes me feel good. (Thula)*

#### 5.3.5.2 Participating in decision-making

Partners conceptualised employee voice as being whether they had a say or whether what they said was taken into account (by top management) when reaching decisions. Perception of this aspect was made at an organizational level, with the LM not being referred to within this conversation by any of the participants. In this discussion, Partners agreed that sometimes decisions were made that Partners were unhappy about. However, all Partners newer to the Partnership (less than three years) reacted pragmatically and felt that these decisions had to be made while keeping the larger interest of the business in mind.

*There are management decisions that have been made no matter what Partners said, like the break system was changed from a 3 break system to a 2 break system and that was very very unpopular. Also the hours were changed instead of opening till 6pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and until 8 on Thursday and Friday, we opened until 8 pm every day. And again that's not very popular. It is a commercial decision that has to be made. (Maddox)*

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A few of the Partners who were new agreed that when decisions were taken, management did make efforts to explain this to the Partners. One Partner specifically commented about changes in working hours:

*No one likes to work later; challenging time; less time at home with friends and family. Sundays I would be working later; shift in times rather than more hours. Lose my evenings, my time. You could talk about it. Didn't feel afraid to raise concerns. Explained how they'd worked it out to do as fairly as possible; meet business needs and Partner needs as well.*  
(Marc)

The majority of Partners who have been in the Partnership for nine years and longer, however, were more downbeat with three Partners specifically noting how Partners had reduced voting powers on decisions.

*We used to be able to vote for things but that's been taken away from us...a couple of years ago now, three years ago. We talk to our branch Forum member and influence but we don't get to vote on anything anymore. Not as much as it used to be.* (Mia)

One Partner who has been in the Partnership for more than nine years also stressed that she felt that because they have less of an influence, she had stood down from her role of representing Partners in one of the formal channels.

*At one time we used to vote for it and now a lot of the options that we can vote on have gone... I tend to believe you know if you can't cope with what's happening you either have to stand up and shout or you stand down and let somebody else do it, so, I stood down [from a Forum] and let somebody else carry on because if you're in a democracy... (Sophie)*

There were two Partners who differed in their views even though they had been in the Partnership for a longer period (more than nine years) - one was a Business Forum member and the other a very long serving member.

*As a Forum member part of my job is to look after the people on my floor, if they have any concerns that I bring it forward to the Forum meetings. As a Forum member I try to solve all problems before it gets out of hand. We have to bring our ideas forward and then they decide in length and then we voted but you don't get to take decisions on anything unless it is taken apart, discussed and put it better.* (Ruby)

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As a Forum member, this Partner is an active participant in the democratic process and therefore might be inclined to think of this differently. It is worth noting that both these Partners mentioned during their interviews how the JLP had cared for them in their time of need and consequently this had made them very loyal. Thus, it could be that the feeling of loyalty affected their perception of voice in the system.

### 5.3.5.3 Outcomes of employee voice

Many Partners remarked that having a voice made them feel part of the business and team. They felt that their views were important to senior management.

*Things are thrashed out and management will say I want you to do this and Forum reps will come back down to the department and ask Partners what they think and take back the feedback; they're happy about this or not happy about that and its put to a vote so again people up above taking notice of what you say makes you feel part of the business. Not being just an employee, good feeling. (Abbie)*

These Partners felt valued, good, and mentioned that they did not feel like an employee but felt like a Partner.

*Gives you that feeling that I can make a difference, my opinion does matter, not just a cog in a wheel. [I] have a voice, can change things. I am listened to, I am valued, being a Partner as opposed to being an employee if you like. [It] makes me feel very good. (Marc)*

When probed on how this affected their service delivery, Partners commented it would affect everything they did, and this included dealing with customers.

*It affects everything I do; on the other hand if I don't feel that way I won't go out of my way for anybody. (Thula)*

Some Partners mentioned that the democracy was a fair process. This perception of fairness in some way contributed to them providing excellent customer service and going the extra mile.

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*[The democracy] it is very good. You feel it is a fair. If you are not treated fairly, then you will give off negativity and if you are negative and unhappy you are not going to want to give the best customer service, are you? You could not be bothered to work or do anything. (Kim)*

Those Partners who perceived the democracy to be working well felt happier in their employment:

*But in JL, in our democracy and we have a say and we discuss it and we come back and in that it makes us a lot happier in our work but we are not moaning about things, left right and centre all the time or you are not thinking sat down. (Kim)*

A few Partners who were members of the Business Forum mentioned that not many employees felt that this was an effective way of representing their views or influencing decision-making.

*The branch Forum is not working too well because the Partners are blaming us (the Branch Forum) for a lot of decisions. And a lot of the time they (Partners) believe that we say yes to everything and they don't see the democracy that we could go through. They don't see democracy because they are not there. I don't think a lot of them understand what happens behind because they don't see it. (Roger)*

Another Forum member noted:

*They [senior management] don't want people to be unhappy as unhappy people are not as productive and ultimately it does lead to profit. If we are all miserable, then we are not going to go out of our way to go above and beyond. (Laila)*

On the other hand, a few Partners who were unhappy with the way decisions were being made thought that they felt less of a Partner nowadays than before.

*In the beginning, you felt more of a Partner because they listened to you and acted on it but now they don't listen and act on whatever they want. (Amelie)*

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Specifically referring to some of the decisions that had been taken recently which many Partners were unhappy about, one Partner noted that for these decisions the process of democracy was not followed properly.

*It did not go through the channels, it just happened because that's what he [the MD] wanted and in that respect it's not the same Partnership as it was before. You aren't listened to any more. (Mia)*

This implies that these Partners were unhappy with the way the process of democracy was implemented and this perception of implementation was not perceived as procedurally fair by these Partners.

On probing the effects of the negative perceptions of the democracy, a few Partners mentioned the terms 'unhappy Partners'. On probing this further, it emerged that this would affect how they dealt with customers:

*Because they are not so happy [with the decision], I don't think they are happy to serve them or they might pass the customer on or might spend longer on their breaks or stand around without approaching the customer. (Roger)*

Thus, perception of fairness affects whether Partners feel happy or not. The use of the term *happy* in this instance is more of an indication of satisfaction rather than a more transient indicator.

It is significant to note that employee voice was the one practice that was most diverse in how Partners perceived it. Figure 29 presents the linkages across the various constructs within the People management-performance causal chain. As can be seen, perception of employee voice translates into PSSBs through a multifaceted set of mechanisms.

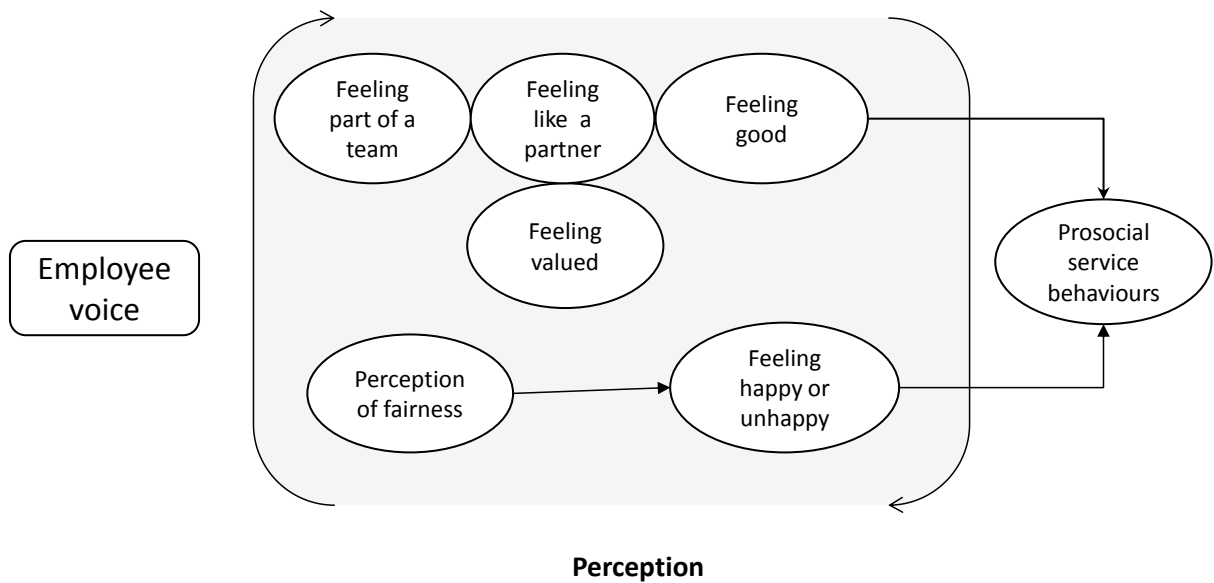


Figure 29: Inside the People-performance black box (Employee voice)

### 5.3.6 Non-financial recognition

In discussions on the range of practices that influenced Partners to deliver excellent service, Partners mentioned the significance of both non-financial and financial factors. These will be dealt with in separate sections as they seem to affect Partners’ behaviour in different ways. Non-financial recognition emerged as an important driver for engaging in PSSBs. All the Partners who highlighted the role of non-financial recognition agreed that this was done well in the JLP, with the following quote summarising the general view suitably:

*JL are very good at recognising their Partners. (Maddox)*

Within the context of non-financial recognition, Partners discussed recognition at three levels. Many Partners mentioned that being recognised by their LMs [individual level] played a big role in Partners wanting to do whatever they could for customers. In addition, a few Partners discussed the part the company magazines played in recognising Partners at an organizational level. Furthermore, Partners stated that they were recognised by other Partners for their efforts. I will present a discussion around these themes below.

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### 5.3.6.1 Recognition at an organisational level

A few Partners stated that the company magazines contributed to recognising Partners. Partners who mentioned the magazines, stressed that the company magazines were significant in acknowledging Partners' and teams' achievements. One Partner mentioned that the magazines showcased awards won by either individuals or teams or the entire Partnership. In doing so, Partners felt recognised for their achievements. The quote below hints at team level contribution.

*Weekly newsletter to make everyone in the branch aware of any awards you've got or anyone that's done really well or trips people have been on. Letting them know. Today we went and did an apprentice away day and we were in the Chronicle for that. Makes you look back and think of the week; someone was noticed; won team of the week. I felt recognised. (Hailey)*

A few Partners also commented that the Partnership had a scheme called 'Partner of the month' whereby Partners were voted by other Partners for the work they did. As a result of the value of this being minimal, Partners conceptualised it as recognition rather than a financial benefit.

*There are little things, rewards: like they do Partner of the month and you get vouchers (£200 - added extra), we have only done it since this year and we vote for that but ultimately it is more like getting a pat on the back thing. (Laila)*

In addition to comments about being recognised at an organizational level, many Partners reiterated the role of the LM as an important contributor in recognising Partners' contributions. This will now be elaborated upon.

### 5.3.6.2 The role of the LM

Many Partners mentioned that being recognised and praised for their actions by their LMs made them feel appreciated. LMs regularly used praise to motivate them and made a point of recognising their contributions publicly. One Partner's view aptly summarised this:

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*Recognition and praise comes from the LM: this is absolutely key. Feeling of appreciation makes us work a lot harder, achieve more...like to do well, to be appreciated, be praised.*  
(Aliya)

From the Partners' interviews it can be noted that they mentioned both *recognition* and *praise*. The term *recognition* was used in two ways. Recognition could mean simply being recognised for doing the day's work well. Alternatively, it could indicate being recognised for doing something that their managers' perceived as that little extra with a little something tangible at the end of it. The term *praise* was used by Partners when this recognition for doing something extra was not associated with a tangible reward at the end.

#### 5.3.6.2.1 Recognition

The majority of Partners referred to being recognised by their LMs for things they did for the customers.

*You quite often get a card , I've got a few cards that say thank you for going the extra mile or well done on this sale and things like that; little things like that do help. Makes me want to do it more and more. Makes you feel good. I enjoy what I do anyway but if someone's noticed that you're good at what you do it makes you happy when you are doing it. Makes you feel appreciated. (Bailey)*

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One Partner compared the appreciation scheme to his previous employment and highlighted that it felt more personal in the JLP.

*If we did get something at bank- pre-printed card. But here it's handwritten and just that small fact that it is handwritten means they've taken the time to sit down. If pre-printed could have come from anybody. Because it's handwritten it means more than getting something monetary; a personal thing. (Greg)*

A few Partners discussed recognition by their LM as instrumental in going the extra mile. Two Partners specifically discussed this in relation to how other organizations treat their employees.

*I think for other retailers they are not even thanked. And because [here] they are recognised they go the extra mile for the customer. (Maddox)*

Within this discussion, two Partners mentioned about Partners being given small items such as vouchers or some gifts from the Goodie Cupboard as a show of appreciation for their efforts.

*If you do a bit more than is expected you can earn a voucher, a bottle of wine, sometimes small, sometimes a lot bigger. If you've done a big piece of work you get a bit more. Recognised by the LM. Makes you feel appreciated. (Aliyah)*

As mentioned earlier in this sub-section, recognition was perceived by a few Partners to indicate a broader meaning of general recognition rather than being associated with a specific achievement. 4 out of 23 interviewees remarked that sometimes the 'thank you' said at the end of the day did not necessarily have to be linked to something specific but it could simply be a general thank you for the work done for the day and this made them feel recognised.

*Hopefully, in most cases, it is very much the idea that at the end of the day somebody will thank you...inevitably, when you say "alright! I'm off for today" somebody will say "Thanks for today" and it's not just courteous, its one step beyond courteous... (Sophie)*

Overall, being thanked is integral to Partners feeling recognised.

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#### 5.3.6.2.2 Praise

Some Partners referred to being praised for their actions as drivers of customer service behaviours. Partners distinguished between recognition and praise. Partners felt that managers praised them regularly if they had done something worthy of praise.

*My LM...especially in our department will always make a point of saying well done to this person, they've done really well. They are really good for praise. (Hailey)*

One Partner referred to 'praise' as one of the perks that the JLP provide; this is an interesting point. Even though only one Partner mentioned it and it is a positive perception of praise, this signifies to a small extent that this appraisal of praise is being made at organizational level.

*For all the perks; praise, bonus, additional bits and benefits. It's nice to give something back; it's your job. (Bailey)*

#### 5.3.6.3 Role of other Partners

Even though most of the discussion surrounding recognition centred on recognition by LMs, there was another avenue through which Partners felt recognised – through other Partners. A few Partners highlighted this in their conversations surrounding this aspect.

*[if you are] asked to do something, and if you do it, or something out of the ordinary you get a card from the LM or whoever you've done it for. Makes you feel nice, appreciated and wanted. (Greg)*

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The term “whoever you’ve done it for” was mentioned by three of the Partners. When I probed how this worked in practice, interviewees mentioned that Partners could recognise the efforts of other Partners. There was no difference in opinion between newer and more experienced Partners in this discussion.

*You [a Partner] can even go if you see one of your colleagues on the shop floor doing something and you say “Oh! That was really nice”, and then you can actually go to the section manager and say “Oh! did you know ‘so-and-so’ did ‘that’ and the customers were all over the moon”, and you could gently ask him/her that such persons be recognised. (Sophie).*

As one Partner stressed, this occurs widely:

*You are acknowledged for your actions not only by LMs but by your fellow Partners as well. I often say “You dealt with Mr So-and-So well”. Then somebody can thank me, everybody is doing for everybody else. (Maddox)*

Thus, other Partners emerge as important in the perception of being recognised by Partners.

*So, we always praise each other for doing good things when you see that. You just know that you can just go up to someone and say “I like how you have done that”. It’s just something you pick up from all the experienced Partners. (Roger)*

#### 5.3.6.4 Outcomes of non-financial recognition

In this section, outcomes for both non-financial recognition and praise will be presented. Largely, Partners felt that their manager was interested in them and as a result, they felt appreciated, wanted and motivated to provide even better customer service the next time. Some Partners mentioned that they felt good as a result of being recognised:

*I don’t need to be told every day I am doing a great job, but the fact someone is acknowledging the fact and telling me I am doing a job. To [me] that is really important. That makes me feel good. (Amber)*

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Others mentioned that as a result of being recognised they felt appreciated, leading them to want to work harder. Thus, being recognised motivated them to work harder and put in more effort.

*[I am] recognised by the LM. Makes you feel appreciated. Feeling of appreciation makes [me] work a lot harder, achieve more. (Aliya)*

On probing into being recognised helps specifically in delivering customer service, a few Partners remarked that they would engage in that behaviour again, with one Partner mentioning:

*It would make me do the good thing again for another customer. If you do something and don't get a thank you, you wouldn't bother next time but if you do get a thank you, or well done then you think I enjoyed doing it, I'll do it again and again. (Greg)*

Even though Partners did not explicitly mention how being recognised reinforced their beliefs about what was expected in terms of customer service, this is implicit as seen from the above quote. As a direct consequence of being recognised for providing excellent service, Partners are motivated to continue the behaviour (*I'll do it again and again*) and are also committed to doing more (*makes [me] work a lot harder, achieve more*).

A few Partners discussed the consequences of not being recognised.

*If nobody recognises you then you feel that it is a waste of your time. (Sophie)*

This provides a slightly different view in that these Partners seem to engage in customer service behaviours only because they get praised. These same Partners, however, had also mentioned in their interview that it was in their nature to go the extra mile. This presents somewhat inconsistent evidence. They wish to be regarded as Partners who go the extra mile because of who they are, but in effect they are affected by factors in the workplace, such as recognition by line management in this particular case.

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Two Partners specifically stressed how feeling appreciated themselves went some way towards them recognising other Partners' efforts. Both these Partners have been in the organization for longer than nine years.

*If you get recognised then you feel that you have made an effort and you should be appreciated and because you feel appreciated, you are more willing and this can spread to other Partners as well. You try and boost other Partners if they are down. (Amelie)*

Similarly to the previous discussion on outcomes of being recognised, when Partners were praised, they too felt good in themselves.

*I feel good about it because whenever you are being praised for something you always feel good about yourself. (Roger)*

A few Partners mentioned the term 'happy' as a consequence of being praised.

*Yesterday I did a Partnership card so it's nice to get the praise, felt good, encourages you to do more. Makes me feel happy. (Mia)*

Figure 30 demonstrates how non-financial recognition influences PSSBs. It must be noted that there were no differences in views at all within the data gathered in respect of this practice.

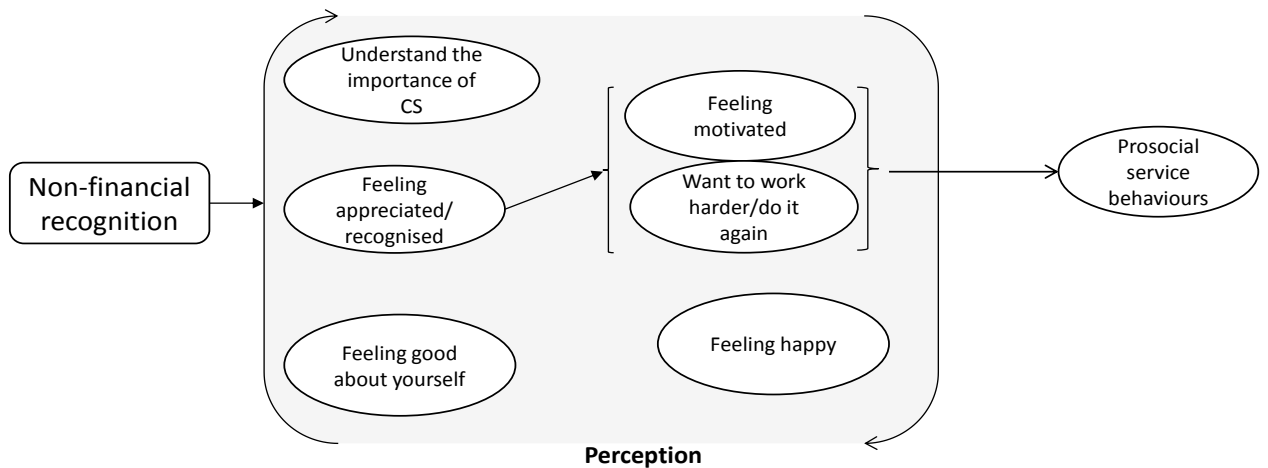


Figure 30: Inside the People-performance black box (Non-financial recognition)

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### 5.3.7 Financial rewards and benefits

Profit sharing (bonus) and financial/leisure benefits were the main discussion points surrounding financial rewards. Within financial rewards, the bonus scheme and financial benefits emerged as the main factors. The discussion surrounding these two categories was sometimes presented together. However, for ease of understanding, as far as possible these will be presented as distinct categories.

Within the JLP, the bonus is a form of profit sharing, whereby a proportion of profits is distributed equally to Partners as a percentage of salary. Some commented on the bonus as instrumental in the Partners displaying PSSBs. Partners explained that such behaviours led to happy customers who would return, and this would result in more profits for the Partnership, ultimately leading to a higher bonus.

*Bonus is probably the biggest perk, the more you do for your customers, the more money you earn throughout the year, the bigger the percentage. (Bailey)*

The above quote illustrates the motivational aspect of the bonus, in that the bonus encourages Partners to do more for their customers. Alternately, the fact that Partners recognised that the bonus was the reason for them engaging in PSSBs, suggests that this did communicate to them the importance of customer service in the organization. From this group of Partners, it could be inferred that they felt a sense of responsibility for their contribution to the bonus. One respondent summarised this view well:

*If I'm not pulling my weight in my mind and doing my job I feel as if I'm letting the Partnership down that it's my fault if there's a lower bonus, in my mind I feel I wasn't doing my job. (Bailey)*

Within the discussion surrounding bonus, it was implicit that bonus served as a motivational push to deliver exceptional customer service as well, as the quotes above illustrate.

*If my customer goes away unhappy then we would lose profits and technically our bonus would be down and we would not get so many benefits. (Roger)*

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Of the Partners who mentioned the bonus, the majority of them felt that receiving the same percentage of bonus made them feel part of a team. It was interesting that everyone who mentioned the bonus referred to it as “our bonus”. This is an indication of team feeling and aspect of belongingness, where everyone’s contributions matter.

*Way we all Partners work and what we put into the business. We all put in and get our bonus out each year, the more we put in the more we get. (George)*

One of the Partners mentioned that even though he received a bonus in his previous employment, it felt different at the JLP because everyone got the same percentage share. It could also be as a result of being an ownership organization, where everyone is considered equal and has a share in the business and this might affect how they perceive the bonus.

*Well we’re all a team. The bonus makes JL special although I used to get a bonus at [previous company] it was not the same for everybody. (Mia).*

This implies that the allocation of bonus affects the perception of fairness amongst the Partners. Two Partners emphasised that because the pay was not great, the bonus kept people motivated.

*What you do affects how much money goes through the till which affects what you get. Pay is not fabulous. Constant. Bonus keeps people going. (Aliyah)*

A few Partners (3 out of 23) discussed how being a co-owner of the business where everyone got an equal reward encouraged them to work hard towards this bonus.

*It is sort of a co-owner to the business and we work towards the bonus we get each year. It is giving 100% service. For all the hard work we put in, it comes with the bonus at the end of the year. (Rupert)*

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One Partner commented that a lot of Partners hesitated before giving too good a service, because it affected their bonus:

*Lot of people hold back on giving too much good customer service because ultimately it will affect the bottom line which ultimately will affect our bonus. (Delia)*

In particular, another Partner referred to how some Partners perceived too much customer service as a bad thing as it would lead to a smaller bonus eventually.

*You do consider it as if this is your business, this is your profit and ultimately your bonus, which is really more annoying when they [other Partners] say “Well, come in [to customers], have £400 and take a bunch of flowers”, and you don’t think it’s the right decision, you think “it’s my money you’re giving away”. (Thula)*

Thus, in some Partners’ minds it seems that there is a fine balance between doing whatever one can for dissatisfied customers, especially when it comes to redeeming service failures and ultimately the profit that is to be made, which ultimately leads to the bonus.

There were a few negative views about the bonus. They were made by three of the longer-serving Partners (nine years or longer) who felt that they no longer had a say in the Partnership and did not feel like co-owners. When probed on how they felt about the bonus, one Partner responded:

*The bonus is not a sign of it [Partnership]. Charlie Mayfield gets so many millions, can you imagine what his bonus is at 17%? He works 3 days a week and has 2 people doing his job now whereas his predecessor he did the whole of the Partnership. (JL and Waitrose). Charlie Mayfield has given Waitrose to someone and JL to someone and they award themselves bonuses and pay rises and we don’t get that at all. Last week there were a few letters saying why do they get pay rises but they always waffle. (Amelie)*

It suggests that these Partners perceived this to be unfair in their assessment.

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Adding to this, another Partner noted that there had been questions about pay and bonus in the company magazines and Partners were regularly asking questions related to this but sensed that these were not responded to properly.

*One letter was about why our bonus is done on a percentage rather than split equally. Lots of waffle in the answers; this is how it is done. (Abbie)*

Apart from the bonus, Partners also mentioned the role of benefits in driving them to engage in PSSBs.

#### *5.3.7.1 Financial and leisure benefits*

A few Partners mentioned the cluster of financial benefits in their discussion of tools that the JLP provided, as instrumental in their engaging in PSSBs. 4 of the 5 Partners who mentioned this have been in the Partnership for less than three years. The same Partners have all worked in other establishments before. In their discussion about this, they implicitly compared the offerings at the JLP with knowledge of other organizations. They were also more explicit in their discussion of the range of offerings.

Discounts, pensions, holiday houses, memberships, leisure courses Partners could attend, made the Partners feel that the Partnership cared for them as individuals and not just as people who worked for the Partnership.

*Benefits; if been here a certain amount of time you get a pension, discount here and Waitrose, ticket subsidies, leisure learning; lots of courses. I don't think there's as much invested in the individuals in other places. I can't think of many places that would say if you want to learn tap dancing we'll give you some money towards it. Makes me feel good, glad I'm part of it. Makes me think, right I'm going to do something in return. (Greg)*

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These Partners were able to comment on several types of leisure benefits and felt rewarded because they were made available to them. This made them feel rewarded and they appreciated that.

*All the different leisure benefits and subsidies is so far beyond anything I've had with any other retailer before that. They're the things you only expect from big corporations and things. Thinking wow; you really feel like you're being rewarded for being a Partner.*  
(Carmen)

### 5.3.7.2 Outcomes of financial rewards and benefits

The findings from the interviews suggest that the perception of financial rewards, such as the bonus and financial benefits, lead to slightly different outcomes. How the majority of the Partners feel about the bonus affects their perceptions of being part of a bigger team.

*We all get the same percentage bonus at the end of the year. More of a team ethos.* (Greg)

The fact that all Partners got the same percentage of bonus was perceived fairly in general. However, a few Partners did comment on the unfair distribution of profits (as discussed in the previous section).

The majority of Partners who mentioned the bonus, also added that because they were awarded bonuses this made them feel like co-owners.

*Benefits you get – bonus, they put in a pension for you. Makes you feel like you're co-owners.*  
(Marc)

As a consequence of the benefits, a few Partners also felt rewarded (*Thinking wow; you really feel like you're being rewarded for being a Partner*). On probing exactly what this meant, the Partner replied

*I feel very appreciated. They make you feel ....like there's a lot for you. You're appreciated not just in your pay but you've got all these other things you can have. If you feel appreciated it's going to reflect in your general attitude to everything...like you want to pass it on to*

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*others; all that good will whether it be to your peers, to other Partners or to customers, you want to pass on all that good feeling. (Carmen)*

When asked how being appreciated made Partners feel and how it helped deliver excellent service, Partners mentioned that it affected how they dealt with customers, with one Partner's response summarising the group's views well:

*Makes me feel good about myself. It's what pushes me day in day out for each customer. Even if you have an awkward customer it still gives you the patience to deliver good customer service, not to change, to be patient, to be polite, with a high level of customer service, throughout the year. (Bailey)*

In return, Partners felt that they wanted to return the investment, as one Partner commented in response:

*For all the perks; [praise], bonus, additional bits and benefits. It's nice to give something back; it's your job. It's nice to do that because they will do more for you. (Bailey)*

Figure 31 reveals the different ways in which perception of financial rewards affects PSSBs.

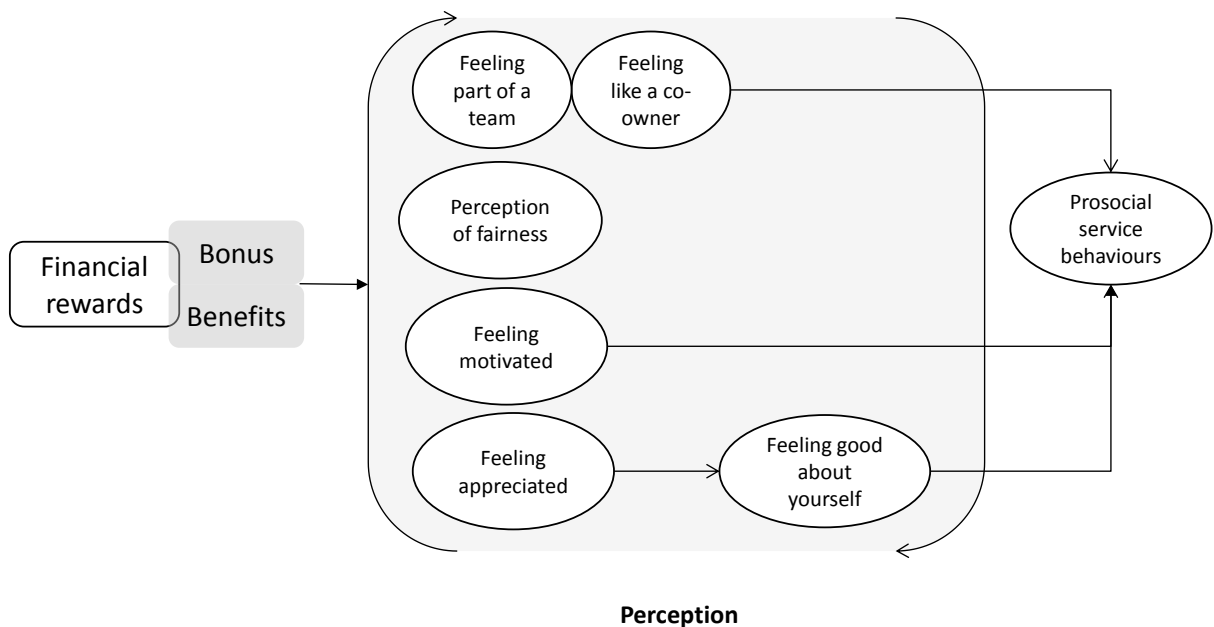


Figure 31: Inside the People-performance black box (Financial rewards)

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It can be seen from Figure 31 that the profit sharing and benefits affect Partners' behaviour through different routes. One affects behaviours through appreciating the individual (benefits) and the other makes the individual feel motivated and included in the group (bonus). It demonstrates that for the Partners both are important – their individual self, as well as the concept of self within a group.

#### **5.4 LM's management and leadership style**

The influence that the LM exerts on the Partners is multifaceted. In addition to the crucial role of the LM in enacting the human resource practices (which has been discussed in the previous section), he/she also plays a general role in managing and leading Partners. It is not that these aspects of the LM's role are exclusive to the enactment facet, although elements of this do feature within the enactment piece. However, I have chosen to present these separately to accentuate how important these issues are on their own as well as how they serve as a platform in affecting perceptions of enactment. Where relevant, I will refer back to the enactment discussion earlier for a more nuanced understanding.

The majority of respondents were very clear that their LM was a key influence in helping them to provide excellent customer service. Within all the conversations about tools and techniques used to deliver excellent customer service, the LM (section manager) and the manner in which he/she managed their Partners emerged strongly, time and again, as the key reason for the Partner providing excellent customer service. Only one interviewee did not refer to the LM in any discussion. This reflects that the role of the LM is crucial in Partners engaging in PSSBs. Most of this perception emerged as a result of the LM being on the shop floor with the Partners during the working day. The LM helped the Partners deliver quality service in a myriad of ways: by being supportive; by being open and approachable; by leading by example; and by treating Partners with respect. These will now be discussed in turn in the next section.

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#### 5.4.1 The many facets of support

Many Partners mentioned that their LMs (section managers) were always on hand to support them on the shop floor. There was no difference in viewpoint on how Partners perceived their LMs; with this comment *'My LM is really supportive'* (Alex) summarising the views well. Many commented that when LMs saw that Partners were rushed off their feet on busy days, most helped them out with their jobs.

*They give you support if you say you can't do something. If I'm running round the store for nine customers they will help you. (Jason)*

Another Partner talked about a broader conceptualisation of support:

*If you can just have somebody there that almost empathises and doesn't even necessarily sometimes have to do anything about it but is just there and will help you and you just know that you have that moral support, it makes a big difference. (Amber)*

This gave Partners the impression that managers cared about them, as one Partner noted:

*They don't want to baby you but at the same time they want you to be cared for and nurtured. (Carmen)*

Within the larger discussion of a supportive LM, a few Partners also discussed the importance of visible managers on the shop floor. This afforded Partners a perception that there was help available if and when they needed it.

*Because you always have an LM on the shop floor, if you don't know something or are uncomfortable with something you can always ask them. (Alex)*

Within this discussion, a few Partners remarked that their section managers were approachable if Partners needed to ask any questions. Thus, this discussion sits within the broader dialogue on feeling supported by the LM.

*They [section managers] are not in ivory towers and because they are approachable, they are on the shop floor and a lot of the time they are selling as well, there is that rapport. So,*

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*they are very approachable and if you do have any issues or questions on the floor, then it is just a case of going up to them and asking them. (Maddox)*

Only one Partner provided a slightly different view, commenting that:

*Some section managers are more approachable than others or much more able to spread themselves amongst the Partners. (Maddox)*

Only two Partners commented that their LMs were not always on the shop floor. In this particular quote it alludes (*'struggling'*) to the fact that this Partner would have benefited from additional help. Thus, this is bound to affect their perception of the LM being supportive or not.

*I used to have an section manager who used to sit in the office all day on a Saturday and you'd never see him and you'd be struggling and things would happen and he would never come out. (Amber)*

Adding a slightly different angle, one Partner drew attention to how supportive his LM was when he experienced a family bereavement. Even though it was a personal matter and he was a new member, the level of support and care he received made him feel appreciated.

*My grandfather was quite unwell, he died and the level of support I got from my LMs and fellow Partners was fantastic. I'd only been with the Partnership two months. I got a condolence card. You don't find that level of care in any other establishment. It really helped me to get through. (Jason)*

Thus, perception of support from the LM emanates from both support related to the job and support of a pastoral nature symbolising that management cares for the Partners.

In the previous section under the enactment discussion, I have elaborated upon how Partners perceive that their LMs support them through practices, such as training, performance management and job autonomy. Support provided by LMs in relation to training and performance management is associated with supporting the Partner in developing knowledge, skills and abilities. Support from a job autonomy point of view entails providing support in reaching decisions and also support of the actual decisions

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made. Some evidence of this supported autonomy discussion is evident in the quotes in this section. Even though some quotes reflect support, these were not made in relation to decisions concerning customer matters and therefore, could mean other general job-related support, and hence, I have chosen to present them separately.

As a result of feeling supported in this way, Partners feel good.

*If you do have any problems you know they are there for you to talk to about anything regarding a Partner or a customer or a personal issue. You feel good, really fulfilling you know that whatever you do...you know they're there to support you. (Hailey)*

#### 5.4.2 Leading by example

In addition to being supportive, LMs were also perceived by a few Partners as leading by example. Once more this is related to them being on the shop floor and the importance of visible leadership.

*They are on the shop floor a lot, and they serve customers on the shop floor and lead by example and so we can always see how they deal with customers. (Alex)*

One Partner provided an insight on what Partners thought when LMs did not lead by example, emphasising that Partners looked at these LMs unfavourably.

*It is always better to lead by example, because like the saying Do as I say but not as I do, it's annoying because you feel they are not, so why should I? If they are doing it, then you think they are doing it so I should it as well I feels like it's more ethical and you feel good. (Rupert)*

One Partner specifically discussed how seeing LMs doing the Partners' job made her want to display similar behaviours.

*So he'll be down there, take his jacket off and clear tables if necessary. Which is fabulous because if you see your manager actually doing it, that's a massive morale booster and makes me feel good, brilliant. Makes me also want to emulate it myself. (Amber)*

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As a consequence of leading by example, Partners feel motivated (or not) to do the same and this serves as a good example of the behaviours expected in the workplace. This also results in communicating to Partners that customer service is key and subsequently encourages Partners to gain an understanding that customer service is very important.

#### 5.4.3 Nice treatment of Partners

A few Partners observed that LMs also treated Partners nicely. These Partners commented on how their LMs communicated with them nicely. It was the manner in which managers interacted with Partners that emerged as central to how employees perceived these LMs. Even though communication in general involves providing feedback to employees, the section here will only cover general communication aspects and will not focus on any performance-related feedback discussion (which has been covered in Section 5.3.2).

A few Partners discussed the manner in which their LM interacted with them. The overall impression was that managers spoke to Partners nicely and this resulted in Partners feeling good.

*The way they engage you and encourage you, the words that they use or the mannerisms, how they go about engaging you... it's asked nicely. Makes me feel good, [makes me] want to do things more. (Kim)*

This demonstrates elements of interactional fairness in how managers interact with their selling Partners. As a consequence of managers supporting Partners, leading by example and treating them nicely, Partners felt supported, motivated and good; equally, how managers behaved on the shop floor communicated the importance of customer service to these Partners.

Figure 32 presents the linkages across the various constructs within the People management-performance causal chain. As another aide-memoire, only linkages obvious from the data collected have been presented.

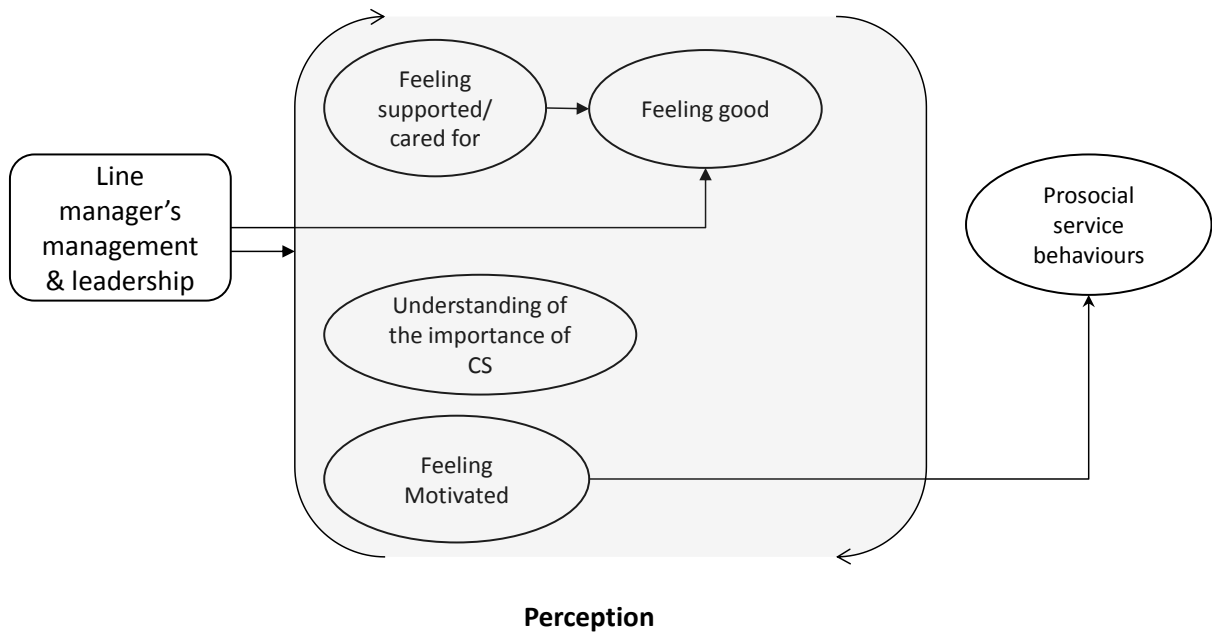


Figure 32: Inside the People-performance black box (LM's management/leadership)

As can be seen from Figure 32, perception of how the LM manages and leads the team translates into PSSBs through Partners feeling motivated and also by feeling good about themselves.

## 5.5 Employee welfare

A few Partners singled out the Registry as an important element of the Partnership. Within the JLP, the Registry is a department whose job is to ensure that the Partnership's principles and policies are applied consistently in the branches across the JLP. This Registry department is headed by the Registrar at every branch and it is his/her role to provide helpful advice to Partners about any matter within the Partnership. Specifically related to employees, this function offers helpful advice and support to Partners about any matter. This performs a similar role to the employee welfare functions within HR departments.

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A few Partners mentioned the Registry as a body that is seen as unbiased and independent; the Registry's function includes resolving issues between Partners, sorting out any personal life issues that Partners might have and essentially supporting the Partner. A few Partners who had used the services of Registry told very evocative stories reflecting their experience with Registry and were very appreciative of this service. Respondents felt that knowing that they were there, gave them a feeling of comfort. They felt that they were looked after and the Partnership cared for them.

*Because we have Registry to go to, more sympathetic ear. Registry is responsible for our well-being and welfare...makes you feel well looked after. (Jason)*

Two Partners specifically stressed how even retired Partners were looked after.

*And also with Registry they take care even of retired Partners, you are not just out you go, they still look after you. (Kim)*

In another instance, a Partner mentioned when he was supported by Registry related to a personal issue and this made him feel very loyal to the company.

*I have only ever needed that once. I didn't like to see them because of my pride. I did go to see them and when I was talking to the person, I felt quite relaxed about it in the end. They make you feel welcome and they try to do the best that they can for you. It contributes to how I am now. It has helped me in many ways. I have got green blood through and through. (George)*

The example above implies that, depending on the severity of the need and the manner in which Registry responds to that need, it seems to lead to a very strong sense of reciprocally-based loyalty to the organization. Amongst the Partners that mentioned the Registry there was no difference in opinion or their overall perception and indeed the overall assessment of Registry and the services it provided was a very positive one.

*I think that made the Partner feel very supported, that if they have nowhere else to turn to, Registry bit, they see it as support. (Laila)*

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In responding to how feeling supported by Registry affected them on the shop floor, one Partner explained it well:

*If you come into work and you know you have the support there and you know someone will listen...somebody you need someone away from the issue who will listen to you makes you more comfortable about whatever is going on in your life then you're not as stressed, you're not as anxious. The time you come down and are on the shop floor you're much calmer so whatever it is that issue is that makes you a better person on the shop floor to do your job.*  
(Abbie)

Figure 33 illustrates how perception of employee welfare affects PSSBs. It can be noted from this illustration, that Registry operates as a support mechanism for Partners and indirectly affects how they deliver customer service.

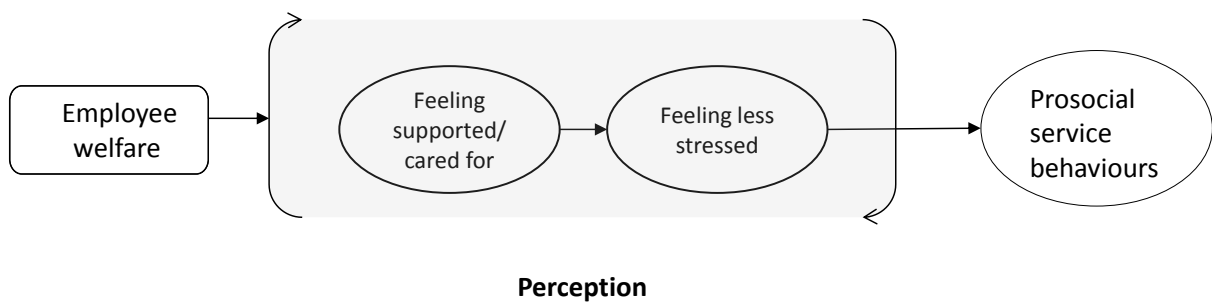


Figure 33: Inside the People-performance black box (Registry/employee welfare)

## 5.6 The Ownership context

Having elaborated on the perceptions of the people management practices that enable Partners in displaying excellent service and going the extra mile, I am now going to present a discussion on how this specific context of ownership affects these findings. In my data-collecting process, in many interviews, Partners made comments about the Partnership and their role as Partners and/or co-owners being an integral part of why they delivered exceptional service and went that extra mile. Some Partners made comments in passing about the Partnership in general, referring to it as a good place to work:

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*I get such a warm cosy feeling when I am at work and I don't mind getting up in the morning to come to work and although at the end of the day you are tired and you need to go home, but you don't mind coming back. I do love working here. (Kim)*

and how that affected them generally at work:

*I think if you did not feel like that about that company, you would not be happy to work. (Laila)*

A few Partners particularly related their overall state of happiness towards customer service, as one Partner's quote aptly puts it:

*If you're feeling happy and well in yourself and happy in your job you're going to pass that on to customers and if you're feeling gloomy...it all filters down. Everything comes back down to customer service. (Carmen)*

Most of the comments in this regard were about how the Partnership looked after its Partners, one of whom put it:

*[The Partnership] will always make sure the Partners are taken care of. (Carmen)*

As can be noted from the previous section, perceptions of specific people management practices (such as communication, employee voice and financial rewards) influenced whether these members of the Partnership in reality felt like Partners and co-owners. Furthermore, many of the Partners (15 out of 23) mentioned that the fact that they were 'Partners' affected how they delivered customer service and indeed why they went the extra mile. In addition, six Partners also referred to being co-owners and how that influenced them to go the extra mile. They felt that their role as Partners and co-owners meant that they were different from employees in other organizations.

*We are Partners rather than employees, owners of the business and that's how we are treated and looked after. (Abbie)*

Many also explained that the fact that they were 'treated as a Partner' was one of the reasons they went on to deliver exceptional service.

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*Way you're spoken to, treated as a Partner, the way you're valued at work. (Marc)*

Some Partners also mentioned that they were co-owners of the business and this affected their delivery of service.

*I have got Green Blood through and through. I'm a JL Partner and I've never worked for anyone else. I like the setup of the business and it is my business. (George)*

Thus, the Partnership context emerges as a driver for customer service behaviour. I will now move on to provide a discussion on *how* the ownership context plays a part in employees engaging in PSSBs.

### 5.6.1 The role of the Partnership

I invited Partners to elaborate, on what in their day-to-day job, made the JLP a Partnership and indeed made them feel like Partners. This allowed me to understand the factors that were integral to the Partnership in the Partners' minds and also explore how this perception affected them in service delivery. The factors that were integral to the JLP being perceived as a Partnership and making Partners feel like Partners have been outlined in Table 15 below (presented in order of priority):

*Table 15: Practices that make it a Partnership*

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<b>What makes it a Partnership?</b>
1. Employee voice
2. The friendly work environment/atmosphere
3. Bonus (Profit sharing)
4. Communication
5. Benefits
6. Registry (employee welfare)

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It can be seen that the *friendly work environment/atmosphere* surrounding the workplace emerged as a crucial ingredient in what constitutes the Partnership. Apart from the friendly atmosphere, the other factor contributing to the Partnership feeling includes people management practices that have been presented earlier (See Section 5.3) in my exploration of the perception of the practices that enable Partners to deliver excellent service. These are communication of business-related information, employee voice, and rewards and financial benefits (Bonus - profit sharing) and financial and leisure benefits) and employee welfare (Registry). Partners identified these practices as those in their day-to-day job that made them perceive the JLP as a co-ownership and influenced them to display PSSBs. As they have been discussed earlier (see Section 5.3), I will now present a discussion merely on the work environment to provide a deeper understanding of an important facet of the Partnership context. The overall perception of the Partnership in how it manages its workforce is shaped by the friendly work atmosphere and its Partnership cluster of practices. Together they influence the way in which a Partner feels about being a member of the Partnership.

#### *5.6.1.1 The work environment*

In addition to the ownership-specific people management practices, many Partners identified the friendly work atmosphere and environment of the JLP as an important element of their overall Partnership perception. Partners mentioned that the JLP was like a *family*, where people cared for and supported each other. Many remarked that ‘Partners treated each other *nicely*’ and this led to reciprocal behaviours. When probed further, they clarified that this was manifest in interactions between selling Partners across all levels. It is important to note that there was uniformity of view in the discussion of this aspect of the Partnership.

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#### 5.6.1.1.1 The meaning of family

Many Partners remarked that they felt the JLP was like a family with a friendly atmosphere. Many Partners highlighted that they received support from other Partners which could be work-related support or support of a personal nature. One Partner explicitly commented on how work-related support was manifest in practice:

*Everyone is willing to help each other out. Like in the past I have asked someone for help say for example for half an hour and they help. It is like give and take and the customer does not suffer. (Rupert)*

Whilst another mentioned general support.

*I suppose the support and the family atmosphere you have there and you can share trouble and problems with your fellow Partners and you can give support as well. (Maddox)*

The fact that Partners support each other is also evidence of how people care for each other and help out when Partners have problems. As one Partner commented:

*Partners do generally care a lot about their fellow Partners. And if they are feeling down they want to know why. (Maddox)*

Other Partners focused on the friendly atmosphere as a whole:

*Like a family, It's the friendly atmosphere. You get on with your team, they are kind of like a second family and John Lewis as well is like a second home to me. You are here so much, you get to know everyone so well. (Roger)*

Another facet of the work environment that a few Partners referred to was the social side. This was mentioned by the newer members of the Partnership.

*There is the fun element that makes it not just work, more community thing. (Amber)*

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Partners stated that this socialising element allowed them to be more understanding of other Partners:

*We know little bits about each other's families, you know, somebody's dog has been to the vets and somebody else sort of says 'how's the dog?'...it's just human chatter, so...but again, it takes the edge off everything, it's the human element still there. (Sophie)*

The above quotes suggest that Partners feel that the environment is one in which Partners feel supported and cared for by other Partners. There are glimpses within the data discussed above suggesting that it may well be the case that this perception of the atmosphere could have two aspects to it: the team's atmosphere and the firm's atmosphere. In the next section, I will go on to present a richer description of what makes up this friendly, family atmosphere to help understand its role in influencing PSSBs.

#### 5.6.1.1.1 Interactions at work

The majority of Partners mentioned that they talked to each other pleasantly and with respect and some Partners stressed that even though there were organizational levels, everyone was equal as Partners. The term '*people are nice*' was mentioned by the majority of Partners as important to what, in their minds, constituted the Partnership.

*Everyone is really nice. As soon as you join, no matter what department, everyone says hello to you, you feel very welcomed in, benefits, and perks, discounts and so on. (Bailey)*

Within the 'nice' discussion, some discussed micro-behaviours reflecting the 'nice' aspect. This again was rather insightful, and reflects that small things matter to individuals.

*The first week I joined, we have this long corridor and you are 15 ft away and in lots of other organisations, people won't hold the door open for you and smile at you but here they do, and that says a lot about the mentality of the people you work it. It is about caring about other people. (Maddox)*

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Some Partners specifically mentioned that Partners felt respected by Partners at all levels within the JLP:

*All the way through the levels; peers, fellow selling assistants, the steering group all the way through to the MD – they treat you with respect. (Marc)*

One Partner specifically reflected on the role of senior management in making her feel cared for.

*Exactly four weeks after I joined, my son fell really ill and the MD came down to my floor one morning and I had only told my section manager. He said [name] I don't want to see you in the store until your son is better. (Ruby)*

In this instance, the Partner was so appreciative of the support and help she received in her time of need, she stressed that:

*I knew then that as long as I lived, I would be pro John Lewis. (Ruby)*

From the above discussion it is evident that the work context and indeed other Partners play a significant role in how Partners make sense of the environment, be it supporting other Partners or in the way they treat Partners or whether Partners feel cared for. Data from the interviewees suggest that this caring environment is a vital ingredient of how Partners perceive the Partnership overall.

#### *5.6.1.2 Outcomes of the work environment*

Partners emphasised the work environment to be like a *family*, where Partners supported each other, Partners felt cared for and generally Partners felt that they were treated nicely and with respect. I probed the Partners on how they felt these perceptions subsequently affected their PSSB.

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The supporting role provided by Partners within this JLP family helped Partners provide better customer service.

*Having that support from the team it all goes straight back into the customers and the work that we provide. (Jason)*

Likewise, as a result of feeling respected at work, few Partners mentioned that they did not mind going the extra mile.

*In the environment that you are in you are treated with respect and sort of looked after that way and you treat customers that way too, how you want to be treated. It does not bother me to go the extra mile for JL. (Kim)*

Specifically, being treated nicely and with respect within the family discussion, made Partners feel good about themselves. When questioned further about how people's nice behaviours affected them, one Partner commented:

*It just makes you feel good about yourself. (Roger)*

When asked whether this affects customers, one of the Partners responded:

*Yes, there is a knock on effect. You are going to be nicer to people because you feel good about yourself. (Alex)*

Thus, when Partners feel they are being treated nicely and with respect, this appears to have a spillover effect on how they interact with customers. When I questioned Partners about how the work atmosphere and family feel affected them, several related that to providing good customer service through a general feeling of happiness. One respondent commented:

*I feel happy, because if you are happy and your team are happy then the customers are happy. If none of you are getting on and have arguments then the customer can sense. So you give better customer service when you are feeling good about yourself, happy and the team's happy, you know everyone is getting on and stuff. But if you are moody, then the experience you provide suffers. (Roger)*

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A few Partners specifically associated that to going the extra mile:

*I think if you did not have that family feeling, you would not be happy to work there and would not go the extra mile and would be more selfish. (Thula)*

Partners also used the term ‘happy’ widely in their discussion of the Partnership context as a whole. A few Partners stressed that when Partners were happy in themselves and happy in their jobs, they performed better with customers. As one respondent stated:

*If you're happy and content in job, tend to deliver better, perform better. (Marc)*

This highlights that there are two facets to their perception: a cognitive and an affective one. A few respondents clarified that there were two aspects to happiness: one from the person themselves and the other from the appraisal of the job, as the following quote echoes:

*If you're feeling happy and well in yourself and happy in your job you're going to pass that on to customers and if you're feeling gloomy...it all filters down. Everything comes back down to customer service. (Carmen)*

Figure 34 below displays that the Partnership environment makes Partners feel good about themselves, happy, supported, cared for and looked after. This then goes on to affect how they provide service to customers.

**Work environment/atmosphere**

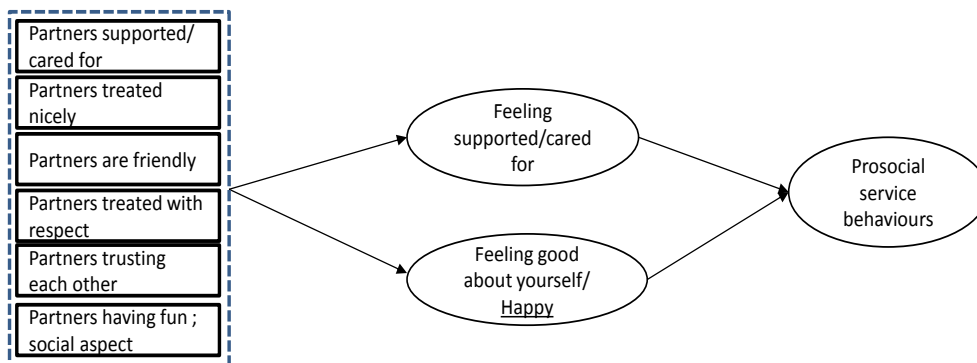


Figure 34: How the work environment affects PSSBs

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Figure 34 confirms that relationships between the Partners and interactions between workers at work are key to their positive perception of the Partnership and ensuing customer service behaviours. These interactions will also affect how people practices are implemented by LMs, and subsequently will affect the perception of implemented practices by selling Partners. It is worth bearing in mind that it could well be that linkages exist between the identified constructs; however, due to time constraints this could not be explored.

### 5.6.2 The role of the Partner

It was important to understand how members of the JLP felt as Partners within the Partnership to understand in more depth how the context affected the display of PSSBs. Specifically, the objective was to explore employees' perceptions of what it felt to be a Partner in this particular ownership context. The themes that emerged out of this discussion were that Partners felt valued as a part of the business (Partnership) and cared for as a result of their perception of being Partners within this Partnership. Another aspect that emerged from this discussion was that some Partners perceived 'Partners' and 'co-owners' as the same thing. Each will now be discussed in turn.

All the interviewees acknowledged that they felt like Partners and were forthcoming in their responses to questions about being Partners. The majority of them mentioned that they felt part of a team or the business. One Partner specifically mentioned that he did not feel *'like a cog in the wheel'*.

*Means so so much to me individually; means I am a part of the business. Not just a number.*

*Not just one of many; I'm actually viewed as a part of the business. (Jason)*

A few Partners used the term 'valued' although their meaning of being 'valued' coincided with the majority of the other Partners' feelings of being 'part of the business' as the following quote demonstrates:

*That you're valued as a person. You're not just a number. You have a role to play. (Hannah)*

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From the quotes it can be seen that Partners are saying that they do not want to be just a number or just another employee, they wish to be somebody who has an important part to play in the functioning of the business, which then makes them feel valued. Essentially, when Partners mention not being a number, they implicitly imply that they feel valued. Within this discussion, a few Partners also stressed how being a Partner meant something different to being an employee.

*Means I don't feel like a cog in a wheel, I'm part of something bigger, I have my own opinion, my own voice, I am valued, very secure in my employment, being a Partner as opposed to being an employee if you like. (Delia)*

On the other hand, two Partners suggested that the Partnership was moving towards a more employee-like way of working:

*Primarily it's meant to be that you are not merely an employee. We are treated a lot better like some of the other employees. But it is becoming more like employees. (Alex)*

When questioned further what gave him this impression, he mentioned that some decisions had been taken by senior management without considering their effect on Partners and this affected his perception.

As a result of feeling valued and part of the business, Partners mentioned that they wanted to provide a better service.

*The better you feel [as a Partner], the more valued, the better service you provide. (Marc)*

In addition to feeling valued, a few Partners also mentioned the pride they felt being a Partner.

*Taking that pride in your role, pride in your knowledge. Comes down to pride and joy and seeing joy in others. (Carmen)*

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As a consequence of this pride in their role as a Partner, they did not mind going the extra mile.

*You have great pride in your job and you do go that extra mile. I would expect it if I visited the store as a customer. I once said to a girl who served me, that maybe one day you should visit John Lewis. (Ruby)*

A few Partners also mentioned that being a Partner meant they were looked after and cared for.

*They also look after the welfare of the people. One thing that struck me was the way they [the Partnership] looked after the people, not only are they looking after you when you are in the job but also when you retire. I don't know anybody else that does that. (Ruby)*

Because Partners felt looked after, they were happy to do their best for the organization. This signals a reciprocity of behaviour here consistent with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

*The fact that we are looked after makes me strive to give the best customer service I can all the time. (Kim)*

Thus, when Partners felt looked after and cared for, they are committed to doing their best for the organization and to providing excellent service and going the extra mile if required.

6 out of the 23 Partners explicitly mentioned that being a Partner meant being a co-owner of the business. This is significant as they perceived the business as belonging to them and that they were essentially owners of the business.

*I love being a Partner, sense of belonging, this is mine; my business. (Alice)*

Within this co-ownership dialogue, many Partners emphasise their feeling of responsibility for the business:

*Being a Partner is ...feel quite an individual, co-owner, very responsible for the business. If I'm not pulling my weight in my mind and doing my job I feel as if I'm letting the Partnership*

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*down that it's my fault if there's a lower bonus, in my mind I feel I wasn't doing my job.*  
(Bailey)

It can be seen that Partners feel part of the business, feel pride, feel valued and as a result want to do everything for the business and go the extra mile. In some cases, when Partners see themselves as part-owners they feel not only not like an employee but like an owner. Overall, how this perception affects PSSBs is shown in Figure 35.

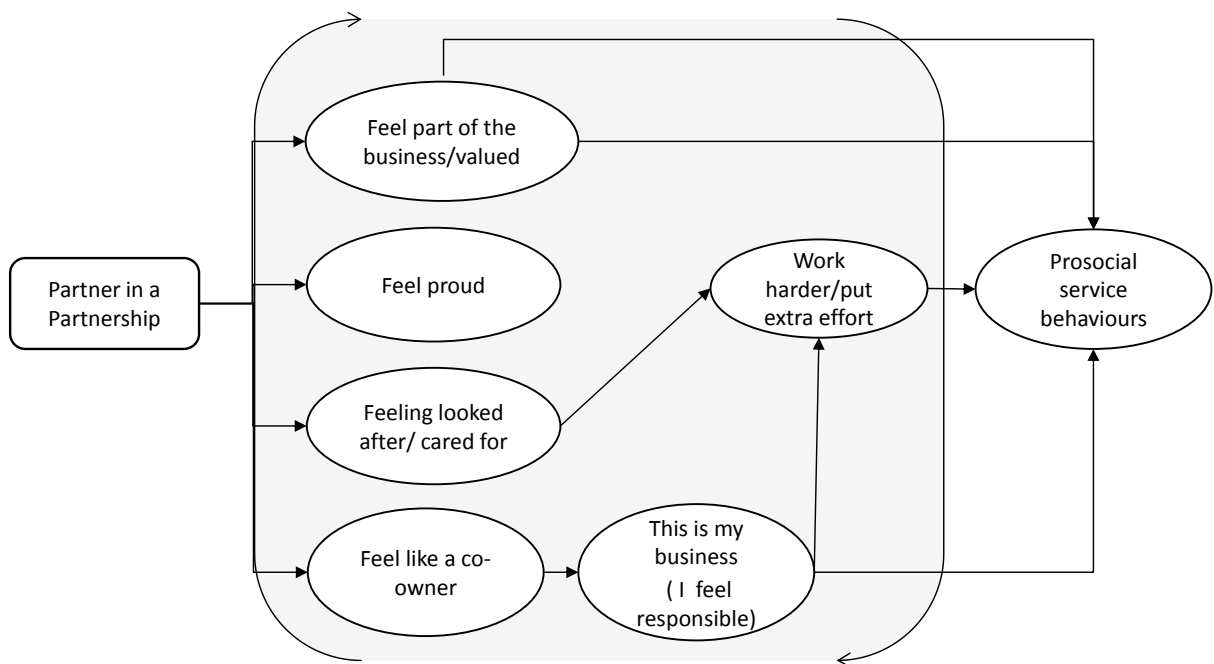


Figure 35: Outcomes of being a Partner

This distinction between Partners and co-owners is an important one. In the acknowledged linkage between being a Partner and PSSBs, Partners provided a general perception of being a Partner, which suggests that it is an overall assessment of being a Partner that affects PSSBs.

As can be seen from the last quote, not all Partners mentioned that they felt like co-owners of the business. Leading on from this, I asked the Partners whether they felt like a co-owner, considering this was an employee-owned organization. The majority of Partners perceived themselves to be co-owners of the business, even those Partners who did not identify themselves explicitly as co-owners previously in the question related to whether

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they felt like a Partner. It might well be that in relation to their role as Partners, they did see themselves as co-owners but had not made that explicit. This includes the six Partners who identified themselves as co-owners. Thus, 11 Partners described themselves as Partners and not co-owners. This implies that not all Partners are co-owners but all co-owners are Partners.

6 Partners (out of 23) do not consider themselves as co-owners; within this group of Partners two Partners did not feel like a co-owner at all and the rest felt that only sometimes they felt like co-owners. The key reason cited by these Partners was the reduction in decision-making related to Partnership decisions (employee voice).

*No. I think all our decisions; we used to be able to vote for things but that's all been taken away from us...a couple of years ago now, three years ago. (Mia)*

Another Partner who did not perceive herself to be a co-owner, referred to herself as an employee:

*We are Partners, classed as a Partner but I think I'm more of an employee. (Mia)*

This reference to employees as the other type of worker is important to note. Partners employ the term 'employee' negatively, as opposed to being a Partner and a co-owner. This discussion suggests that for Partners to be perceived as co-owners, Partners must feel that they are being heard and their views are being listened to in reaching decisions. Even though co-owners do not list employee voice as important in their perception of ownership, the absence of employee voice signals feelings of non-ownership. When Partners feel listened to and also feel like co-owners they do their best for the business but when the same Partners feel left out in the decision-making process, this makes them unhappy and might impact on their customer service behaviour.

When I probed the Partners who did not feel like co-owners, they suggested that not feeling like a co-owner did not affect how they performed in their role as selling Partners.

*I would like to think that if I felt disappointed that isn't reflected on the shop floor because we are performing, we are there to do a job. (Bella)*

### 5.6.3 The Partnership influence on PSSBs

It emerges that the Partnership appears to influence PSSB in several ways. One influence is the work environment. This plays a substantial role in making Partners feel valued, cared for, supported and happy. The work environment is only one facet of the Partnership; complementing it are the set of practices that Partners in their mind conceptualise as those practices that specifically give them the impression of the JLP being an ownership. Together, therefore, they form a social entity whose perception affects how individual Partners feel about the Partnership. As Partners within this specific Partnership context, Partners feel valued as part of the business, cared for, and are proud in this role and some of them also feel that the business is theirs. As co-owners they feel more responsible for the business and proud. Feeling both like a Partner and co-owner results in the members doing their best for the business and going the extra mile. This has been captured in Figure 36. The reason why there is a slight overlap between the ovals (emanating from perceptions of being a Partner and co-owner) is because some Partners feel like co-owners.

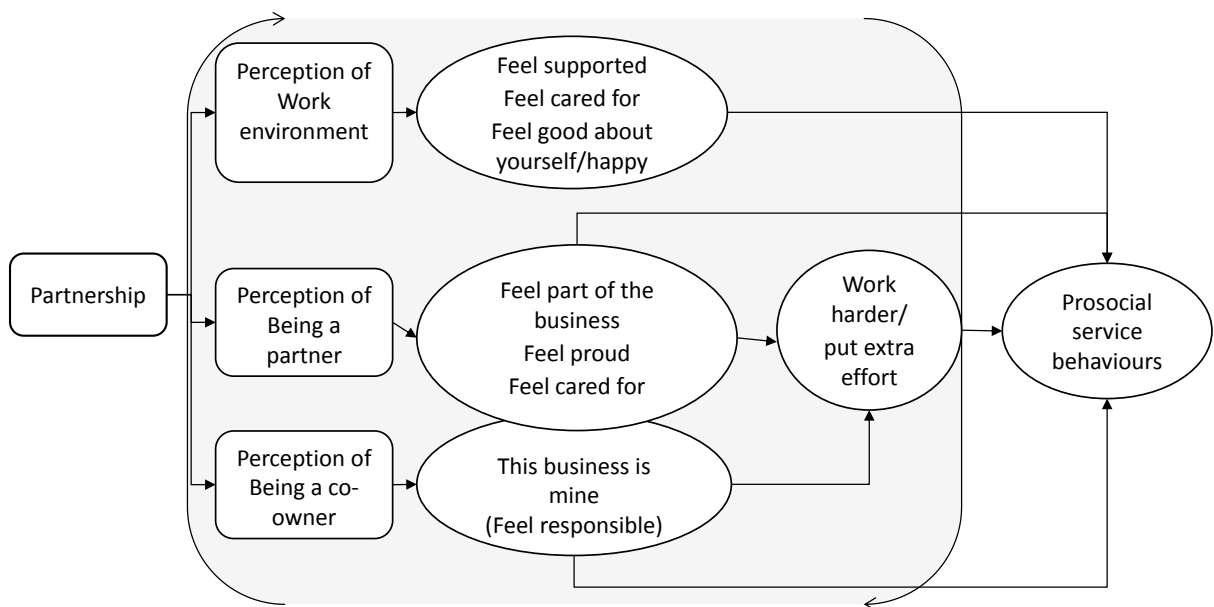


Figure 36: Partnership context and PSSBs

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A question that comes to mind is if Partners highlighted that they felt good and happy as a consequence of their work environment, why then did ‘feeling good and happy’ not emerge as one of the perceptions of being a Partner? The most likely explanation could be that feeling valued as part of the business, cared for, proud etc. made them feel good and happy but I did not probe that in enough depth. It could also be that the affective aspects of feeling good and happy had been discussed by the Partners before and therefore they did not discuss those aspects again. From the findings of the perceptions of people management practices, it can be seen that feeling valued, feeling part of the business etc. made Partners feel good and happy and thus my justification seems to fit those existing findings. It is also interesting to note that even though Partners felt proud as Partners, this finding was not evident from any of the previous data. It is highly likely that factors affecting how Partners and co-owners feel may be comprised of organizational aspects in addition to the ownership-people management practices that were identified. Other organizational context-related aspects that Partners mentioned as influencing why they engage in PSSBs, include organizational culture focused on service and external reputation for customer service. With reference to service culture, from my interviews I found terms such as *‘the JL way’* and *‘this is part of the culture here’*, emerging in many of the interviews in relation to the provision of customer service. The main theme here was the culture of service excellence. Most of this discussion ensued when Partners were answering questions on how and why they provided excellent service and went the extra mile. Many Partners commented that they engaged in PSSBs for the reason that this was what the culture in the JLP encouraged them to do. In many instances Partners mentioned that they engaged in PSSBs as this was *‘how it was done here’* and also cited that they learnt the importance of service not only through formal practices but also from other Partners (this has been discussed in Sections 5.3.1 (training), 5.3.2 (performance management), 5.3.3 (job autonomy) and 5.3.4 (communication)). Partners conveyed the notion that any Partner at any level was expected to deliver the JLP service to a customer who had walked through the doors. In addition to organizational culture, another aspect on which some Partners placed emphasis was the reputation that the JLP has in the business world as the best in customer service and commented that they wanted to meet the reputation. They mentioned that this made them want to do whatever was needed to be done for the good reputation to continue.

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In addition to service culture and external reputation, another aspect that emerged out of the interview findings was that individual characteristics of the Partners play a part in why they engage in such behaviours. Individual personality traits or characteristics were identified by all participants as the most important reason why they went the extra mile. The majority of selling Partners mentioned that the main reason why they engaged in going the extra mile was because they enjoyed making the customer happy, because they wanted to and they got an immense level of satisfaction from it. The majority also talked about the ethos of John Lewis to do the utmost to make the customer happy and to ‘go the extra mile’ for the customer. A few Partners remarked that sometimes the type of customers influenced whether they engaged in extra-role behaviour or not. They stated that specifically when they were interacting with nice customers, they did whatever it took to make them happy! A few also stated that the external brand reputation of the JLP meant that customers came into John Lewis expecting nothing but the best customer service and this also influenced how they went the extra mile to keep this reputation intact. This suggests that even though recruitment has not emerged as a practice from the interviews, it serves as an important filter in selecting only those applicants who have a passion for service.

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## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter sets out the findings from 23 interviews with frontline selling Partners from an ownership firm examining how the perception of people management practices affects these Partners' PSSBs. The chapter commences by providing an overview of what PSSB entails in this context. Having done this, it proceeds to present the findings of the actual people management practices identified by the Partners and then moves on to examine the mechanism by which perception of practices actually translates into customer service behaviour.

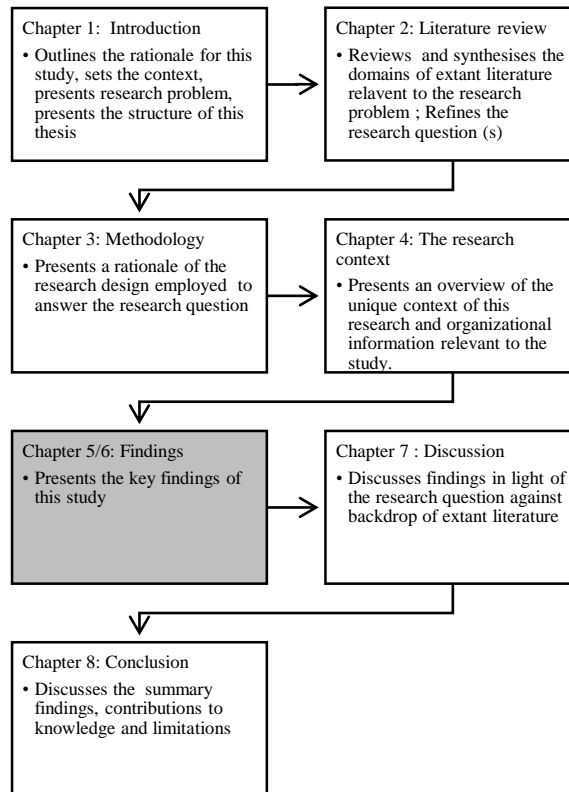
The ownership context is also investigated to explore its role in how Partners perceive practices and engage in PSSBs. It was found that in addition to practices identified as people management practices, the ownership context also contributed in two main ways to the Partners' perception – first, Partners assessed the Partnership as a whole and second, Partners also assessed Partnership HR practices on their own and both these routes were different.

Chapter 5 presents the findings and analyses from the interviews gathered from eight section managers. The objective of gathering data from managers was to explore what practices they considered influenced frontline Partners to deliver excellent service. This was done to add reliability to the data collected from the Partner interviews and also sought to serve a further role to establish the set of implemented people practices and compare it with the list of experienced people practices (obtained from the selling Partners).

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## 6 Findings: People Management practices that enable the delivery of PSSBs – the *section managers*’ perspective

Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of section managers (FLMs) from customer-facing departments to understand the LMs’ account of what they felt were the people management practices that enabled the selling Partners to display PSSB. The intention of this exercise was to uncover the practices that managers thought were crucial to Partners engaging in PSSB and the main aim was to add reliability to the information about people



management practices already gathered from the selling Partner interviews. With the number of selling Partner interviews not being a large sample due to organizational constraints, it was felt that adding a secondary source of data, i.e. the section managers, would allow for triangulation. This will then allow for crosschecking information about the people management practices to yield more precise findings in response to the main research question. This is important in addressing my research question in that it adds credence to the inventory of people management practices and their perceptions overall. Section 6.1 presents the discussion surrounding what customer service means, this is then followed by Section 6.2 which discusses the perceptions of the people management practice from the line managers’ perspective, Section 6.3 then presents the Partnership context and relates that to PSSBs. Section 6.4 compares the findings from the selling Partners and the section managers and finally, Section 6.5 provides a conclusion for this chapter.

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## 6.1 Expectations of customer service

In terms of uncovering expectations of customer service, managers' accounts were similar to the Partners' accounts. All the managers suggested that the level of customer service that was expected to be provided was such that the JLP created returning customers.

*Giving an excellent experience to customers so that they visit us again, shop online and go to our other stores, to become JL customers for life. (Viola)*

One manager spoke about a broader role where he stated the responsibilities of being an selling Partner:

*Ultimately it's about delivering great customer service but it's more rounded than that. As co-owners of the business we expect people to take a wider interest in how the business works and to contribute in any way they can. So ultimately while it's about delivery of great service, of course there's other things like sales, about taking an interest in how the business is run and so on. (Lionel)*

The managers' reports of expectations of customer service provided by Partners did not highlight any talk pertaining to selling Partners 'going the extra mile'. However, both views quintessentially highlighted the importance of the returning customer. It is reasonable to conclude that this is implicit in the managers' understanding of excellent customer service whereby selling Partners would 'go the extra mile' to make the customer happy so that they return to the store. Both the selling Partners and the section managers agreed that providing excellent service equated to returning customers.

## 6.2 Perceptions of people management practices and PSSBs – the section managers' perspective

To investigate PSSBs, questions were asked in the eight interviews on in-role and extra-role behaviours. Even though specifically 'going the extra mile' was not included in the conversations surrounding the meaning of excellent customer service, the people

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management factors that were discussed were the same set of practices. This signifies that managers, too, conceptualise *'going the extra mile'* within the provision of excellent service. Hence, I will discuss the people management practices only in relation to the overall display of excellent customer service behaviours (including *'going the extra mile'*).

The responses revealed as shown in Figure 37 that in addition to actual practices, the Partnership context and particularly the organizational culture that is focused on service and individual characteristics emerged instrumental in influencing Partners to deliver excellent customer service. This will be discussed later in greater depth in this chapter. This suggests that in tandem with the findings from the Partners, practices by themselves are not the only motive for employees engaging in PSSBs.

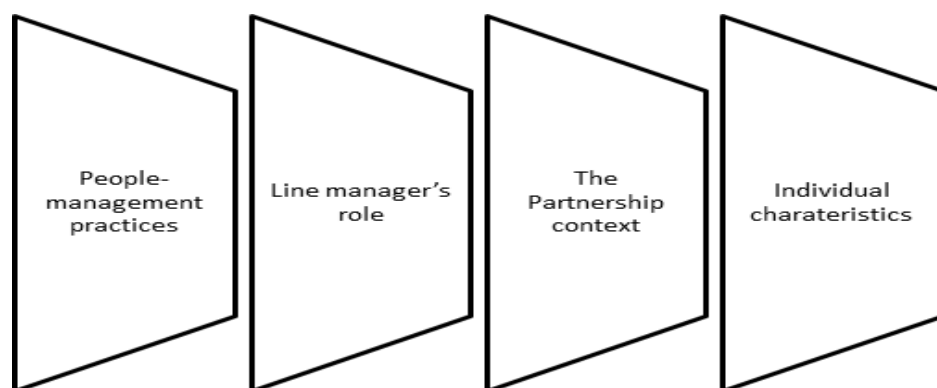


Figure 37: Factors affecting PSSBs

From the section manager interviews, within people management practices, (similar to selling Partners' accounts), there were traditional HR practices that are part and parcel of any HR system. In addition, the LM's role appeared pivotal to the implementation of HR practices and also in how managers managed and led their team. A pictorial depiction of these people management practices as discussed by the section managers is shown in Figure 38. I will start by expanding on the people management practices that managers acknowledged as fundamental to Partners engaging in PSSBs.

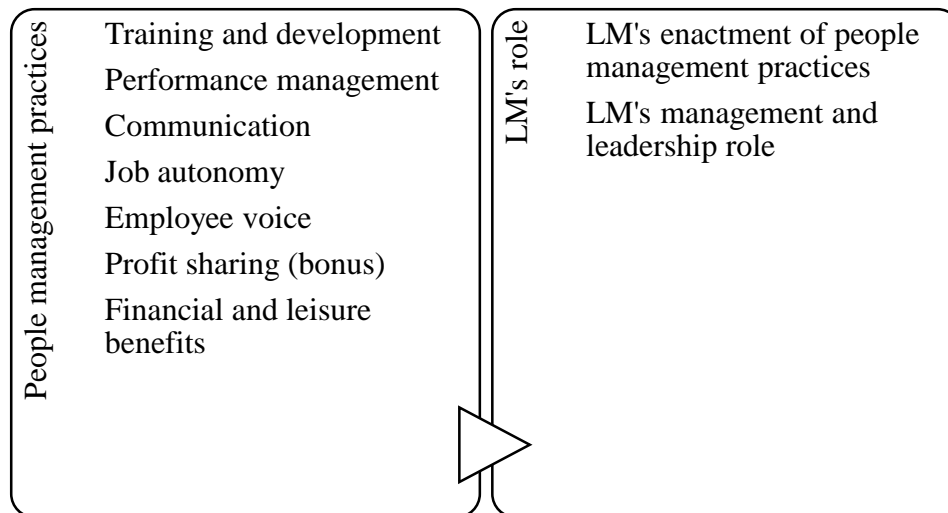


Figure 38: People management practices associated with Partners engaging in PSSBs

The order in which I have presented the findings related to the people management practices affecting PSSB is based first on the number of managers commenting on them and then by the number of references made to that factor overall.

It is important to point out that my aim from these interviews was to explore the people management practices that section managers thought to be instrumental in selling Partners going the extra mile. In attempting this, I sought to add credibility to the people management practices from the selling Partner perspective and in doing so would be able to impart higher reliability for the Partner interviews. My experience of this was that managers, in answering questions on how their selling Partners were managed in discussion pertaining to PSSBs, were able to identify the practices but were unable to separate their own experience of these practices from the manner of their implementation all of the time. Another point that became apparent as the interviews went along was that the fact that all the employees are Partners and equal to some extent which affected some of the discussion. For instance, when section managers started talking about practices that were more Partnership-driven and where they perceived them to be applicable to all Partners, irrespective of their position/level in the Partnership, the managers in all cases deliberated on how they experienced these practices and felt as a consequence. Having noted this, since the aim of these interviews was also to add reliability to the practices identified by the Partners, this was not perceived to affect this aspect of the study.

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On the whole, the managers' findings of the practices that influence PSSBs replicate the content of the people management practices that influence PSSBs from the perspective of selling Partners. It must be acknowledged that the main aim of these interviews was not to explore the mechanisms via which the ascertained practices translated into behaviour, but only to explore what the section managers thought the people management practices were that influenced selling Partners to display PSSBs. I will commence with training and development followed by performance management which were both identified by managers as important in Partners providing excellent service and going the extra mile. Beyond these two, other practices and, where relevant, enactment issues will be presented if data collected warrant such discussions. Within the eight interviews with managers, there was a large degree of uniformity in the data gathered.

#### 6.2.1 Training and development

With regard to training and development, all of the LMs reported that for selling Partners, access to training programmes, such as the Horizon suite and the training courses, enabled them to gain knowledge and confidence in dealing with customers.

*We have Partners going away to training courses for Dyson, Nespresso and the knowledge about these products is so superior. They get more confident which means they are more confident in selling these products to the customers and helping the customer make the right choice. Goes back to confidence, gives them job satisfaction, makes them feel good about their job. (Carys)*

Some managers noted how there was no limit to the amount of training to which Partners had access.

*There is no limit to the number of training programmes Partners can sign up to. (Polly)*

Some managers highlighted the importance of the induction and sponsor programmes to help new Partners feel more comfortable within their new environment and also to teach the Partners the JLP way of dealing with customers.

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*There is induction, part of the induction training is learning about JL and the learning of systems..... the most important bit is that they are then linked with a sponsor on the shop floor so they get the right support and help. LMs have to mirror Partners with sponsors and they are there to help and support them and when they see their sponsor give great customer service they can aspire to be like that. (Rita)*

Furthermore during this discussion, managers reiterated the importance of using experienced Partners in training and developing new Partners within the Partnership.

*Using experienced Partners: this is good for both Partners, the new one learning and the experienced Partners developing their own coaching and mentoring styles. (Rita)*

All the managers agreed that being trained allowed the Partners to develop confidence in dealing with customers.

*These training programmes can be a good source [of information], gives them confidence, tips and techniques. (Aaron)*

Some managers also acknowledged that Partners felt invested in as a result of being sent for training. The Partners felt valued and gave their best in return.

*People who have worked in other places, you get a bit of H&S training, and there you go and you are on your own. They see the time you invest in them and you give them. They give their best and give their all and ensure they perform very well. They feel valued. (Aaron)*

Specifically on enquiring how Partners felt as a consequence of having the opportunity to be trained, one manager noted:

*Partners I think really appreciate it [having access to training programmes]. It makes them feel that they work in a business that really cares for them and it's not just all about putting money in the till. (Lionel)*

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### 6.2.3 Managing performance

In terms of managing performance, ABC forms, the appraisal, PDP and coaching (informal conversations regarding performance) were discussed by the majority of the LMs as being what they thought Partners perceived as tools to help them deliver PSSBs. For both the ABC forms and the appraisal, the most important element highlighted by all the managers who discussed them was how the process was managed and feedback provided to the individuals. They all highlighted that the objectives of these conversations was for the selling Partner to feel motivated rather than deflated, so how the process was conducted needed to be positive even though the actual discussion of performance may be linked to below-expected performance. This aspect had a much stronger focus in LMs' accounts of how selling Partners experienced the overall performance management experience. A few managers particularly stressed the issue that sometimes they were required to deal with below-par performing Partners and it was important that they provided feedback in a positive way.

*It would be really poor to conduct an appraisal and have a Partner walking away feeling deflated; I mean that would defeat the object. It should always be about getting better, celebrating your achievements and yes identifying where your challenges are but that should still be approached in a positive way. The appraisal should leave you feeling motivated. It should leave you self-aware so that you can get better and ultimately that will be in large part about delivering excellent customer service. (Lionel)*

Managers reported that selling Partners felt appreciated as a result of the appraisal process.

*It makes them feel appreciated, makes them feel that they are doing a good job, they can stand out as a champion of service, a real positive. When [they feel] appreciated they give more back. (Rita)*

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In addition to the formal systems of assessing performance, many section managers also discussed how they managed the selling Partner's service performance through informal one-to-one discussions or coaching and how they gave feedback to Partners.

*Regular conversations with tasks and performance during the day even, you know with all the time. It's an on-going practice. (Gabriel)*

Coaching, as a term, was used only by the section managers and not used at all by the Partners, even though Partners mentioned the informal discussions on a regular basis with the LMs as a key influencer on their delivery of excellent customer service. One manager commented that when managers provide positive feedback Partners feel recognised and valued.

*If it's a positive discussion, then it would make them feel great, recognised and valued. Yes you come to work to earn money, but it is a bonus if you get valued and recognised. (Carys)*

In the case of negative feedback, a few managers stressed the importance of using it as a learning opportunity.

*If you have had negative feedback you take it back to the Partner as a learning/development opportunity and talk them through as to what happened, how they could perhaps have handled the situation differently, do they need to know more about products, understand company policies. (Rita)*

One manager also raised the view that not all Partners were interested in managing their performance and ensuring a good appraisal.

*If a Partner doesn't want to prepare or speak. Opportunity for both to speak and that's good but some people are good at putting their case forward. Some people just aren't interested. (Sebastian)*

Another finding with regard to managing performance was that all managers felt that the culture of John Lewis played a large part in how performance was managed overall. Things such as "the no blame culture, no individual targets but team and branch targets", was a big motivation for the Partners not to be stressed and thus be more relaxed at work.

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This they felt then helped them be happy towards customers and engage in customer oriented behaviours.

#### 6.2.4 Job autonomy

Many of the section managers acknowledged their critical role in allowing Partners to take decisions to provide excellent service. Amongst them empowerment. i.e. allowing the Partners to take decisions, was the most cited. The majority of section managers stressed that Partners could make decisions in their job and a few particularly mentioned decisions relating to customer service.

*We want Partners to be empowered, we want them to be able to get it right first time for the customer, first point resolution. You put that message out there and yes managers do have a role in ensuring that they allow Partners that space. (Lionel)*

The majority of the section managers also commented that selling Partners felt trusted by the section managers. A few of the section managers included the theme that when LMs were perceived as being supportive of the actual decision that was taken (even if it was a wrong decision) and provided feedback in a positive manner, this made the Partners feel trusted.

*If you empower someone and trust them, you get an awful lot back from them. If section managers allow you to take risks, Partner feels trusted. They should feel that “Even if I take a wrong decision, I won’t be told off but we will discuss my learning, next time how would I do it” and this can only make you a high performing team. (Pam)*

Some managers mentioned how being trusted led to a satisfying employment, which ultimately led to better interaction with customers.

*It makes you feel trusted by your employer, it makes your job feel worthwhile and satisfying because you know you’re being trusted and actually you’re being allowed to deliver something more without shackles on and it makes your relationship with the customer feel better. (Sebastian)*

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Particularly in response to customer service, many of the LMs felt that they played a vital role in Partners going the extra mile to delight customers. Many felt that they provided the tools for the Partners to be able to take decisions to put things right. This indicated to the Partners that they were empowered to do their job.

*Because they have got the tools to go the extra mile. Any Partner can make that decision to give a customer 50 quid off. Being able to do that makes Partners feel empowered and good.  
(Gabriel)*

Within the discussion on empowering tools, the goodwill system was mentioned by several managers as allowing the Partner to have the power to deal with a customer issues. They felt that Partners had product knowledge through the various training programmes and equipped with that confidence and then being allowed to take decisions, they could go the extra mile to make the customer happy.

*Which is to give the best possible service, sometimes that means them using our goodwill which means what the customer is asking for is not, it is not our fault but if we deal with that with goodwill then that customer will go back with a good feeling and will tell 10 people about it and they will continue to shop with us. (Viola)*

A few managers specifically referred to how training programmes set the tone for the implementation of empowerment practices.

*We have rules and in JL you are encouraged not to break the rules but to think outside the box, to bend the rules. It's not a bad thing if you're doing it for the customer. Certainly JL goes a long way in its refund policy to trust the customer because a lot of people don't play it right. JL trains its staff to be positive thinking rather than negative. They look at it in the long term. (Sebastian)*

This reflects that in addition to empowering policies set at an organizational level that enable the provision of excellent customer service, other people management practices also aid in creating the mind-set to make the process of empowerment succeed. This, in essence, suggests that practices do not tend to act alone but synchronously with other practices.

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### 6.2.5 Communication

Many section managers also discussed the role of the communication half-hours in providing business-related information to the selling Partners as an important tool in helping Partners deliver excellent service. They felt that when Partners were equipped with business information and targets, they felt more part of the business and were more aware of their own contribution to making the business work. When one manager was specifically asked what happens as a result of these communication half-hours, he responded:

*He feels informed [as a result of the communications half-hour]; he knows what's going on - again, it's confidence; they feel valued again. It all comes back to ... I will say it makes you part of the team, because everyone is informed about the same bit of information. You're not singling anyone out. It makes you build the team really and you work better together. (Gabriel)*

Within this, a few managers also stressed that the Partner magazines such as the Chronicle and the Gazette were important sources for providing Partners with business-related information.

*Locally speaking we have our journalistic publications so we have the Chronicle and Gazette and they are for branch and division level and they give Partners knowledge of what is happening in the business that will ultimately form part of the service that they offer but also as well in terms of knowledge. (Lionel)*

Some managers also discussed that, for Partners, how the section managers conveyed the information also played a role in motivating them.

*In that half an hour, if you use it in the right way, right at the start of the day just before the doors open, it's a great time to make Partners feel motivated at the start of the day. (Rita)*

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### 6.2.6 Employee voice

Some section managers also identified that employee voice served as an important tool for service excellence. Similarly to Partners' responses, managers presented it as a discussion on *democracy*. Democracy entails two elements: airing views and participating in decision-making. Both of these will now be discussed in turn. Managers felt that Partners were allowed to voice opinions/concerns via several channels such as communication half-hours and magazines.

*You get information, you can air your views on how you feel, you get heard and listened to. You feel that it's worth going the extra mile and customers appreciate you. (Rita)*

The role of the organizational magazines was discussed by a section of the managers who discussed employee voice.

*You are listened to, not all Partners get it, and some Partners don't all read the Gazettes and Chronicles. We can influence but can't decide. I feel that I am listened to, sometimes they might listen to and do nothing. (Carys)*

Within this discussion, as can be noted from the quote above, some managers slipped into providing information on their feelings of being a Partner. This might be because as management Partners they found it difficult to separate their own perceptions from non-management Partners' perceptions. Even though they are section managers they are also Partners and hence, it might be difficult for them to distinguish between the two roles easily. It can also be noted that managers felt that not all non-management selling Partners engage with the democracy process by not reading the magazines and were clear in their understanding of how democracy entailed having a say but not complete ability to influence decisions.

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Some LMs also identified the Partner Opinion Survey as an important tool to share employee voice. This was not mentioned by any of the selling Partners in any form in discussions relating to employee voice.

*You also have the Partner Opinion Survey, a very useful tool. Good and bad feedback will be looked at [at] departmental level and then discuss them with your department. (Polly)*

Even though everyone had the same options, section managers reported that not all Partners wished to have the voice. This view was shared by a few of the managers.

*Not everyone wants to be involved in democracy but knowing you can is a big comfort to many people. (Viola)*

A few also mentioned that even though Partners had a say, sometimes the business had to take a commercial decision based on its principles: Partner, customer, and profit. Specifically in relation to voicing opinions in the decision-making process, one manager noted:

*I think again you will feel like you have been listened to. You can't always change it, but again it's recognising it and explaining why that or looking at a different way of doing it. So again that's a Partnership decision but if they listen to the views of the Partner and the staff as well. You know, you have to juggle it all the time but you have to look at all three aspects Partner, customer and profit. (Gabriel)*

The environment of the JLP, where Partners could challenge management and say what they thought might help to help Partners feel more included and involved in the business as a whole.

#### 6.2.7 Non-financial recognition

Many of the section managers also discussed the importance of praise and recognition for selling Partners. They said that Partners liked to be appreciated by simple things like

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‘Good morning’, a quick ‘Well done!’ and a ‘Thank you’ at the end of a day. One manager described the many facets of recognition:

*So from a really casual or informal way, it's the everyday thing of saying 'Oh that was really good' or 'you did a great job there' or 'oh somebody just come back to me and praised you for being really helpful, so well done'. So there's that side of it. So moving up a level you can sort of reward Partners with small gifts or whatever. So we do have a little cupboard upstairs where managers are allowed to take small gifts from and record it. (Lionel)*

The above quote implies two details: one that it touches, albeit briefly, on the role of other Partners also in the recognition process; and two that occasionally there are tangible rewards that go with being recognised; however, the financial value is small enough to warrant discussion within non-financial recognition.

A few of the section managers conveyed that Partners felt happy when their managers celebrated their achievements amongst colleagues. One manager noted that when Partners were recognised for their efforts, then they felt happy.

*Recognition is a big part. Makes Partners feel happy, then they come back do an equally good job or even better. If they go home unhappy then they might not be able to do a good job. (Aaron)*

On probing managers on how they thought Partners felt on being recognised, a few managers commented that Partners felt valued, with one Partner specifically responding with:

*Even if it is just a box of sweeties or whatever, it's just about recognising that Partner. Makes them feel valued. (Viola)*

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In some instances, even though managers highlighted the importance of recognising the Partner's efforts and achievements within their team, they went on to comment on how they themselves felt as Partners when their managers appreciated their efforts. Thus, it seems that when it comes to discussing how Partners experience enactment, managers were not always able to delineate their own feelings from those of Partners.

*I will get comments back saying I provided excellent service – recognition which makes you want to do it the next time. (Sebastian)*

#### 6.2.8 Financial Rewards and benefits

Another aspect that was discussed by the managers included financial rewards and within that the contribution of profit sharing (bonus) and leisure benefits.

Within the discussion on rewards, many of the section managers agreed that the profit sharing (bonus) played some role in selling Partners exhibiting PSSBs. Managers agreed that Partners understood the route from providing excellent customer service to their individual bonus in March.

*Partners always want to get customers coming back to make bonus better and bigger. In these difficult times when everybody is selling quality products one of the distinguishing things we do is service. (Sebastian)*

On probing how specifically bonus played a part, one Partner commented:

*It's about them feeling that if I do this [customer service] well, I know I'll get recognised for it and ultimately tying it back to the success of the business and being able to say at the end of it, I know why I'm doing this, it's because if we deliver a successful business, it will last, I will get my bonus. (Lionel)*

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In addition to the bonus, a few managers discussed the role of benefits as important tools in Partners displaying PSSBs. They felt that Partners appreciated these perks and understood the association between higher sales and better benefits for everyone.

*For all the things that are offered, the benefits, the bouncy castles, all the subsidies, sailing clubs, the bonus, Partners can receive, the discount, Waitrose. I think it affects how you treat the customer because you want to make that sale and everyone is going to benefit from it and the more we sell the more we are going to benefit from it. (Polly)*

### 6.2.9 LM's management and leadership style

In addition to the section managers' accounts of what they thought helped selling Partners display PSSBs, another aspect that was discussed by them was being fair with their Partners. Many section managers felt that they were fair in dealings with their Partners.

*I personally like to think that I am very fair with the Partners, very supportive to them, I make sure I know a bit about all of them personally, what makes them tick, issues that they may have that I need to store in the back of my mind. (Carys)*

One Partner noted that being fair with Partners meant letting them take the credit for something they have done:

*My thing is I don't like taking the credit for what Partners have done and so when upper management come down I let them have the credit, I recognise and I am not taking the credit for what they have done. It makes them feel so good about themselves. It makes them feel I am a nice manager and I am very fair. (Polly)*

## 6.3 The Partnership and PSSBs – the section managers' view

Taking into account the specific context of the ownership setting, I also investigated how the Partnership context affected the display of PSSBs. The majority of section managers

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(6 out of 8) revealed that the fact that they were co-owners of the business would affect them in how they interacted with customers. Only two managers discussed that they were Partners and co-owners. This is in contrast to the data gathered from the selling Partners wherein many of the Partners explicitly commented on the fact that they were Partners and being treated as such influenced their engagement with PSSBs and a lower proportion of the Partners mentioned that they felt like co-owners. This is interesting in that it highlights that more section managers consider themselves as co-owners of the business. In this discussion, section managers did not provide any data on whether they perceived their Partners to be co-owners and due to a lack of interviewing time, this facet was not pursued in more depth by me. Several aspects were mentioned within the co-ownership umbrella: bonus, communication, employee voice and benefits. The discussion surrounding these practices was consistent with findings that emanated from the practices discussion and hence will not be presented again here.

The majority of section managers linked the co-ownership discussion to bonus. Even though the bonus did not top the list of practices that influence Partners to engage in PSSBs, it categorically emerged as the most important piece of co-ownership.

*Because we are all co-owners and get a share of the bonus of the profits, this can be the realisation that if I don't give good service then maybe that customer can shop elsewhere.*  
(Aaron)

Following the discussion surrounding bonus, employee voice was the next most listed item within the ownership context.

*The fact that we are co-owners in this business and we do have a say, not necessarily a big one but we do have a say in how the business is run, the democracy of the business is amazing and you just don't get that in other companies.* (Rita)

A few managers also highlighted the role of organizational communication in making them feel like co-owners.

*As a co-owner you get a lot of information that you can't do anything with that is simply information, but again the Partners feel that they are part of something bigger as they are getting this information.* (Violet)

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A few managers also commented on the role the benefits played in how Partners perceived the Partnership.

*The benefits package, the best retailer to work for, having that voice, it's just totally different, knowing you can shape things. (Aaron)*

Within this co-owner discussion, few managers noted that even though all Partners had the chance to be involved, not all Partners wished to be involved in how the Partnership was run. This suggests that voice is a crucial mechanism via which Partners can choose to demonstrate co-ownership.

*Not everyone wants to be involved in democracy but knowing you can is a big comfort to many people. It makes you part of something bigger. It makes you want to put something back into the company, there is a proportion of Partners that come in and do the job and nothing more but most people in some way do something extra. (Lionel)*

This suggests that the concept of ownership plays a role in influencing Partners in going the extra mile over and above the people management practices that have already been discussed in section 6.2.

On probing whether the Partnership/co-ownership context affected how Partners interact with customers, one manager replied:

*Yeah, because ultimately you're always really wanting to give good service because of wanting the business to be successful and how much you want it to be successful is fed in to by feeling like a co-owner. (Lionel)*

Specifically, another Partner commented that the fact it was a Partnership affected how she delivered better service:

*Makes me work better, makes me want to come in and actually deliver for this Partnership because I think what we give will pay back to us, that's the nice thing, but we've got to be the ones giving that time, giving what they're asking us for, then we get it back. (Viola)*

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In addition to the people management practices discussed above, a few managers also mentioned the atmosphere of the Partnership and how Partners were treated as playing a role in their perception of the Partnership.

#### *6.3.1.1 The work environment*

Some managers commented on the role of the social environment as being what made the Partnership environment in this specific store important in the discussion pertaining to PSSBs.

*The way we are treated, valued, the people I work with, this is key (Carys)*

These managers likened this to a family, and how Partners felt valued within this:

*Well on a day to day, well I suppose all the time the way you are generally treated nicely. I suppose at the end of the day give you that feeling that you are valued. It is like a little family really. (Gabriel)*

On how this closeness affected Partners in delivering service, one manager noted:

*There's just this closeness. I don't think there is anything else like it. I think it affects how you treat the customer because you want to make that sale and everyone is going to benefit from it and the more we sell the more we are going to benefit from it. (Rita)*

From the above discussion we can infer that the Partnership context plays a part in section managers engaging in PSSBs. This mirrors the knowledge gathered from the selling Partners' interviews as well.

## 6.4 Comparing Partner and manager accounts of people management practices

Largely, the accounts offered of the people management practices by both the selling Partners and the section managers show a good level of similarity. The similarities are mostly in the inventory of practices identified and the extent to which they feature in the interviewees' responses. What we can infer is that the list of actual practices recognised by the managers and Partners is almost identical, except for there being no mention of Registry (employee welfare) by the managers. Where differences are evident, they are in the particulars of enactment and implementation by LMs and other Partners. Figure 39 below presents a comparison of the Partner and section managers' accounts of the people management practices in influencing PSSBs.

Identified practices and agents	Discussed by Partner	Discussed by section manager
<b>Training and development</b>	✓	✓
▪ LM	✓	⊗
▪ Other Partners	✓	✓
<b>Performance management</b>	✓	✓
▪ LM	✓	✓
<b>Job autonomy</b>	✓	✓
▪ LM	✓	✓
<b>Communication</b>	✓	✓
▪ LM	✓	✓
<b>Employee voice</b>	✓	✓

Identified practices and agents	Discussed by Partner	Discussed by section manager
▪ LM	✓	⊗
<b>Non-financial recognition</b>	✓	✓
▪ LM	✓	✓
▪ Other Partners	✓	⊗
<b>Financial rewards and benefits</b>	✓	✓
LM	x	x
<b>Employee welfare</b>	✓	⊗
LM	x	x

Figure 39: Comparing Partner and manager account of people practices

As can be seen from Figure 39 there exist similarities across the two versions. The key differences have been highlighted in the figure and are specifically related to training and development, employee voice, non-financial recognition and employee welfare. These will now be discussed in turn.

Two of the differences relate to the role of the LM in implementing the practice; the third difference pertains to the role of other Partners in how Partners perceive implementation of non-financial recognition and the last difference was the omission of Registry by the managers.

When Partners discussed training and development, there was some discussion on the part played by the section managers in how much training Partners were allowed to receive. This was not discussed at all by the section managers. Partners highlighted the role of the section manager in discussing training needs and selecting the courses they needed to attend. Section managers did not report on their involvement in deciding which

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training courses selling Partners needed to attend. Similarly, related to employee voice, only Partners identified the section manager as an important contributor in leading Partners to perceive they had a voice and as someone with whom they could air their views. Section managers focused primarily on the organizational tools, such as letters to the company magazines and the communication half-hours, but they did not report on their role in communicating to selling Partners that they had a voice.

With non-financial recognition, managers did not provide any data that showcased the importance of other Partners in recognising Partners' efforts and achievements. But within the Partner data this emerged as a significant contributor to Partners feeling appreciated. Finally, even though only a few Partners mentioned employee welfare and Registry as instrumental in what made them deliver excellent service, this did not feature at all in the managers' accounts. It could be that employee welfare is very personal to the Partners and managers would not necessarily know if and when Partners receive help and support, due to the unbiased and confidential nature of Registry's role. This might be one of the reasons why managers did not discuss this.

Another subtle yet notable difference between the selling Partner and section manager accounts surrounds the discussion of poor performers. This was something that section managers were more explicit about in their accounts of performance management and how feedback was provided to these selling Partners. Likewise, section managers also reported that not all selling Partners were interested in participating in the democratic aspects of the business. It could be that these differences are evident because the high-performing selling Partners were asked questions about themselves whereas the section managers were asked questions about what they thought affected selling Partners. The Partner Opinion Survey was also not mentioned at all by the selling Partners in their identification of items that helped them display PSSBs, whereas some section managers did think that this was something that would affect selling Partners in whether they displayed PSSBs.

It is important to note these differences as ultimately it is the implementation that affects perception and it is the perception that translates into behaviours. This means that any avenue of implementation that affects Partners' behaviour must be considered and managed to ensure PSSBs. It emerges that even though at a glance the list of people

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management items looks the same, there are nuanced differences between the section managers' and selling Partners' accounts in respect to the implementation of these practices. This is essentially a gap in understanding amongst the selling Partners and section managers. The section managers do not report their role in the enactment of some of the practices i.e. training, employee voice.

With reference to the specific ownership context in which the JLP is set, section managers see themselves more as co-owners than selling Partners do. This is significant in that they seem to have a more vested interest in the organization which affects their display of PSSBs. Similar to selling Partners, they also detailed the work atmosphere as instrumental in selling Partners engaging in PSSBs. It must also be noted, however, that managers did not discuss the service culture and external reputation or individual characteristics at all when identifying the aspects that contributed to Partners delivering excellent customer service behaviours, even though Partners perceived them to be significant. One possible explanation for this could be that because managers were asked about how Partners were managed, they only provided information pertaining to that. It might well be that if I had asked Partners what made them engage in PSSBs, those aspects might have emerged in the findings.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This section conveys the findings of interviews with section managers who have responsibility for managing non-management selling Partners. The interviews revealed that typically there were similarities between section managers' and selling Partners' accounts of the people management practices identified as drivers of PSSBs. There were some discrepancies which have been discussed in the previous section. It was established that, similar to data obtained from Partners' interviews, the information provided by managers also suggested that the Partnership context played a role in Partners engaging in PSSBs. In short, the section managers' accounts reinforce the credibility of the people management practices and role of the context in influencing PSSBs. This enhances the reliability of the data collected from the Partners in clarifying the practices through which perceptions translate into behaviours. However, there are nuanced differences in

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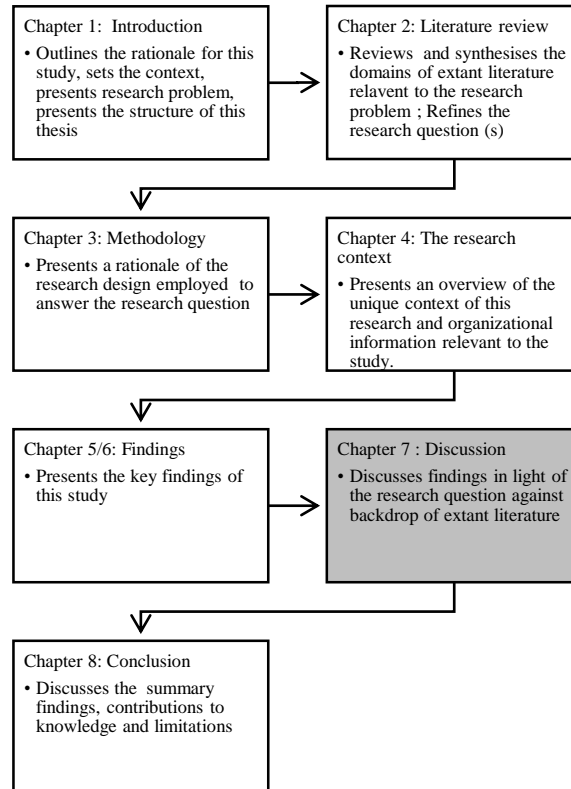
implementation aspects vis-à-vis the role of the section managers and other selling Partners. The following chapter, Chapter 7, provides a discussion of the findings from Chapter 5 with some references to the findings from Chapter 6. The key focus of this study is to explore how perceptions translate into behaviours from the selling Partners' perspectives and therefore the findings from Chapter 5 will be primarily used in the upcoming discussion. Nonetheless, where possible and relevant, findings from this chapter will also be used. Specifically, the discussion will be contextualised in the light of literature that has been discussed previously in Chapter 2.

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## 7 Analysis and Discussion

At the end of Chapter 2: Literature review, I established the research question for the study: How do perceptions of people management practices translate into frontline employees' PSSBs in an ownership context?

This chapter centres on the analysis and discussion of the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The key findings related to the people management practices and intervening mechanisms, the



organizational actors in implementing people management practices and the role of the ownership context are analysed and discussed in relation to extant literature in the subsequent sections. The chapter is presented as follows: first, I will analyse the findings for each of the key findings and then proceed to discuss these findings in light of the extant literature in this area. Accordingly, Sections 7.1 and 7.2 concentrate on the analysis and theoretical discussion of the perception of people management practices and the intervening mechanisms; Sections 7.3 and 7.4 focus on the analysis and discussion of the role of the organizational actors in the execution of people management practices and these are then followed by Sections 7.5 and 7.6 which specifically analyse and discuss the ownership context. Section 7.7 will present a concluding discussion, bringing together the salient points in a schematic representation of my findings. Following this, in Section 7.8, I will summarise the discussion, with a focused analysis targeted at emphasising the contribution of this research to knowledge on this topic.

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In this chapter there are instances wherein I have referred to authors whose work has not previously been discussed in the Literature review chapter (Chapter 2). The reason for this is that the findings have revealed some factors in this investigation of the HR-performance causal chain that have not been examined earlier in this investigation, which required me to engage with this literature to explain my findings.

## **7.1 Analysis: Perception of people management practices and how they affect PSSBs**

### 7.1.1 The HR system focused on frontline selling Partners engaging in PSSBs

At the outset it is important to acknowledge the positive nature of the findings. The findings from the Partners mostly reflect favourable views of the organisations and its associated practices. There was also a high level of consistency in the accounts of the SPs. This consistent, favourable view is what I describe as positive findings. There might be a couple of reasons for these positive findings. First, I chose a sample of employees from an organization that is reputed for its exemplary customer service. Within this, I specifically decided to examine how perceptions of practices translated into behaviours for employees who were known to provide superior customer service, i.e. high-performing selling Partners with respect to customer service. This was specifically done to be able to focus on PSSBs as the examined outcome, which obviously required discussion surrounding both in-role and extra-role customer service behaviours. Secondly, the sample was chosen by the Personnel department in the JLP. However, since the data gathering process was not about making judgements of individual performance but really focused on exploring how perceptions channelled into PSSBs, it could be concluded that responses were not biased or tailored. Equally, to increase reliability of the data set, further interviews were conducted with section managers and the positive findings of the selling Partner interviews were supported by the section managers' accounts, too. Similar evidence of a positive nature of the findings is also evident in the work of Jenkins and Delbridge (2014), within a call-centre context, wherein they explain that it is the pursuit of researchers to investigate why the positive findings occur rather than dismiss them. Furthermore, even though the majority of the data set is positive, there

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are some unfavourable views and where that is case, these have been highlighted and discussed (see employee voice and bonus discussions).

So, before I commence discussing the findings in depth, I wish to revisit where my work goes beyond that of others. Firstly, my study was positioned in the context of services with a specific focus on exploring an employee-level outcome relevant to this setting. The employee outcome that I chose was PSSBs (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997), which involves both in-role and extra-role customer service behaviours. This has not been studied within an HR-performance setting before. Secondly, in contrast to previous quantitative HR-performance studies, where HR practices were used from a standard set of practices, my study required the employees to *generate* the HR practices that they perceived as instrumental in their engaging in PSSBs. Thirdly, against the flow of statistical investigation in the HR-performance investigation, my doctoral research employs a qualitative case study-based approach which seeks to explore *how* the perception of practices translates into PSSBs. Finally, the unique setting of this research in an employee-owned organization adds appeal to this research as there is no known study of the HR-performance discussion in an ownership context.

Having positioned how my research goes beyond current research in the HR-performance domain, I will now discuss my findings. In order to investigate the perception of the practices I first needed to establish the people management practices that high-performing frontline selling Partners observed to be associated with their displaying PSSBs. This led to the identification of a collection of practices that I will refer to as a service-HPWS because of its focus on PSSBs. Perception of the items within this suite of practices that were obtained from top performing selling Partners, reflects one similarity for the majority of the practices in that they in some way reinforced to Partners the importance of customer service, albeit the extent to which they communicated the importance of customer service behaviours varied between them. Nonetheless, this is significant as it demonstrates that this set of identified practices is designed and enacted such that Partners are able to demonstrate PSSBs. Accordingly, this can be termed as the service-HPWS which prioritises service quality provision as an absolute must.

Before I set out to discuss in depth the selling Partners' findings, I believe that it pertinent to discuss, albeit briefly, the findings from both the selling Partners and the managers.

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What is important to note here is that, as mentioned in Chapter 6 there is similarity between the set of practices identified between the selling Partners' and section managers' perspectives. The findings from the section manager interviews thus add reliability to the data obtained from the selling Partner interviews. Nonetheless, as discussed (although in brief as this is not the main focus of this study), there are subtle differences in the execution of practices as presented in Chapter 6 in recognising the role of the section managers and other selling Partners in implementation aspects associated with the practices.

Having said that, I will now move on to provide an in-depth discussion on the findings from the selling Partner interviews.

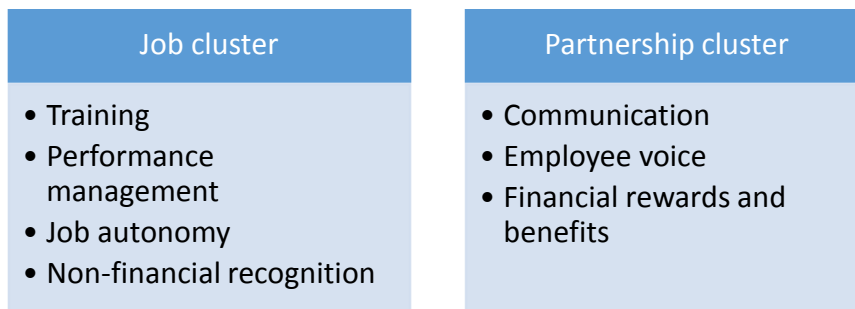
#### 7.1.2 Identifying patterns within the practices in how their perceptions translate into behaviours

An in-depth analysis of the mechanisms by which perceptions of people management practices translate into behaviours shows that perception of practices affects behaviours in a myriad of ways and not through any one exclusive route (refer to Appendix 13 to see the table that portrays all these paths from perceptions to behaviours). It is noticeable that practices do not display a simplistic pattern from perception to behaviours. Partners perceive practices in several ways. No single practice affects Partners in only one manner. In fact, the same practice leads to more than one outcome. For example training, which is considered as an ability-enhancing practice (Appelbaum et al., 2000), affects not only ability via enhanced confidence but also leads to Partners feeling supported and valued. Similarly, performance management or appraisal is an established item in the motivation enhancing bundle, and while this is supported in this study, it also demonstrates other outcomes such as employees feeling valued, confident etc. In fact, looking at the practices as simplistic management tools with specific intentions does not necessarily reflect what actually transpires at the employee-level of analysis. There is no denying that the practices' intentions are actualised but the practices do more and not taking that into account only represents a part of the picture. Thus the conversation needs to be broadened

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to include not only intended practices but also to consider the impact of practices at employee level.

Having said that, there are patterns within the data relating to the mechanisms by means of which perceptions translate into behaviours (please refer to Appendix 13). In most cases, there appears to be a primary impact. What I allude to here is that there are always one or two paths that the majority of Partners or many Partners have acknowledged as perceptions of these practices. For the purpose of creating a cluster of practices to enable a logical combination, the primary paths will be utilised. It can be seen from the data that all but one (Registry) path lead to Partners feeling good. Then again, how the practices affect the way Partners feel, follows a different pattern and finally culminates in Partners feeling good. It can be seen that there are two basic clusters of practices that emerge out of their perceptions of people management practices. The two most obvious clusters (as shown in Figure 40) are presented and discussed in depth below.



*Figure 40: Bundles of practices*

It appears from Figure 40 that these selected practices together seem to result in similar outcomes for the Partners in this particular study. The two items that are not in any cluster are Employee welfare (Registry) and LM's leadership and management. Employee welfare (Registry) as it is not categorically a practice and in this case essentially a department, will be discussed on its own merit within the ownership context. The line management discussions will be reported separately but in some parts these will be linked to the enactment discussion if relevant.

It emerges that training, performance management, job autonomy and non-financial recognition affect selling Partners in a different way to the Partnership cluster of practices.

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These practices (training, performance management, job autonomy and non-financial recognition) affect employees in a more synchronised fashion. This sub-cluster of practices performs four crucial functions. First, it leads to Partners feeling confident, thus leading to a perception that they have the ability to do the job required. Concomitantly this set of three practices also leads to Partners feeling supported in doing their jobs. In addition, this cluster also communicates to the members of the organization the importance of customer service. Finally, this cluster behaves as a motivational mechanism. I have grouped these practices together under Job Cluster (see Table 16) and will now go on to discuss them in more depth; the terms majority, many, some and few represent the number of respondents that discuss them.

Table 16: The job cluster

	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Importance of Customer service</i>	<i>Supported</i>	<i>Valued</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Trusted</i>	<i>Motivated</i>	<i>Appreciated/recognised</i>	<i>Relaxed</i>	<i>Perception of fairness</i>
<i>Training</i>	Majority	Many	Some	Some						
<i>Performance management</i>	Majority	Majority	Many	Many			Some	Many	Few	Few
<i>Job autonomy</i>	Some	Some	Some		Many	Many			Few	
<i>Non-financial recognition</i>		Few					Some	Many		

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In relation to enhancing employees' levels of confidence, even though it may appear that all three practices (training, performance management, job autonomy) impact on Partners' levels of confidence, it is important to note that the outcome of feeling confident in relation to the perception of job autonomy has a different meaning from the other two (i.e. those of training and performance management). The facet of confidence that is related to job autonomy is to do with Partners feeling confident in themselves as a result of having their manager's support in the decisions they take when dealing with customers; whereas feeling confident as a consequence of training and performance management initiatives reflects Partners feeling confident in undertaking their jobs. Partners feel confident in performing their job role because they believe that they have been trained and their performance managed in such a manner that they have developed the ability to do so. Partners believe that they have the tools (knowledge, skills and ability) to do the job; consequently, they enhance the Partner's level of human capital.

This trio of practices also serves as a supportive structure in aiding Partners in performing their jobs well. Through making training courses available for Partners, they perceive that the organization supports them in executing their jobs. Partners also feel supported by their managers in the way they look after Partners' development and learning needs in terms of knowledge, skills and ability. Likewise, Partners feel supported by their superiors in reaching customer-related decisions.

The practices in the job cluster and how they are implemented signal to the Partners the importance of customer service within the organizational boundaries. This is done through making available training programmes on customer service, by measuring excellent customer service and going the extra mile explicitly in performance appraisals and reviews, by developing customer service skills of Partners if required, by putting systems in place (such as goodwill, happy returns policy) to enable Partners to create happy customers, and by explicitly recognising excellent customer service behaviour. Training, performance management and job autonomy can be thus grouped together under the term ability cluster; this cluster allows Partners to recognise that customer service is important and then improves their ability to display excellent customer service and go the extra mile.

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The other key aspect of this bundle of practices is to function as a *motivational* mechanism. As a consequence of feeling valued, important and trusted, Partners feel that they have a worthwhile contribution to make as organizational members. Being valued has two themes that emerge from the data; employees feel valued when they perceive that managers make time for them and also when the organization invests resources on them. This conveys to them that they are vital to the organization's success and that their contribution is important. Data also suggest that through job autonomy initiatives, Partners feel trusted and important as a consequence of being allowed to make decisions on the frontline. This results in them feeling that they are prized within the organization. Thus, both feeling valued (training and performance management) and being considered important and trusted (job autonomy) reflect the Partners' notion that they are of importance to the organization and this affects their perception of themselves. Another way that is more direct, is that employees feel appreciated, recognised and motivated through the use of non-financial recognition and performance management initiatives. In both these instances, being recognised leads to being motivated. Specifically, in the case of performance appraisals, being recognised is intertwined with feeling valued.

Beyond the four practices discussed above in the job cluster, communication of organizational information, employee voice and financial rewards and benefits seem to make the JLP members feel that they are an integral part of a team and lead to a feeling of being a Partner and a co-owner as shown in Table 17. As a consequence, these three practices have been grouped as the *Partnership cluster of practices*. Additionally, it can be established from the data that none of the practices within this cluster affects the employees' confidence to do the job or acts as a support mechanism to engage in customer service behaviour. So, the Partnership cluster does not appear to directly affect Partners' ability to provide customer service, rather indirectly. And even though there is some evidence that communication by the LMs and the bonus signal the importance of customer service, this is of less intensity.

Table 17 : Partnership cluster of practices

	<i>Importance of Customer service</i>	<i>Perception of fairness</i>	<i>Motivated</i>	<i>Part of a team/Partner/co-owner</i>	<i>Safer</i>	<i>Appreciated/recognised</i>
<i>Employee voice (O)(P)</i>		Some		Many		
<i>Communication (O)(I)</i>	Few		Few	Many	Few	
<i>Financial rewards and benefits (M)(R)</i>		Few	Some	Some		Few

The primary effect of this cluster is motivational, by meeting employees’ socio-emotional needs. By making Partners feel included, the organization meets their needs for affiliation; recognising Partners’ contribution, both monetarily and non-monetarily, meets their needs for self-esteem. From the interviews, it was also noted that the feeling of being included in a group makes Partners feel important to the organization and inevitably makes them feel like a Partner or a co-owner. It appears that this Partnership cluster’s main impact is that they affect Partners’ perception of inclusion in the organization or sense of belongingness to a larger group. White and MacKenzie-Davey (2003) explain inclusion as the perception of the individual of the organization’s efforts to make them feel part of the organization in a meaningful manner (p. 229). Inclusion implies the importance of the group for the self and how an individual wishes to see him/herself as part of that group. Central to an individual’s desire to have a positive view of themselves is that when employees feel included they consequently see the organization in a more positive light (Turner, 1987). When employees feel included in a team this leads to them construing the team in a positive manner (Ellemers et al., 2013). This bears some resemblance to discussions on job involvement; however, the outcome in this case was very simply the perception of being included and feeling part of the team.

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In explaining what exactly was meant by feeling part of a team, Partners felt that they were not just a cog in the wheel but felt important within the organizational context.

The fact that Partners referred to themselves as Partners and co-owners throughout the interviews, even when questions were about practices, is suggestive of the fact that this Partner identity affects how Partners execute their selling Partner roles and tasks. This discussion will be presented in more depth in section 7.5.

Furthermore, in addition to the impact of the specific bundles, some of the practices also indicate to the employees whether the organization is fair in terms of how it deals with them. This was mostly encompassing the procedural aspects of organizational justice for performance management and employee voice, and was concerned with distributive fairness with regard to bonus-related discussions. This is suggestive of perceptions of fairness being an intervening factor of the people-performance link. Another perception was that some practices communicated to the Partners were about feeling relaxed. Few Partners reiterated that the culture of the JLP was a relaxed one although being supported by the managers led to Partners feeling relaxed which resulted in a better service delivery. This suggests that Partners, in experiencing practices, are not only affected by these practices alone but also by factors at an organizational level, implying that perceptions of organizational factors also mediate how some practices are perceived. Finally, a few Partners also mentioned that having regular and open communications about what was happening within the organization reassured them that their jobs were safe.

As has been recognised, the job cluster emerges as a set of practices that allows Partners to deliver exceptional levels of service. This set of practices reflect the organization's emphasis on providing excellent customer service through enhanced beliefs of ability, opportunities and recognition. The Partnership cluster is more concerned with ensuring that Partners feel they are an important part of the business and are valued by the business, and does not directly influence the ability element of the Partner. Thus within the service-HPWS there exist two sub-systems or clusters or bundles that seem to have somewhat distinct foci. The Partnership bundle is primarily recognised for evoking feelings of belonging to the Partnership and being Partners which then contributes to Partners' motivations of providing customer service, whilst the job bundle or customer service

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bundle aims at directly affecting the service delivery through enhanced ability-led interactions with customers in addition to also making employees feel valued and effectual. The grouping of the sub-systems clearly reveals the depth of the belongingness and esteem elements for the Partnership group compared with the Job group of practices. Furthermore, the supportive aspect in relation to exhibiting exemplary customer service behaviours is obvious for the job bundle whilst it has not been explicitly discussed by the Partners in relation to the Partnership bundle. This suggests that even within an HR system focused on primarily one item (provision of excellent service in this case), there exist sub-groups with varying purposes, even though ultimately both these clusters (Job and Partnership) led to the display of in-role and extra-role service behaviours.

#### 7.1.2.1 *Common routes to PSSBs*

In an analysis of the paths to PSSBs, the processes by which the perceptions directly affect PSSBs are: feeling confident about their job, understanding the importance of customer service, feeling good and feeling motivated. In addition, feeling an important part of the team and having a friendly work atmosphere leads to Partners feeling good and happy about themselves which also affects PSSBs. The friendly work atmosphere will be presented under the ownership discussion (which follows next) to contextualise the results in a more pertinent manner. Feeling confident, understanding the importance of customer service, feeling motivated and feeling part of a team have already been discussed in the previous section and consequently will not be discussed again here. I will focus on discussing how feeling good affects PSSBs as this is the most frequently occurring route to PSSBs.

##### 7.1.2.1.1 *The feeling good route to PSSBs*

As mentioned previously, perceptions of all but one of the people management practices i.e. Registry – employee welfare, are associated with Partners *feeling good*. I found that interviewees specifically stated that they felt good as a perception of people management

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practices. Feeling good was associated with several other feelings (see Figure 41). Occasionally feeling good was associated with more cognitive assessments, such as feeling supported, feeling valued and feeling part of a team. Feeling good was the most influential in terms of impact on PSSBs (refer to Appendix 13). What is obvious here is that the perceptions of people management practices have both a cognitive and an affective element. In certain situations these were expressed together whereas in others they were discussed as separate concepts. Furthermore, there emerged slightly nuanced variations in the discussions surrounding feeling good and what this meant. For instance, Partners mentioned that they felt *'good about themselves'* specifically in relation to non-financial recognition.



Figure 41: Paths leading to Partners feeling good

In this context, feeling good about oneself could be linked to feelings of self-worth and is mostly dependent on another party recognising Partners in general and their contributions. Partners also perceive that when other Partners behave well towards them it is because they are likeable and this enhances their self-worth. In other cases, Partners simply cited that they *'felt good'*. This could be a form of positive affect that the Partners

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experience as an outcome of their perceptions of the practices, as Partners mentioned feeling good resulted in them displaying PSSBs in most cases.

Additionally, Partners felt *'happy'* when they were recognised for their efforts either through the performance appraisal or through non-financial recognition by either managers or colleagues. Data suggest that this involves a more emotional transient state and has a temporary, probably intense, impact on the customers.

## **7.2 Theoretical Discussion: Perception of people management practices and how they affect PSSBs**

### 7.2.1 The HR practices influencing PSSBs

Guest (2011, p. 11) in his review of the HR-performance literature, adds *"We need to retain a focus on the basic and as yet unresolved question of what combination of practices is likely to have the greater impact on performance and other outcomes"*. My study goes some way towards offering clarity in this regard. It identifies a set of practices that affect an employee-level outcome or proximal outcome (Guest, 1997) and also within this set of practices, it recognises combinations of practices that seem to have reinforcing effects within a particular context. Where my study differs from previous research in the area is in how I come to develop these bundles. In all previous studies, the bundles have been conceptualised prior to the study, depending on what performance outcomes were being studied, whereas in this study the existence of bundles emerges from employees' perception of the practices. Consequently, the bundles that are evident in my data emerge from perceptions of practices that mediate the link between the HR practices and performance. Within this identified set of practices, in addition to the more traditional HR practices (such as training, performance management, rewards, recognition), the presence of work organization practices is noticed but not seen so commonly in HR-performance studies. Marchington and Grugulis (2000) highlight that the inventory of best practices normally lacks work organization items and those related to employee voice. More recently, Wood and de Menezes (2011) report that authors have neglected the *involvement* component in favour of the human capital components and Snape and

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Redman (2010) state that there seems to be a waning of research in the area of job design in HR-performance studies. In contrast, in the employee relations area, employee involvement is considered imperative to the HPWS. My research does confirm the strategic significance of work organization (job autonomy) and involvement (employee voice, communication, profit sharing) practices. Batt (2002, p. 587) suggests that such high involvement work systems generally include “*relatively high skill requirements; work designed that enable employees to have both discretion and opportunity to use their skills in collaboration with other workers; and an incentive structure that enhances motivation and commitment*”. The one practice that is conspicuous by its absence is recruitment and selection, which features as an integral part of any high-performance or high-involvement or high-commitment work system. It is not that this is not important, but because the focus of this piece of research was only on practices that influenced employees to display particular behaviours, it did not feature directly. Nevertheless, the importance of recruitment and selection was evident in the responses of the Partners when they all mentioned that delighting customers was something they inherently liked doing. It would seem that applicants who are employed by the JLP are those who might be intrinsically motivated to deliver exceptional service levels. This could be construed to mean that in their recruitment and selection process, the JLP selects Partners who have values very similar to those of the organization in relation to customer service.

In the development of the service-HPWS, the practices that affect customer service behaviours are identified. However as discussed previously, this service-HPWS has two sub-systems within it with varying contributions to how they shape the delivery of customer-service citizenship behaviours. This shares similarities with the concept of *equifinality* (Delery and Doty, 1986) whereby different bundles can result in similar outcomes by means of different mechanisms.

To some extent, I believe that the service-HPWS with the two sub-clusters also contributes to the debate between best practice (Pfeffer, 1994) and best fit (Schuler and Jackson, 1987) schools. It is apparent that the evoked set of practices are included in the HPWSs that have been regularly been employed in HR-performance investigations. So, in essence it supports the best practice school. However the HR system identified also demonstrates fit with the purpose and aims of the organization – *happiness of its members*

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*through worthwhile and satisfying employment* in a successful business where *the Partners share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power* (refer to Appendix 9 –p. 7). Sharing of profits is manifest in the bonus scheme and the financial and leisure benefits, knowledge through the availability of company-related information, and power through the formalised channels of employee voice (or democracy as it is known in the organization). These form part of the cluster of the Partnership bundle in this study. Hence, this Partnership bundle is consistent with the notion of vertical fit (Delery and Doty, 1986) whilst the sub-clusters are examples of horizontal fit, where those practices that have synergistic effects are aligned together, which Becker et al. (1997) refer to as '*powerful combinations*'. This then bears a resemblance to the configurational school (Delery and Doty, 1986). My point here is that my findings go some way to suggesting that all three perspectives are valid and it is probably the case that the universalist practices need to be contextualised to the needs of the environment to result in the desired behaviours and outcomes, thus leading to an appreciation of the contingency framework. But within this, as a consequence of organizations not pursuing only one primary purpose or objective, it is likely that there will be sub-bundles within them with different foci that ultimately lead to similar performance measures. Thus, this extends the notion of *equifinality* (Delery and Doty, 1986) in this regard by identifying two sub-bundles both leading to PSSBs by means of different channels. This echoes the stance that Martin-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, and Sánchez-Gardey (2005) adopted in their theorising of the different theoretical perspectives in Strategic HRM investigation. As a consequence of conducting an exhaustive review of the universalist, contingency, configurational and contextual perspectives they concluded that notwithstanding the important contributions that studies make whilst assuming single perspectives, a comprehensive framework encompassing the four approaches provided a more robust and sound explanation of SHRM. They concluded that the approaches are not exclusive but simply look at SHRM with a different focus. To that end, my findings go on to support their theorising to some extent.

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### 7.2.2 Bundles of practices

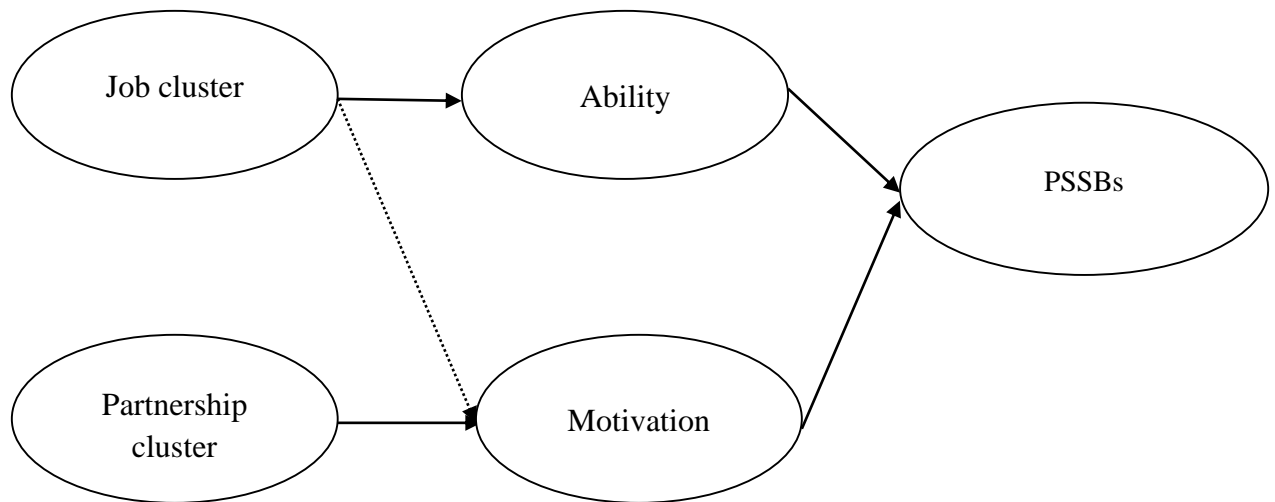
My findings above reveal the presence of two clusters of practices (the job and Partnership cluster in this specific context) that consist of people practices within each set that are complementary. MacDuffie (1995, p. 200) advocates the existence of bundles of practices, which entail combinations of practices into a bundle rather than individual practices, affecting how people work. These bundles include practices that are interrelated and demonstrate internal fit (Ichniowski, Shaw, and Prennushi, 1997). Prior research has confirmed that different bundles have different effects (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Batt, Colvin and Keefe, 2002; Collins and Clark, 2003). Collins and Clark (2003) suggest from their findings that different sets of HR practices affect organizational performance in different ways, with some particular practices contributing to specific outcomes, while more general practices affect more general outcomes, such as enhancing skills or employee motivation. Most recently, the studies of Gardner, Wright and Moynihan (2011), Jiang et al. (2012b) and Subramony (2009), and employ the use of the AMO model (Appelbaum et al., 2000) in categorising HR practices into ability/skill-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity- or empowerment-enhancing groupings. Subramony's (2009) study establishes that bundles of complementary practices are positively associated with business outcomes, and these connections are more robust than, or as robust as, HPWS' associations with organizational performance. In addition, Jiang et al. (2012b) utilised a multiple theoretical view in their enquiry into how HR practices shaped organizational outcomes by combining the behavioural perspective, human capital theory and the RBV of the firm. They ascertained that skill-enhancing HR practices proved to be more influential in strengthening a firm's human capital than motivation- and opportunity-enhancing practices, and that motivation- and opportunity-enhancing practices impacted on employee motivation to a greater extent. Their study also confirmed that the skill-enhancing practices affected employee motivation to some extent (albeit less than their effect on employees' knowledge, skills and abilities) and consistently, motivation-enhancing practices and opportunity-enhancing practices affected employee knowledge skills and abilities to a lesser degree. In a similar kind of investigation, Knies and Leisink (2014) established that the AMO variables indeed mediated the HR-performance relationship. Furthermore, they established that there are interrelationships

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amongst the AMO variables, whereby ability and motivation affected employees' extra-role behaviours and the opportunity variable affected extra-role behaviour indirectly through motivation.

My findings support the existence of mutually reinforcing bundles of practices (Jiang et al., 2012b; Subramony 2009) that affect organizational outcomes (in my study, specifically employee-level outcomes) differently to some extent. It answers calls for further research by Subramony (2009) to "*explore various HRM practice combinations that are likely to be effective for various performance outcomes*" (p. 759). The specific outcome that was studied in this body of work was PSSBs and I was able to identify practice combinations within them which contributed to this particular work outcome.

This also adds voice to the idea that within the best practices school it is becoming widespread to cluster practices in order to build more sound explanations of the HRM-performance link (Gooderham, Parry, and Ringdal, 2008). My research suggests ( as revealed in Figure 42) that, in accordance with Jiang et al. (2012b), the effects of the bundles are different. The job cluster affects employees' perception of their ability and enhances their understanding of customer service. In addition, it also enhances an individual's perception of their self-worth, which serves as a motivational mechanism. The evidence also validates the view that when employees feel confident with regard to the knowledge they need and know that they have support from others if needed, this directly enhances their interactions with customers. Therefore, the job cluster impacts on PSSBs directly through enhanced abilities and indirectly through motivation. On the other hand, the Partnership cluster demonstrates no effect on employees' ability – only on their perceptions of inclusion and self-worth. The Partnership cluster affects PSSBs fundamentally by Partners feeling good about themselves and this consequently affects how they behave with customers. So, the influence of this cluster on the examined behaviour is indirect on PSSBs via motivation.



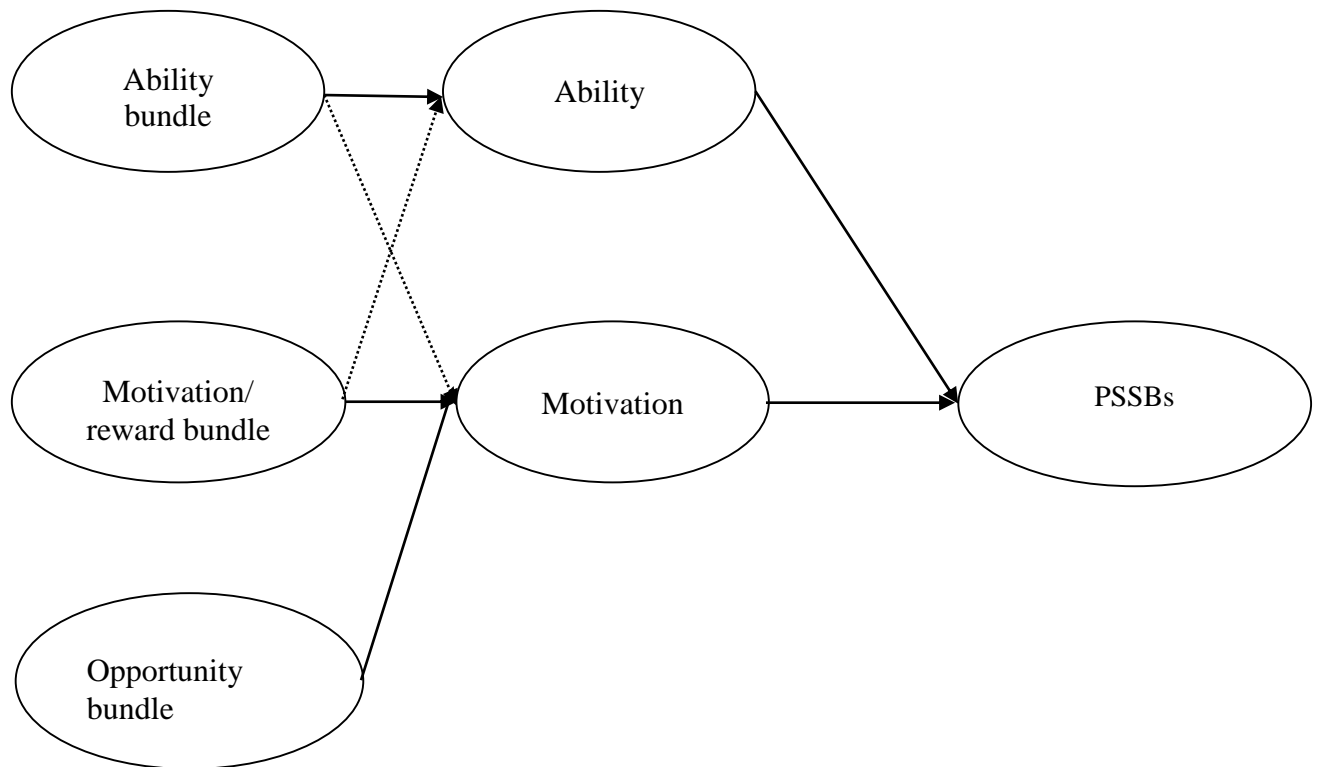
*Figure 42: How practice clusters affect employee behaviours*

These findings offer support for those of Jiang et al (2012b) that different clusters have differential effects. The reason I elected to group the clusters as I have is as a consequence of their effects on the Partners. Partners sense the complementarity between training and performance management in developing their ability and even though previous studies do not show evidence of this, in this study performance management was certainly found to affect Partners’ perceptions of ability. Within this job cluster, there was evidence that perceptions enhanced ability and motivated the Partners to engage in PSSBs. In addition, evidence from the Partnership cluster did not demonstrate any impact on abilities – only on motivation. When the effects of the practices were being considered during analysis, distinguishing the practices according to the AMO theory (Appelbaum et al., 2000) and the PIRK (Power, Information, Reward, Knowledge) framework (Vandenberg, Richardson and Eastman, 1999), did not reveal the same extent of similarities in their impact as when they were considered as job and Partnership clusters. In addition, to augment this argument, Partners perceived the three practices of communication, employee voice, and financial rewards and benefits, to be integral to their impression of the Partnership and hence, there was some meaning to be attributed to that perception. Having said that, where my findings do support the literature is that the inventory of practices that emerged from the data set show parallels to the High-performance and High-involvement work systems (see Appendix 14).

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Even though I have classified the clusters as job and Partnership clusters, I believe that it is beneficial to offer an insight into what would have happened had I opted for the AMO bundling approach. I acknowledge that it is worthwhile to have a discussion on the effects of the perceptions of these identified practices to validate whether indeed the outcomes are in line with the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al, 2000) wherein HR practices affect employees' attitudes and behaviour through enhanced abilities and motivation.

The most common bundling of practices has been the AMO theory, which groups practices into ability-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing practices (Appelbaum et al, 2000). Subramony (2009) in his meta-analytic review confirms the existence of ability-, motivation- and empowerment-enhancing bundles. Similar to the HPWS, the HIWP provides workers with power, information, rewards and knowledge to meet organizational objectives. As shown in Appendix 14 the knowledge element corresponds with the ability bundle of the AMO theory and the rewards element corresponds with the motivational bundle. The difference between these two systems is that the opportunity-enhancing bundle (AMO) is broken into information and power facets of the HIWP. Figure 43 depicts how the different ability-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing bundles lead to the delivery of PSSBs. I will now proceed to explain how this ensues. If we look at the effects of the ability/knowledge bundle (training), we can see that its main role is to increase the confidence of the Partners in dealing with customers. This essentially suggests that Partners feel more confident in their ability to provide excellent customer service. However, this bundle also plays a motivational role in that it communicates to Partners that they are valued by allowing them the option to undergo extensive training and this serves a motivational purpose.



*Figure 43: Linking mechanisms between AMO bundle and PSSBs*

The effect of the motivational/reward bundle (performance management, financial rewards and benefits, and non-financial recognition) is primarily motivational, with Partners feeling recognised/appreciated and valued, which makes them feel good and wanting to exert more effort with customers. There is also evidence that performance management, which is primarily attributed as developmental in this specific context, can also affect Partners' ability (via affecting Partners' confidence). In addition, importantly this bundle also communicates to employees the importance of customer service.

Finally, the opportunity-enhancing bundle (communication, employee voice and job autonomy) (AMO theory) primarily leads to employees feeling they are a key part of a team, important and trusted. Whereas employee voice and communication of organizational information are involvement initiatives to ensure employees are involved at an organizational level, job autonomy is more task-related. Irrespective of which level the involvement initiative lies within, its effects are through perceptions of Partners' worthiness relative to the organization. Altogether, this bundle also serves a motivational purpose, by boosting Partners' self-evaluations, by making them feel included and more

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worthwhile. Consequently, the empowerment bundle also affects employees' motivation, albeit indirectly, through feelings of inclusion and self-worth.

The above evidence leads me to conclude that the mediating mechanisms are consistent with the AMO theory whether one looks at them as job and Partnership clusters or ability, motivation and opportunity clusters. The mediating effects not only correspond to Knies and Leisink's (2014) research, that AMO variables act as the linking mechanism, but also add validity to Jiang et al.'s (2012b) study that the AMO variables have differential effects. Furthermore, they also validate Knies and Leisink's (2014) results that establish that interrelationships exist between the AMO variables. Accordingly, my qualitative study highlights the fact that perceptions do indeed affect employee behaviours through various routes; it also demonstrates that mediation happens through both human capital (increased knowledge, skills and abilities) and through motivating employees. As noted by Snape and Redman (2010), there is a dearth of research involving work design items. My findings go on to suggest that work design items or practices included within the opportunity bundle are indeed central to the HR-performance discussion as they play a part in motivating employees.

My findings also add to existing research in establishing that human capital does indeed serve as a linking mechanism between the perception of HR practices and performance (Cabello-Medina, López-Cabrales, and Valle-Cabrera, 2011; Hsu et al., 2007; Jiang et al., 2012b ; Jiang, Takeuchi, and Lepak, 2013). It also extends previous research that supports the notion that HR systems affect performance through psychological and motivational mechanisms (Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Kuvaas, 2008; Messersmith et al., 2011; Sun, Aryee, and Law, 2007). Most studies choose one particular theoretical approach and investigate a mediating variable within this theoretical paradigm (Jiang et al., 2012b). The most used theoretical frameworks are the RBV of the firm (Barney, 1991) and the behavioural perspective (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). The RBV suggests that the human capital (in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities) of an organization contributes to organizational performance and specifically, recruitment, selection and training support the creation of the rare, inimitable resources for the firm (Wright and McMahan, 1992); whereas the behavioural perspective advocates that organizations employ practices to influence employee behaviours that are consistent with organizational goals and objectives (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). For

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instance, Hsu et al. (2007) Youndt and Snell (2004) focus on the role of human capital, whereas Gong et al. (2010), Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith (2013), Snape and Redman (2010), Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak (2009, Wood et al. (2012) and Wu and Chaturvedi (2009) focus on motivation variables. Chang and Chen (2011), Jiang et al. (2012b) and Takeuchi et al. (2007) are the only known works that investigate more than one theoretical perspective. My work fully supports their notion that looking at only one theoretical angle would paint an incomplete picture and examining multiple perspectives will reveal a fuller understanding of how HR practices translate into HR outcomes.

### 7.2.3 Unravelling the linking mechanisms from a theoretical perspective

The employees of any organization are not usually exposed to a single practice at a time, instead they are exposed to multiple organizational practices simultaneously. Even though it appeared that individuals provided data for individual practices, albeit with the Partnership discussion interweaving through it, the effects of several practices were felt concurrently along with the experience of their LM's leadership behaviour. In this next section, I will provide a discussion of the psychological factors that elucidate these paths and their impact on PSSBs with reference to the extant literature in the HR-performance area. So, essentially, this section advances the previous discussions on clusters and their impact on PSSBs by identifying the mechanisms in relation to the extant black box discussion.

As is evident from the data, perceptions of people management practices affect employees' PSSBs in several ways. As the information portrayed is based on employees' perceptions, the terminology employed by them does not correspond to academic concepts normally employed in literature. In an effort to position and examine these perceptions and routes to behaviours within an academic frame of reference, I will now proceed to discuss them with the aim to show parallels with established academic concepts within the HR-performance discussion where relevant. What needs to be taken into account is that in some cases the perceptions of the practices can be relatively easily situated within the extant literature. On the other hand, in some instances, to discuss these perceptions in relation to established concepts in the HR-performance chain is more

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complex. The purpose of this section is to indicate how my research supports, extends or challenges academic thinking in this area. The key academic concepts pertaining to the findings from the perception of the practices are POS, individual human capital, psychological empowerment, organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), and perceptions of fairness.

### 7.2.3.1 *Individual human capital*

One path that affects how Partners provide customer service to external customers is the perception of training. Perception of training and development significantly affects Partners' confidence to undertake their job, as a result of possessing the right skills, knowledge and abilities to execute the task. This is in line with human capital theory whereby a firm's performance is directly enhanced by developing the human capital of its employees in accordance with the human capital theory (Delery and Shaw, 2001; Lado and Wilson, 1994). In this way, individual human capital acts as a mediator within the HR-performance chain, similar to the findings of Chang and Chen (2011) and Liao et al, (2009). Ultimately, this results in customers being accorded excellent service. This makes sense in that in a service business, wherein employees interact with customers, the knowledge, skills and abilities of the FLE is paramount in creating satisfied customers (Liao et al., 2009). An important observation is that the job bundle alone contributes to this and the Partnership bundle does not directly seem to affect it. This is an ability mediator according to the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000)

A second avenue by which perceptions affect PSSBs involves Partners feeling good. The data reveal that Partners *feeling good* is a dominant route to their delivery of PSSBs. A detailed examination of the paths demonstrates that certain established mediators in the extant literature encompassing the people-performance debate in reality reflect my findings. These paths are POS, psychological empowerment, and perceptions of fairness. Feeling good is accepted within work psychology as a positive job-related affect (Salanova, Llorens, and Schaufeli, 2011) which serves a motivational role and has been known to positively affect attitudes and behaviours. They all serve a motivational purpose and serve as motivational mechanisms in accordance with the AMO framework

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(Appelbaum et al., 2000). Each will now be discussed in turn. As highlighted in Chapter 2, a brief discussion of some of the mediators identified (perceived organizational support, psychological empowerment, organizational justice/fairness) can be found in Appendix 2.

### *7.2.3.2 Perceived organizational support (POS)*

As a result of several people management practices, Partners perceive that the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. As a result of numerous training options available to them, Partners feel that the Partnership is interested in investing in them which makes them feel that the JLP values their contribution and cares about their development. In addition, performance management initiatives are seen by the Partners as supporting tools in delivering excellent service. By explicitly identifying performance parameters for effective performance along with LMs supporting the Partners to achieve these performance measures, Partners are led to believe that their actual contributions count. Partners specifically noted that the fact the LMs spent time with them to discuss their performance made them feel that their role was taken seriously by the organization and that managers truly cared how they were going to meet performance targets. Partners also identified having supportive LMs which also made them believe that their LMs value their contribution and care about their well-being, through supporting them on the shop floor and reducing stress levels when on the shop floor. LMs were open and approachable and available on the shop floor if the Partners needed help in their job. Partners also perceived that they were supported and valued for their contributions by the LMs because LMs praised them and recognised their achievements. Furthermore, by allowing frontline Partners to deal with customers and only stepping in to support the Partners when necessary clearly demonstrated that the LMs not only valued Partners' contributions (by allowing them to make decisions) but were also there to assist them and this demonstrated a level of care for the Partners. Furthermore, having a role to play in decision-making at an organizational level also led employees to believe that their contribution was actually valued by the organization. Facets of employee well-being are evident from a few employees' quotes that suggest

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Partners felt less stressed and more relaxed as a consequence of how performance management initiatives were implemented and also by the level of support provided by their managers. Finally, through the Registry and the provision both of the bonus and leisure benefits, employees felt valued and cared for by the organization at work and outside of work. Furthermore, in our discussion of the Partnership context, it was concluded that Partners felt supported/cared for and valued by the Partnership. Thus, it can be argued that on the whole Partners feel that the JLP values their contribution and cares about their well-being and both the job and the Partnership cluster contribute to this perception.

The academic concept that captures the preceding discussion is POS. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), POS explains that the quality of the employee-organization relationship affects how employees behave. My findings confirm Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) findings that fairness, perceived supervisor support and rewards affect POS. Furthermore, my results confirm the interpretation that LMs are a crucial agent in employees' POS. LMs' support is evident not only in the discussions around training, performance management and job autonomy but also in a more general role, not only supporting Partners to perform organizational roles but also showing care and concern on a more personal level similar to the findings of Eisenberger et al. (2002). My findings also shed light on the role of other co-workers in POS (Ng and Sorensen, 2008; Hayton, Carnabucci and Eisenberger, 2012). My data provide evidence of other Partners being perceived as organizational representatives and their support is important in the perception of certain practices (training). Furthermore, Partners, similarly to managers, are seen to be showing care and concern for their fellow Partners. My findings support results from other studies that confirm that POS mediates the HR-performance route (Kuvaas, 2008; Liao et al., 2009; Snape and Redman, 2010). How my findings add to the extant literature is by including the co-worker as influencing selling Partners' POS, with no studies, to the best of my knowledge, including them in any HR-performance studies.

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### 7.2.3.3 *Psychological empowerment*

From the interview data, it is clear that Partners feel more confident in their jobs as a result of several people management initiatives. Partners mentioned that, as a result of the various training opportunities and courses, they felt that they had the knowledge to provide better service to customers. They also felt that the performance management initiatives (performance appraisal, PDP, frequent conversations with section managers) provided them with confidence that they were able to do the job well. As a result of the performance appraisals and PDP process, Partners are kept fully informed about the exact requirements of their role. This lessens role ambiguity and enhances role clarity. Subsequently, armed with the knowledge from the training programmes and knowing specifically what is expected of them in terms of customer service, allows them to be more confident on the shop floor. Overall, this results in a positive appraisal of their job competence. Furthermore, LM's supportive style (being open/approachable and visible on the shop floor; having informal meetings) also enabled the Partners to become more self-assured on the shop floor. It is obvious from the interview data that employees believe that the provision of excellent customer service is a cornerstone of the JLP and its reputation. This leads me to infer that Partners understand the level of customer service that the JLP is committed to providing for its customers, agree that it is important to the store's success and are therefore dedicated to providing such a service. Through initiatives, such as training courses focussing on customer service, performance appraisals specifically highlighting customer service and *going the extra mile* as important indicators of performance, Partners are able to internalise the values of the organization. In addition, in my Partner interviews I established that they all felt it was in their nature to go the extra mile in delighting customers. As most Partners perceive themselves as co-owners of the business this signifies that they place a strong value on providing excellent service to their customers and engage in customer-oriented behaviour. The Partners also identified that they were allowed discretion in making decisions – and they identified their LM as the person who enabled them to take decisions to satisfy customers and resolve their problems. Partners remarked that as a result of being allowed the discretion to take decisions, they felt empowered at work. Most Partners felt that they had a voice in the organization, which allowed them to have a say and influence

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decisions in the workplace. Furthermore, being provided with company information, because they were Partners, also affected how they felt allowed to feel that they could contribute to organizational functioning. In fact, employee voice was the single reason cited by the few respondents who did not feel like co-owners of the business. The majority of the Partners felt like owners of the business because they had a voice and were able to influence decisions that affected the Partnership and specifically the Partners within it.

The academic concept that most fits the above discussion is Psychological Empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Several people management initiatives result in Partners perceiving themselves to be more competent on the shop floor. This parallels the competence or self-efficacy dimension of Spreitzer (1995). Similarly, the comprehension that customer service is important and crucial for the business ties in with the concept of internalisation of norms (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001) which is congruent with the meaning dimension in Spreitzer's (1995) understanding of psychological empowerment. Furthermore, data also suggest that there seems to be a congruence of beliefs between the individual's own values and the company's goals and as a consequence, a high perception of meaning (Spreitzer, 1995) or goal internalization (Menon, 2001). Additionally, Menon (2001) also includes ownership of organizational goals as part of goal internalization. This is similar to the self-determination element in Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment discussion and the perceived control dimension in Menon's (2001) portrayal of the same. Lastly, the participation in decision-making within the discussion of employee voice and the subsequent effect of this on the perception of being a co-owner, suggests that Partners felt that they had an *impact* on the functioning of the business and this is congruent with the impact dimension that makes up psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Therefore, it can be seen that Partners perceived a sense of control in relation to their work and an active orientation to their work role that was visible via the four cognitions: meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact. Thus, I believe that Partners felt that both the job bundle and the Partnership bundles led to them feeling psychologically empowered to engage in PSSBs. To this extent, my findings corroborate with previous studies that have found psychological empowerment to be a mediator of the HR-performance relationship (Butts et al., 2009; Ehrnrooth and Björkman, 2011; Liao et al., 2009). Contrary to this finding, Boxall, Ang, and Bartram (2011) did not find that psychological empowerment mediated the HR-customer oriented behaviour relationship

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in a standardised environment. Liao et al. (2009), however, found that ability and psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between employee-perceived HPWS and knowledge-intensive service performance only. Aryee et al. (2012) established that psychological empowerment partially mediates the experienced HPWS and service performance relationship. Essentially, both the studies suggest that psychological empowerment is pertinent only when the service provided by FLEs in service firms requires non-standardised, high-judgement actions. My findings corroborate this interpretation. In the specific context of the JLP, which prides itself on providing exceptional customer service, frontline Partners are required to partake in non-standardised activities (this is evident in the examples provided by the interviewees in response to the question on going the extra mile) and therefore, psychological empowerment is key.

#### *7.2.3.4 Perceptions of fairness*

The interview data suggest that perceptions of fairness guided employees' PSSBs. Employee voice and, more specifically, the perception of the process of how decisions were being reached within that, was influential in Partners engaging in customer service behaviours. Some Partners did not observe the decision-reaching process to be a fair one. On the other hand, Partners were complimentary of how performance appraisals were conducted by their managers and engulfed within this conversation, Partners also clarified how this was conducted in a relaxed, nice and fair manner. Within the performance management discussion, a few Partners suggested that the feedback giving process was not done very well by some managers and this also affected their perception. Another aspect wherein a few Partners raised the issue of fairness was in terms of how the bonus was allocated, questioning the fairness of allocating a percentage amount based on existing pay levels of the Partners rather than an identical sum for all Partners. Lastly, how organizational actors (LMs and other Partners) interacted with the Partners shaped their perceptions of fairness and this was commented on favourably. Partners perceived LMs to be organizational representatives and how managers treated them in their work exchanges affected how Partners felt about the managers and the organization. Thus on a

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daily basis employees would make assessments of how fair the managers had been with them in their interactions. Interactional fairness is essentially important as how employees perceive this affects their attitudes and behaviour. This was also evident from the section manager interviews where data gathered suggested that section managers felt they were fair in how they dealt with selling Partners.

This discussion fits well with the concept of organizational justice. “*Organizational justice is one of the important influences over employee attitudes*” (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 432). Current understanding is that when employees receive fair treatment they experience a compulsion to respond in line with social exchange theory (Johnson et al., 2009). We can observe that the data suggest there is evidence of perceptions of procedural (employee voice, performance management), distributive (bonus, financial rewards) and interactional justice (interactions at work) (Bies and Moag, 1986). Specifically, interactional fairness in terms of how section managers and other Partners treat selling Partners is significant in this context. Essentially employees have daily interactions with managers and co-workers and this affects their assessment of interactional fairness. This supports the notion that in addition to perceptions of fairness related to processes and rewards, perceptions of fairness emanate from perceptions of social entities (i.e. managers, co-workers and even organizations) (Hollensbe, Khazanchi, and Masterson, 2008).

Thus, perceptions of fairness (distributive, procedural and more importantly interactional) appear to be an important mediator in the people-performance relationship. Kuvaas (2008) confirms that procedural and interactional justice mediate the association between developmental HR practices and work performance. Similar effects of procedural justice have been studied within the HR-performance chain by Kroon, Van de Voorde, and Van Veldhoven (2009) and Wu and Chaturvedi (2009). My findings support the contribution of both procedural and interactional justice but find that within this particular context interactional justice is crucial. Both the job and the Partnership clusters affect justice perceptions.

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### 7.2.3.5 Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE)

Partners within the JLP feel valued as a result of several people management initiatives. They feel that the fact that they are offered training regularly and invested in makes them believe themselves to be valuable to the organization. In addition, the point that everyone is allowed to go on any number of training programmes and at times even selected to go on specialised training programmes suggests to Partners that they are considered valuable members of the organization. When section managers spend a considerable amount of their time providing feedback to the Partner about how he/she is performing, this also signals to the Partner that the LMs consider the Partner to be important enough to the organization to take time to discuss his/her performance. Supportive job autonomy indicates to Partners that they are important and trusted both by their organization and their managers to take decisions on behalf of the organization. As a consequence they experience high levels of job influence (Snape and Redman, 2010) which then affects how they feel about themselves. Furthermore, recognition by the LM and being singled out for praise by them, also communicates to the Partner that they are important to the functioning of the organization and vital to the organization's success. In fact, when Partners were recognised for their efforts, they mentioned that they felt *good about themselves*. The Partnership cluster of practices signals to the JLP members that they are important to the business and this affects their self-worth perceptions. The majority of the Partners suggested that being allowed to have a say and influence decision-making made them feel that their voice counted in the organization and they were important, or as many commented, they were *'not a cog in the wheel'*. Furthermore, when Partners were kept informed regularly about matters concerning the business, especially how the business was performing and business results, this made them feel that they were an important part of the team for the business to share these results with them. Other people management practices that send messages to the Partners that these Partners count and are an integral part of the business are the bonus, financial and leisure benefits.

The academic concept that captures this self-concept of feeling good about themselves and perceiving that they are valuable and vital is Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 625). This has not been discussed previously in Chapter 2:

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Literature Review, as it has not previously been considered within the confines of the HR-performance equation. Hence, I will present a short description of this concept.

Pierce et al. (1989) describe OBSE as the degree to which organizational members deem that they can gratify their needs by taking part in roles within the boundaries of the organization. Consequently, OBSE reflects the *self-perceived value* that individuals have of themselves as organizational associates. It is the person's evaluation of their self within their particular organizational context. The perception of value denotes the importance of the self for the group (Tyler and Blader, 2003). An employee's experience at work will shape their OBSE which has an effect on employees' attitudes and behaviours (Royle, 2010). As a result, employees with high OBSE see themselves as vital, meaningful, capable, and valuable within their employing organization (Pierce et al., 1989, p. 625). The items employed in the measurement of OBSE capture the extent to which employees judge that they are valuable, useful and effectual members of their employing organizations. Sample items for the measurement of OBSE include: *I count around here; I am taken seriously; I am important; I am trusted; there is faith in me; I can make a difference; and, I am valuable*. Thus, reviewing this in terms of my findings, it can be seen that all the people management practices influence this self-perception or OBSE. A comprehensive review by Bowling et al. (2010) finds that environmental variables at work, such as job autonomy, job complexity, POS and social support from co-workers and supervisors, influence an individual's perception of OBSE.

A positive perception of value is evident in my data set, in relation to Partners' perceptions of training, performance management and recognition. It is vastly evident in how Partners interpret job autonomy, employee voice, communication of business information and financial rewards, where they perceive themselves to be important, trusted, an integral part of the team, leading to being individuals who matter to the Partnership. Accordingly, my data lend credence to the claim that OBSE acts as a mediator between the perception of people practices and PSSBs. Within the HR-performance research domain, to the best of my knowledge no previous studies have investigated the role of OBSE as a mediator.

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### 7.2.3.6 *Job-related affect*

Partners cited that they felt good as a consequence of their perceptions of several people management practices. Specifically, feeling trusted, valued, recognised, perception of fairness, feeling part of a team, feeling confident, were the key antecedents of Partners feeling good. My analysis of data also highlighted that feeling good was the most dominant path to PSSBs. By this I mean that the perception of all the practices in the job and Partnership cluster ultimately led to Partners feeling good. Feeling good can be interpreted as a positive, job-related affect (Salanova, Llorens, and Schaufeli, 2011). Affects denote feelings incorporating both moods and emotions (Balducci, Schaufeli, and Fraccaroli, 2011). They can be positive or negative and can range across a spectrum of feelings from being happy, content, relaxed at one extreme to being sad, anxious and distressed at the other. Specifically, in the cases of being recognised as good performers in performance management or being singled out for praise, these led to a more transient emotional state of feeling happy. In this instance, the effects of Partners' temporary affective state shaped how they interacted with customers. Partners stated that feeling good as a consequence of their perceptions of people practices resulted in their providing good service. Thus positive affect appears to be influencing Partners' PSSBs in this case.

In addition to feeling good, another job-related affect Partners mentioned feeling is feeling relaxed. Partners felt relaxed as a consequence of the support mechanisms put in place which effectively reduced their stress levels. It could be argued that the outcomes of feeling good, happy and relaxed, all being positive job-related affects, would contribute to Partner well-being in some way (Warr, 2013). Within the HR-performance discussion, affect has only been looked at from an individual anxiety perspective (Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith, 2013) and through job stress lens (Butts et al., 2009). Job-related affect has by itself not been investigated within the HR-performance discussion and this could be a significant aspect to consider for future studies noting the strength of my findings in this regard.

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### 7.2.3.7 *Job satisfaction*

In addition to the above discussion on employee-level psychological states and motivational mechanisms, job satisfaction was mentioned by a few respondents in response to perceptions of job autonomy. A few Partners reiterated that they felt satisfied with their jobs as a result of being allowed to take decisions on the job. This was the only time that job satisfaction was mentioned by the Partners. It could well be that since job autonomy is particularly related to the job at hand, this term was specifically employed by the interviewees. Nevertheless, it is significant in that perceptions of job autonomy affect job satisfaction. Individual level job satisfaction has been extensively studied in the HR-performance discussion (Macky and Boxall, 2007; Orlitzsky and Frenkel, 2005; Wood et al., 2012).

## **7.3 Analysis: The organizational actors in people management**

The organizational agents identified by the Partners as in some way affecting the people-performance discussion, included LMs and other Partners; both of these affected how Partners perceived people management practices in some fashion. These will now be discussed in turn.

### 7.3.1 The role of the LM in implementing people management practices

As expected, LMs play a significant role in Partners' perception of people management practices. Within this, LMs were identified not only in relation to the implementation of people management practices but, in addition, their general leadership and management behaviour has also emerged as instrumental in Partners going on to display prosocial customer behaviours. It was observed that LMs' enactment of actual practices was integral to Partners' perception of these practices and the process of implementation played a key part in this assessment. Nevertheless, from the data we can gather that the

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scope of the LMs' roles differ between the practices. It can be further inferred that the LM's impact on the perception of the people management practices is substantially more for the job bundle of people management practices (training and development, performance management, job autonomy and non-financial recognition) than for the Partnership bundle in this ownership context (communication of business information, employee voice, financial rewards and benefits, and Registry). The Partnership cluster of people management practices in this context were seen to operate more at an organizational level and implementation of these practices were done through other formalised channels. However, even within this set of practices, the LM was discussed in relation to communication and employee voice. In these instances, the LMs' roles were motivational, whereby Partners felt they were both motivated by their LMs and could openly talk to them about business matters. I believe that the fact that all managers are Partners also helped, in that managers were also aware of issues that might be affecting Partners and, consequently, be more understanding.

The involvement of the LM in the execution of the job bundle practices (training, performance management, job autonomy and non-financial recognition), is undeniably crucial, as perception of these lead to Partners feeling confident, supported and motivated in providing excellent customer service. In particular, the LM's role in implementing these practices is absolutely crucial. In addition, LMs also communicate to employees the importance of customer service within this context.

Over and above the enactment aspects with which the LMs were involved, they were also consistently mentioned in a more general leadership and management role. Within this discussion LMs were seen to be of great support to the Partners on the shop floor frontline and also served as excellent role models. Furthermore, how LMs interacted with the Partners, sent a positive message to the Partners. Notwithstanding the criticality of the LM in the implementation of people practices, this is equally important as the Partners feel supported and motivated to deliver high quality customer service, in addition to appreciating the importance of customer service as a result of their manager's behaviours. Therefore, the LM is observed to be *the* most important agent in the people management/performance chain.

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### 7.3.2 The role of other Partners

Data suggest that other selling Partners also play a role in supporting Partners and recognising their efforts and achievements. The aspect in which other selling Partners were most noticeable was in their contribution to creating a friendly work environment and in appreciating the efforts of selling Partners. Other selling Partners were also found to affect perceptions of support (related to shop floor on-the-job training). As a consequence of selling Partners working in close proximity to each other on the shop floor during working shifts, it is to be expected that this would have some effect on selling Partners' behaviours, especially relating to customers. Nonetheless, the extent of this contribution, as highlighted in the interviews, was more than anticipated. It could well be that in this co-ownership context, since all Partners are considered equal, this is more widespread or that their shared goals as selling Partners may encourage such behaviours. The benefits of Partners contributing to a *friendly work environment*, in which Partners feel cared for and happy is crucial, as interviewees suggested that this was instrumental in Partners going out of their way to help customers. Furthermore, when Partners are recognised by other Partners it motivates them to continue providing excellent service or going that extra mile. There is a caveat to this, however. As we saw from the data, a few Partners hold unfavourable views regarding how they are allowed to participate in organizational decision-making; this leads to their being unhappy with this process. Unfortunately, this might negatively impinge on how these Partners behave or interact with other Partners who might hold a more favourable view of the decision-making process, thus altering the work atmosphere. Consequently, the impact of other Partners would be more marked within a team or department setting, as a result of physical closeness of the Partners and the time that they spend together on the shop floor.

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## **7.4 Theoretical Discussion: The organizational actors in people management**

The summary of the findings on the organizational actors indicate that the LMs are indeed crucial in the implementation of HR practices. The interviews also highlight the role of their leadership behaviour. Both these findings confirm current thinking in the area. The significance of LMs' implementation of HR practices concurs with Wright and Nishii (2007, 2013) who highlight the central role of LMs in the enactment of HR policies and practices within the HR-performance causal chain. The leadership aspect in managing employees bears similarities to Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) study of leadership behaviour. Furthermore, these findings support Alfes et al.'s (2013), Knies and Leisink's (2014) and Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) findings that people management activities, (which incorporate both the enactment of HR practices and leadership behaviours), do affect employees' extra-role behaviours. In doing so, my findings support calls by Knies and Leisink (2014) to rename the HR-performance investigation the People-performance relationship. Specifically, the LM's role emerges largely to be supporting the employees in enhancing their abilities, in tailoring their development needs and in supporting them with customer-related decisions. Moreover, the qualitative findings provide a more nuanced understanding and a richer appreciation of the role of the LM. For example, the findings extend the LM's contribution in the enactment discussion by demonstrating that the LM's role varies and is more crucial for some practices than others. As the data reveal, the LM's role in the execution of the Partnership bundle of practices is more impactful than for the job bundle of practices. The general facet of support provided by the LM is also highlighted and this is based on general interactions and communication between the LM and the Partners. Den Hartog et al. (2013) posit that employees' communication with their LMs could impact on how LMs convey information to employees. In another study, Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) established that service-oriented performance, resulting from an open, supportive manager/employee relationship, mediated the high-performance HR practices and organizational performance relationship. To conclude, my findings suggest that even in an ownership context, where essentially employers are owners, the role of the LM is crucial in employees engaging in PSSB.

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My findings further suggest that co-workers also play a role in Partners' perception of people practices and this is, to the best of my knowledge, a novel concept. Even though the role of the LM has recently been included and discussed (Alfes et al., 2013; Knies and Leisink, 2014; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Wright and Nishii, 2013), the role played by other organizational actors in the enactment of HR practices has not been investigated within the HR-performance discussion. The role of co-workers in training and in recognising Partners' contributions shows that they play a role, even in the perception of people management practices. Furthermore, the appreciation of the role of co-workers in creating a supportive and trusting work environment leads me to believe that relationships at work are relevant and affect organizational performance. These findings support the inclusion of relationships at work and the effect of relations in the workplaces in any HR-performance discussion (Frenkels, Sanders and Bednall, 2013). Having described the practices (*what*) and to some extent the routes from clusters to PSSBs, I will now provide a discussion on the mediating mechanisms within the black box investigation.

## **7.5 Analysis: The employee ownership context**

The main research question for this study was to explore how perceptions of people management practices by FLEs affect their PSSBs. In addition, the specific ownership site for this doctoral investigation has led to some specific findings in discussions surrounding PSSBs which will now be discussed. As described in Chapter 5, the ownership setting plays a role in how FLEs interpret people management practices. Even though selling Partners perceive the people management practices to influence their customer service behaviours, they also refer to the organization and to themselves as Partners/co-owners as being instrumental in their engaging in PSSBs, as portrayed in the findings (Chapter 5). This signifies a general identification with the organization and this sense of being a Partner and a co-owner percolates through their subsequent discussion of their perceptions. Predominantly Partners refer to a syndicate of some specific people management aspects that make the Partnership. The interviewees identified these practices as fundamental to their feeling like Partners or co-owners. In particular, the three people management dimensions (employee voice, communication, financial rewards and

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benefits [incorporating bonus and leisure benefits]), have been termed as the Partnership cluster of people management practices. In conjunction with the Partnership practices, the work environment and the Registry together bring about feelings of being a Partner and a co-owner.

Figure 44 depicts how the Partnership context and other organizational factors seem to affect the delivery of PSSBs. The Partners perceive the ownership context through the work environment, the people management practices that make them feel like Partners and co-owners and through other factors such as service culture and external reputation. These will be further explored in the ensuing section.

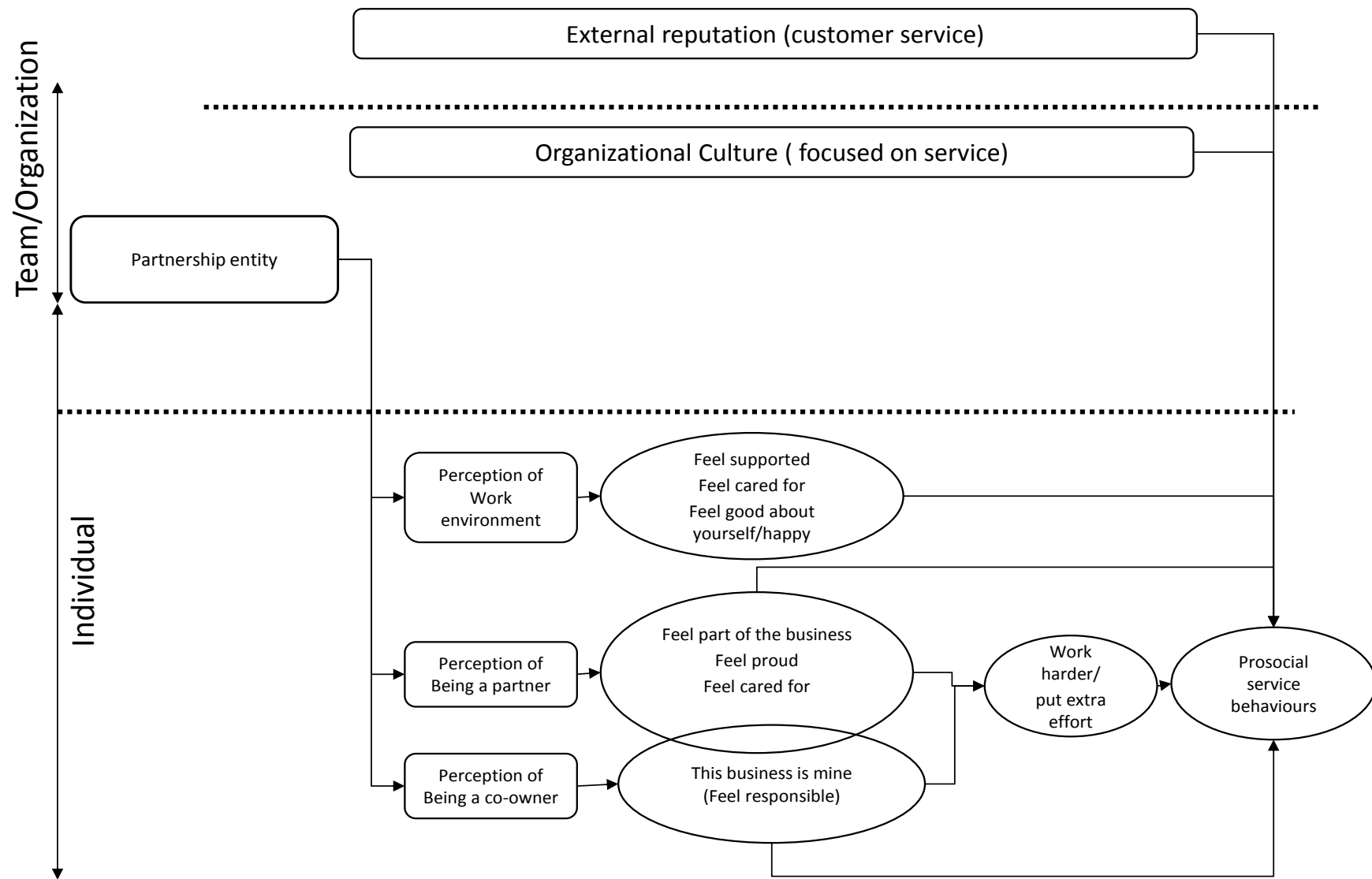


Figure 44: The ownership context and PSSBs

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### 7.5.1 Perception of the ownership context

The work atmosphere emerged as a central pillar of the Partnership entity. This suggests that in this context, the social environment is critical in communicating to the Partners that they are cared for and supported by the organization. This friendly atmosphere in which Partners feel supported and cared for, where all Partners (regardless of level and position) treat each other nicely and with respect, where all Partners are friendly and trusting of each other, and where Partners engage in fun social activities beyond the context of work, results in a work atmosphere resembling a family where Partners feel supported, cared for and good about themselves. Selling Partners also emphasised that they felt happy as a consequence of this family atmosphere. This aspect of the Partnership entity is crucial to our understanding of the people management practices and issues around implementations of these practices. Similarly, when managers experience a happy work environment they would be in a happier state and it can be argued that this would affect the way practices are implemented. The perception of this friendly work atmosphere leads to Partners feeling good about themselves and in addition leads to positive feelings of affect. Positive affect leads to their displaying positive affect with customers, which has also been referred to as the ‘spillover effect’ (Bowen, Gilliland and Folger, 1999). Feeling good about themselves is akin to employees viewing themselves positively or having a positive attitude towards themselves. This then results in PSSBs, such as helping other Partners and also helping customers. Furthermore, when Partners feel cared for and supported by their colleagues, they reciprocate, in line with social exchange theory, with similar behaviours towards co-workers and customers.

Over and above the friendly work environment, the Partnership people management practices and Registry (employee welfare) together initiate feelings of being a Partner and a co-owner. All employees see themselves as Partners but not all see themselves as co-owners. This is not surprising in that simply by joining the JLP, all employees by virtue of their employment become Partners and are known and referred to as such. As Partners, they feel part of the organization and valued, cared for and proud. When Partners discussed being part of the organization, in their quotes what came through was that they did not feel like a number and in some cases they also stated that they did not feel like employees. This implies that being a Partner is perceived more positively than being an employee. Partners felt valued and listened to and quintessentially important to the

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functioning of the organization and this signalled to the Partners that they were important and effectual members of this organization.

Additionally, the perception of some specific elements of the Partnership affects whether Partners actually feel like co-owners. Within the Partnership discussion, employee voice, specifically lack of participation in decision-making, has been unearthed as the single most cited reason for Partners not to feel like co-owners. This is important in that when Partners feel like co-owners they conceptualise the business to be essentially theirs and this results in their doing whatever is required to make their customers happy.

Finally, the findings also suggest that selling Partners feel they are important and vital to the organization. Feelings of being an efficacious contributor and valued result from perceptions of employee voice, communication and financial rewards. Partners also feel looked after and cared for by the organization. This perception of being valued and cared for at a Partnership level is a result of interactions with different organizational agents, including the LMs and co-workers. Similarly feelings of being cared for originate from interactions with Registry and also from interactions with LMs and co-workers. In fact, even though Registry was not heavily discussed, when it was brought up by Partners they were very positive about how the organization cared for their needs and the implications of this in terms of loyalty. Partners also feel a sense of pride in working with the organization, feel they are part of the JLP family, and feel valued and cared for, resulting overall in happy workers in the workplace.

For the reason that the Partnership context, and precisely the concept of being Partners and co-owners, emerged consistently throughout the interviews in discussions related to why Partners engage in PSSBs, it is reasonable to assume that the Partnership system is the foundation for the perception of people management practices. As the Partnership work environment incorporating the interactional fairness element would permeate all facets of implementations, it emerges as an influence on how managers implement, and subsequently how Partners experience, all people management practices. Therefore, from a people management lens, employee voice, communication of business-related information, and financial rewards and benefits, are the people management practices that form the core of how the Partnership manages its workforce in this setting.

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Even though in this specific context, I have referred to the practices of employee voice, communication of business-related information, and financial rewards and benefits, as forming the core of the people management framework, it does not mean that this set of practices can only be conceptualised within an ownership context. All three practices, either individually or collectively may be present in any kind of business, irrespective of employee ownership. In fact the JLP is itself not the purest form of an employee-owned organization as its shares are owned in a collective trust by its members, differing from other modes of ownership whereby share options are owned by the employees. In the JLP, selling Partners do not own any shares and only share the rewards of ownership through profit, knowledge and power. How, therefore, might these practices manifest in other non-ownership organizations? The vested interest that employee owners have in their businesses might affect the intensity with which they participate in employee voice or play their organizational involvement roles. In the purest form of employee ownership, these co-owners would be more engrossed in the functioning of the business and might construe that it is their business. In the other extreme case, in a non-owned business entity, employees might not participate in airing their views or in organizational decision-making in as much as they might be inhibited by the power relationships that manifest themselves when employees exist at different hierarchical levels. Equally, in such non-owned settings, the business may not be comfortable in sharing confidential business performance information with its staff.

Profit sharing might exist in several non-owned organizations as well, but it is only one part of the Partnership equation in this case. With the provision of profit-sharing and similar leisure benefits to all employees in non-owned settings, organizations can still communicate to the employees a sense of equality within a larger team and can also go some way to reducing power inequalities. The implication of these practices which selling Partners consider integral to their Partnership conceptualisation, in reality can exist in other non-owned businesses; however, the extent of involvement by the employees might be restricted. Equally, the friendly work environment is not something that can only be found in this context. Jenkins and Delbridge (2014) in their study of a 'Happy call-centre' found similar positive environmental evaluations. The findings suggest that the friendly work atmosphere is central to selling Partners feeling happy and cared for and this is something that is again not only restricted to employee-owned organizations. Therefore,

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what have emerged as core features of the specific Partnership context are in effect transferable to other contexts? However, it is reasonable to infer that employees' participation and involvement in business matters would probably be less in non-owned businesses than in co-owned businesses. Nevertheless, these practices and how they are implemented in non-ownership settings might be instrumental in creating a sense of belonging, in improving OBSE and in making employees feel valued.

In reality, within this specific setting this cluster of practices, and indeed its perception, form the foundational basis which shapes Partners' perceptions of the other non-core people management practices (training, performance management, job autonomy and non-financial recognition). I would like to add here that the discussion on employee welfare (Registry) is also central to the Partnership discussion in that Partners who did mention it were very favourable in their perception of the organization and this affected their perception of the overall organization. Principally, the Partnership people management practices communicate to the Partners that they are important to the functioning of the organization and that the organization seriously values their contributions. Additionally, through the social networks across all levels of the workforce and the confidential support provided by Registry, Partners feel looked after and cared for.

Over and above the people management aspect of the Partnership, the organizational culture focused on service and the reputation of the JLP were also brought up in discussions on factors influencing PSSBs. Even though Partners were specifically probed about people management practices, these recurrently emerged from the interviews. It could be argued that organizational culture infiltrated all aspects of practice implementation and thus is an important element that needs to be considered in any investigation of people and performance. Equally, the external reputation of the organization is also seen to affect Partners' display of behaviours.

To conclude, the Partnership context necessitates the existence of people management practices that are at the heart of what the philosophy of the Partnership is. As Partners and co-owners of the business, these employees are expected to be more involved in all the matters of the organization. In particular, employee voice, communication of business information and financial awards and benefits, form the core of the people management

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activities within this Partnership system, as they convey to the employees that they matter, by being included and valued. This core cluster has already been identified as the Partnership cluster earlier in this chapter. Even though Registry is a department, it too is crucial to Partners' evaluation of their organization's commitment to support them. As a consequence, this also forms part of the Partnership system. Nevertheless, the social environment, in particular supervisor and co-worker support, emerges as a powerful support tool to Partners both for job-related and personal matters.

Even though for the most part the perceptions of people management practices were largely positive and similar, there were some noteworthy differences. The one thing that affected the perceptions in a slightly negative manner was tenure. In this regard, Partners could be classified into three sub-groups in relation to the data identified from them: less than three years (seven Partners), from three to eight inclusive (nine Partners) and nine years or more (seven Partners). Overall, Partners who had been in the organization for longer than eight years had some negative views of employee voice, regarding participation in decision-making. The data suggest that selling Partners who had been in the Partnership for more than eight years felt that in some way things had changed and they no longer had the same decision-making power at the organizational level. This affected their perception of the role they play in organizational matters and also communicated to them that the organization does not consider their inputs as important. In a sense, selling Partners might be seeing this as a breach of their psychological contract, which they had developed during their tenure and this change in organizational implementation of ownership practices has resulted in this breach. It is worthwhile pointing out that the only two longer serving members who felt differently did feel very supported by the JLP in their times of need and this might have affected their psychological contract.

Within the newest group, who had been in the JLP for less than three years, all the members had worked in another service organization prior to joining the JLP and they were particularly favourable in their views of the Partnership and pragmatic in their assessment of employee voice. It is highly likely that because they came to the JLP from another organization, their expectations of the employee consultation process was different, either because it did not happen at all elsewhere or it was not done well at all.

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Compared to their previous experience, what they experienced within the four walls of the JLP was, in essence, more positive.

Accordingly, albeit tenure or length of service seems to affect the perception of people management practices, within this discussion lies a more nuanced understanding of an employees' previous work context. The more distinct (in a positive manner) the JLP context is from the new Partner's previous employment, the more positive the appraisal of the JLP in the eyes of these Partners.

## **7.6 Theoretical discussion: The employee ownership context**

This study establishes that the Partnership context in some way affects how the practices are interpreted. The Partnership philosophy of creating happy Partners through worthwhile employment is seen to affect how the practices are designed. The Partnership cluster of practices affects Partners' perceptions of who they are within the organizational boundaries. Monks et al. (2013) uncovered the important role played by HR philosophy and HR processes in the functioning of HR systems, the choices that firms have in the ways in which they configure their HR systems, and the outcomes that may result. How employees perceive the Partnership entity through the perception of employee voice, communication and financial rewards, suggests that these practices have been developed to support the notion of employee ownership, i.e. they have been developed in such a way as to make employees feel like owners. Thus, similar to the findings of Monks et al. (2013), my work confirms the role of HR philosophy in the design of HR systems.

Another finding from this study is the importance of the social atmosphere in creating happy Partners. The evidence further indicates that the environment is one in which employees perceive themselves as part of a family, which contributes significantly to what makes the Partnership and results in happy Partners. This suggests an affective response to the evaluation of the social environment. Jenkins and Delbridge (2014) note that happiness which emanates from the social relationships at work has, on the whole, been overlooked. They adopt a social relational approach to organizational identification in a happy call-centre. Work relationships emerge as important in creating this social capital and the relationship affects the interpretation of work practices. It is congruent with the vision of the JLP (happiness of its Partners through worthwhile employment). It

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could be that this is reinforced through established norms of what is expected within this Partnership context. This confirms the presence of a social capital that is unique and therefore, could lead to competitive advantage. To this extent, my findings add to the literature on the HR-performance discussion that is starting to acknowledge that social relationships at work affect this chain (Collins and Clark, 2003; Gant, Ichniowski and Shaw, 2002; Gittell, Seidner, and Wimbush, 2010). Similarly, Frenkel, Sanders, and Bednall (2013) established through their research that employees who hold a consistent view of the level of support offered by line and senior management will experience greater work satisfaction and will be less inclined to quit their jobs. Even though my study did not specifically aim to test relationships at work, the fact that relationships at work emerged as a fundamental constituent of the Partnership illustrates that social capital is indeed relevant for this study. It could also be reasoned that this aspect of social relationships could be interpreted as the social approach to well-being, which focuses on relationships (Grant, Christiansen and Price, 2007). Within this, interactional fairness emerges as a key tenet of the Partnership and pervades the discussion of implementation of the practices. It is worth noting that there was no mention at all of any unfavourable perception in interactions with other Partners, irrespective of whether the Partner was a non-management Partner, section manager or member of the Steering Board.

Kaarsemaker and Poutsma (2006) were the first to embed employee ownership within the SHRM framework; they posit that an ownership-HPWS must include core HR practices such as participation in decision-making, profit sharing, information sharing, training for business literacy and mediation. In my study, the people management practices such as employee voice, communication, financial rewards and Registry (employee welfare) surfaced as practices that contribute to Partners' perception of the Partnership. My study largely supports Kaarsemaker and Poutsma's (2006) framework in that it also confirms that employee voice (this includes participation in decision-making), communication (which Kaarsemaker and Poutsma (2006) call information sharing), bonus (that I have classed under financial rewards and Kaarsemaker and Poutsma (2006) term profit sharing) and Registry, all form part of the employee perceived Partnership system. Even though in my interviews there were a few references to Registry which deals with employee grievances and mediation, the evidence gathered during this study primarily sits within the employee welfare discussion rather than the mediation discussion. A

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reason for this could be that the employees' sample included high performing Partners in terms of customer service and they may not have been involved in any mediation matters within the Partnership.

In addition, my findings reveal that Partners' perception of their roles as Partners and co-owners affect how they assess and interpret people practices. Thus, this Partnership cluster becomes the foundation or core of the Ownership-HPWS (Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2006). My findings do not validate the presence of training for business literacy. A likely explanation for this is that it could be as a consequence of my investigation concentrating exclusively on identifying the HPWS that influenced the delivery of PSSBs. It could also be that training for business literacy may be perceived as being more influential for general employee behaviours. Having said that, a few Partners did make reference to being exposed to training programmes on what Partnership entailed and their roles as Partners.

My results support previous findings in the employee ownership/performance discussion by supporting the idea that employee ownership affects employee outcomes primarily through the instrumental route (Klein, 1987). Buchko (1993) established that the instrumental route of perceived influence exerts more of an influence on employee attitudes than the intrinsic and extrinsic routes. Taking these routes into account, for employee ownership to be fully realised means that employees must see a significant financial return related to their individual perception of effort put in and must feel a greater sense of 'belongingness', in which they sense a culture that encourages participation and cooperation (McCarthy, Reeves, and Turner, 2010). My findings reveal that perceptions of employee voice, communication of business information and profit sharing, all result in Partners feeling included, thus fulfilling their need for belongingness. In addition, profit sharing influences Partners in going the extra mile with Partners being clear that better service leads to better profits and this would then influence the bonus that Partners received. Therefore, both the instrumental and extrinsic routes emerge from my study. Complementing this, the fact that a lack of employee voice leads to reductions in feelings of ownership confirms that participation in decision-making is the most important indication of co-ownership and that the instrumental route is the main mechanism for ownership to be translated into employee attitudes and behaviours.

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Data from the interviews clearly show that many Partners feel like co-owners and consider the business as belonging to them. This is evident from the discourse on being a co-owner when these Partners described that as owners of the business they would do whatever was needed to keep the customer happy. Previous research that portrays this perception is the concept of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 1991). When the perception of the Partnership results in actually feeling like an owner, Partners feel a great deal of psychological ownership. To the best of my knowledge, the only study to have investigated the role of psychological ownership as a mediator within the HR-performance causal chain is Kaarsemaker (2006). In a study conducted in ownership firms, he established that psychological ownership mediated the HR-OCB relationship. There is no evidence, again to the best of my knowledge, of the investigation or indeed subsequent confirmation of the role of psychological ownership in non-ownership firms. Within the intrinsic route, psychological ownership (Pierce, Rubenfeld, and Morgan, 1991) has been investigated for its effects on employee-level outcomes. Van de Walle, Van Dyne and Kostova (1995) established that psychological ownership affected employees' in-role and extra-role behaviours, and that the impact on extra-role behaviours is more than for in-role behaviours. They extend this finding by adding that a sense of ownership may be especially important for service employees with direct customer contact. Kaarsemaker's (2006) study also found that psychological ownership mediates the influence of employee ownership on employee outcomes (OCBs). The findings from this particular research confirm the existence of psychological ownership as a mediator in the ownership-performance discussion and also confirm its direct influence on PSSBs. By doing this, my study not only supports the presence of psychological ownership as a mediating mechanism but also confirms that it affects behaviours – a finding similar to that of Van de Walle et al. (1991).

In addition to psychological ownership, several other established mediators can also be identified as a consequence of the Partners' perception of the Partnership and in relation to their identities as Partners and co-owners. In their assessment of the Partnership, Partners feel they are worthy and effectual contributors to the Partnership's functioning. They perceive that by means of how employee voice, communication and profit sharing are implemented, the Partnership demonstrates that it is interested in the Partners' views and that they have the authority to affect business functioning. It can be safely assumed

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that the mechanisms by which this core Partnership cluster affects PSSBs would be similar to those that have been discussed previously under Section 5.3 (primarily because they are the same aspects of people management) in which I presented that POS and perceptions of fairness mediated the people management performance link.

Ultimately, Partners feel they are a very important part of the business and valued. In a similar way, the social environment results in Partners feeling good about themselves and also leads to Partners feeling happy at work. Thus, the effects of the Partnership, in this case, are in affecting Partners' self-worth and their affective feelings in response to the environment. The psychological concept that reflects the concept of self-worth in an organizational context is OBSE, which has been discussed previously in Section 7.2.3.5. The findings confirm that by being treated as Partners, the Partners perceive themselves as worthy, capable and meaningful individuals at work and this affects their PSSBs. In fact, they also commented that this affected how they behaved with not only with customers but also with their colleagues. This suggests that in addition to the social exchange theory perceptions there also exists a socio-emotional need (Lee and Peccei, 2007) explanation to clarify how perceptions translate into behaviours.

Additionally, Partners also felt looked after and cared for by the Partnership and discussed how supported they felt by the Partnership both at work and, if needed, in their personal life. This then resulted in how they behaved with customers and displayed PSSBs. This can be explained by the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) specifically. When Partners feel valued and looked after, this reflects their high perception of organizational support (POS). In the ownership context, this perception is greatly influenced by the way Partners support and care for each other, in addition to the role of Registry. It could well be that because all employees are considered as Partners, this heightens the sense of organizational support and being valued in the sense that every Partner symbolises the organization. It could be the case that this would be different in other non-ownership organizations where organizational hierarchies could reduce the effect of how much employees felt valued by others, or indeed how much support employees across levels provided to each other and consequently the extent to which that support would be interpreted as an organizational feature.

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Furthermore, as discussed before, organizational members of the JLP perceive themselves as Partners and co-owners. Their presentation of being Partners and co-owners reflected their portrayal of who they were. Throughout discussions, interviewees referred to themselves with pride as Partners and co-owners and the way in which that affected how they deliver service to customers. The term *green blood* was employed to demonstrate that they were completely immersed in the ideology of the organization. They identified themselves in terms of their roles within the organizational boundaries and how this affects their perceptions. Equally, perception of the Partnership cluster of practices (employee voice, communication and financial rewards) also makes the employees of the JLP feel like Partners and/or co-owners. Coupled with their own views of how they were managed, Partners also demonstrated evidence of their knowledge of how unique and different the JLP was in comparison with other organizations. In addition, Partners were also aware of the JLP's reputation both as an employer and as a customer service champion. These points could also influence why Partners would like to identify with this positive image of the JLP. As discussed previously, being Partners affects how they deliver customer service.

The academic concept that best captures this idea of developing an identity relative to the employing organization is organizational identification. Anchoring on the social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), organizational identification refers to the perception of the self in terms of the organization in which they work (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) and is defined in terms of the perception of oneness with the organization. Blader and Tyler (2009) note that organizational identification promotes a sense of belongingness, pride and respect which prompts employees to conform to organizational norms and engage in behaviours that are beneficial to the employing organization. By referring to themselves as Partners and co-owners, selling Partners indicate that they identify with the organization. The fact that all the Partners stated that they innately liked providing excellent service and going the extra mile could also be an avenue leading to organizational identification as a consequence of a congruence of values between the employee and the organization. Another way organizational identification could be enhanced is through the perception of belongingness. Edwards and Peccei (2007) note that the more individuals see themselves as belonging to an organization, the greater their level of organizational identification. The evidence that employee voice, communication

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and profit sharing made Partners feel an effective part of a team suggests that they experience a high degree of affiliation, which consequently suggests a high level of organizational identification. Edwards (2009) established that both POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and perceptions of HR practices could affect organizational identification, though perceptions of HR practices could also influence it directly. The core Partnership cluster of practices in this specific context could be instrumental in directly affecting perceptions of being Partners/co-owners and thus could be seen to influence organizational identification. Even though POS has been studied in the HR-performance context, organizational identification has not. To the best of my knowledge therefore, this extends thinking in the HR-performance domain by suggesting that organizational identification in this specific ownership context affects the display of PSSBs with customers.

It seems that perceptions of being a Partner and a co-owner are relevant to a degree in determining whether selling Partners engage in PSSBs. Partners perceive themselves to belong to the JLP family, where people trust, are friendly with and look after each other. Almost everyone referred to the JLP family, and how this contributed to a happy work environment which then resulted in selling Partners providing excellent service. Another facet of their attachment to the organization was when they stated how proud they felt to be Partners and thus provided high levels of service. The caring atmosphere and the way the organization looked after its Partners made them want to stay in the JLP and continue providing excellent service. Many Partners also considered themselves as co-owners. In many cases Partners stated that feeling like a Partner meant they would do whatever it took to make the business succeed, as they knew the organization would do the same for them. This led Partners to apply as much effort as needed to keep customers happy. As a consequence of feeling like a Partner or a co-owner, Partners put in more effort and worked harder to display PSSBs.

The academic concept that best fits the preceding discussion is organizational commitment (OC) (Allen and Meyer, 1990). OC is an employee's emotional attachment to and involvement with the firm. My earlier argument suggests that the Partners of the JLP are emotionally attached to the firm and feel favourably towards their employment with the organization. When the JLP employees defined themselves as Partners and more so as co-owners, this suggested that they felt favourable towards the JLP and wished to

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continue their employment with them. OC has been considerably studied within the HR-performance both as a mediator between HR and performance (Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011, Gong et al., 2010; Kuvaas, 2008) and as an employee-level outcome (Butts et al., 2009; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Macky and Boxall, 2007; Takeuchi, Chen, and Lepak, 2009; Wright et al., 2005; Wu and Chaturvedi, 2009). OC has been found to lead to OCB (Kehoe and Wright, 2013) and job performance (Boxall, Ang, and Bartram, 2011; Chang and Chen, 2011). My findings reflect earlier findings that employees are willing to exert extra effort and wish to maintain membership largely due to work experiences and thus I believe that my findings confirm that perceptions of HR practices lead to employees being committed to the firm which in turn does positively affect interactions with customers.

To conclude, the impact of the Partnership core cluster of practices and the social environment is significant in whether Partners display PSSBs. In addition to perceiving the practices singularly and as a Partnership cluster, selling Partners appraise their roles as Partners and co-owners. The Partnership cluster contributes to employees feeling like Partners and co-owners, and employee voice, and within that participation in decision-making, has been singled out as most instrumental in Partners not feeling like co-owners. Each of these different routes impact on Partners' displays of PSSBs. Mediators that link the perception of practices to behaviours have also been identified. In addition to POS, psychological empowerment and perceptions of fairness and organizational commitment, additional mediating factors specific to the unique context of the organization have emerged. These include: OBSE, organizational identification and psychological ownership.

## **7.7 Closing discussion: Developing a schematic representation of how perceptions translate into behaviours**

I have hitherto discussed the summary of the findings for perception of people management practices and also presented how the findings are channelled into PSSBs. Furthermore, the key findings allude to the Partnership context affecting overall evaluation of the practices and affecting PSSBs. Based on my findings and discussion, I will now schematically illustrate how perceptions of frontline selling Partners affect their

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PSSBs in an ownership context. This model (as shown in Figure 45) will seek to illustrate the channels by means of which perceptions of high-performing selling Partners influence their PSSBs specifically within this unique ownership context.

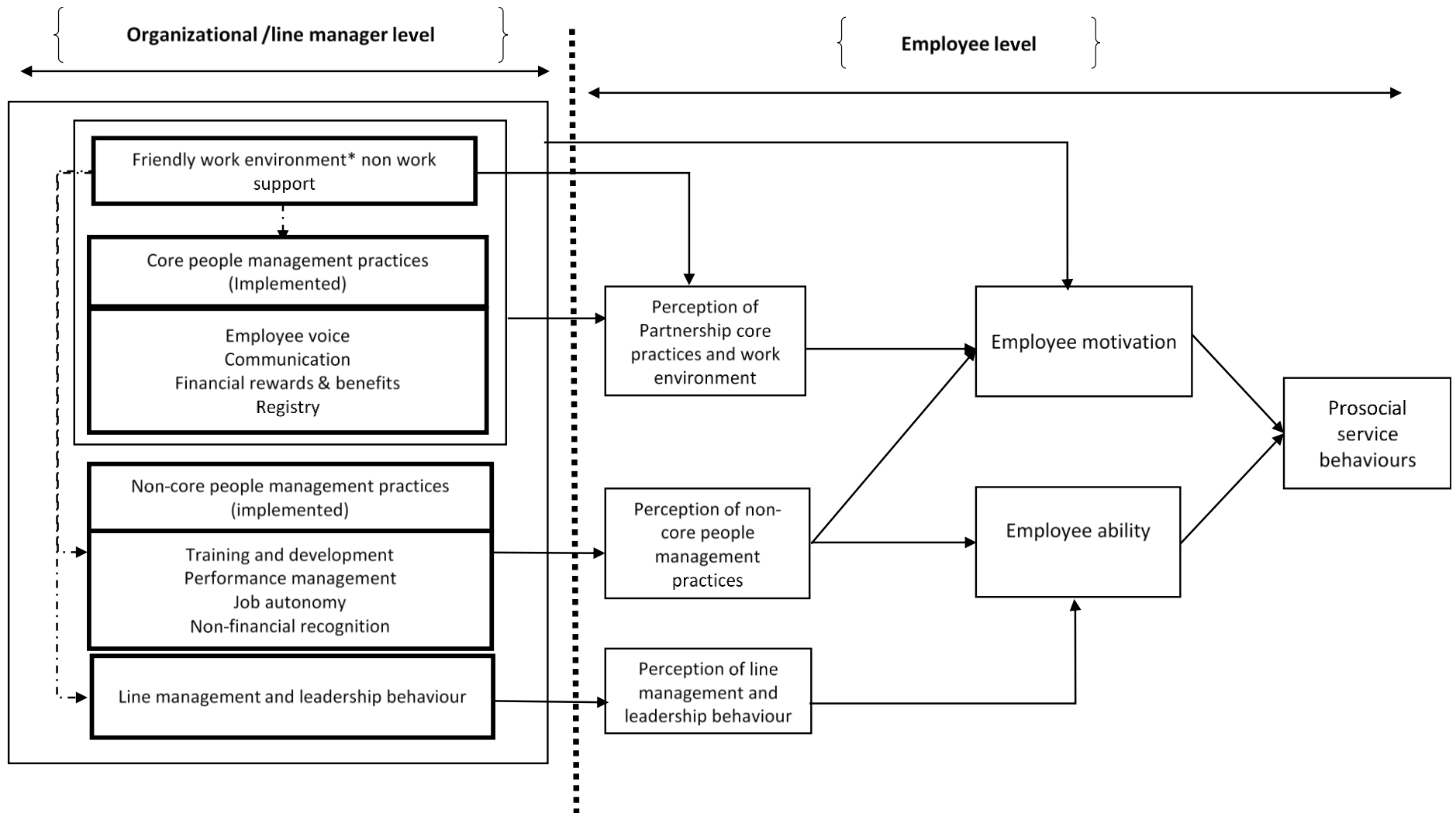


Figure 45: Perceptions of people management practices and PSSBs - the paths

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Essentially the HR system or people management system within the Partnership context is composed of three principal components. First, there exist two specific bundles of practices – the Partnership cluster and job cluster, both of which affect the investigated employee-level outcome of PSSBs through multiple routes. This principally confirms Delery and Doty's (1996) notions of equifinality which advocate that multiple bundles affect the same outcomes, albeit through different mediators. Secondly, the Partnership system is characterised by the presence of a social environment that facilitates trust and respect, and encourages interpersonal relationships and coordination. Finally, the LM's leadership behaviours also emerge to affect PSSBs, both directly and indirectly. All these routes affect PSSBs. These are represented by the darkened boxes on the left of the bold dotted lines and they all individually affect PSSBs. Furthermore, the perception of the social environment and the Partnership cluster together also influence PSSBs. Finally, the four ascertained elements as a whole also affect the PSSB, as indicated in the previous section, through motivation-related variables. Overall, perceptions of the four facets illustrate that Partners are happy in their employment and feel as if they belong to a family, thus suggesting that employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, mediate the perception-behaviour link.

In the social environment, the manner in which relationships are perceived affects all interactions within organizational boundaries – interaction between selling Partners and between managers and Partners – and indeed infiltrates interactions with customers. This is represented by the dotted arrows between friendly work environment and the bundles and LM's leadership behaviours. This affects the implementation of the HR practices by LMs as well. Nonetheless the Partnership environment along with the Partnership cluster is perceived by the Partners as a single entity that drives the display of PSSBs. So, what is the effect of the Partnership entity? Primarily it is to improve beliefs of Partners as efficacious members and to signal to them that the organization values their contribution and cares for their well-being. This suite of practices *does not* impact on the customer service provided to external customers directly but indirectly. The main purpose of this set of practices is to afford Partners the power to influence business through employee voice and information sharing, to distribute the profits back to its Partners through its bonus scheme and available bundle of benefits, and to ensure the Partnership assists Partners in every way it can. Accordingly, this set of practices primarily affects Partners'

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perceptions of the extent to which they feel like Partners and co-owners and motivates them, which subsequently affects the provision of PSSBs. In addition, the environment influences the affective commitment of Partners and also their psychological and social well-being. The intervening influences that have been ascertained in the black box between perceptions of the Partnership entity (social environment + Partnership cluster) and employee behaviours in this context include POS, OBSE, perception of fairness, psychological ownership and organizational identification.

The job cluster is more tailored to the delivery of exceptional customer service by enhancing employees' confidence and abilities in this regard. Nonetheless, the way in which the practices are implemented demonstrates the support the organization provides to the Partners which is associated with their feeling valued and meaningful in this specific context. The job cluster's other role is to convey to the employees the message that customer service is key. Therefore this cluster has a role in both influencing ability and motivation at the employee level. The mediating factors that have been identified in the black box between perceptions of HR and employee behaviours in this context include POS, OBSE, perception of fairness, psychological empowerment, individual human capital and job-related affect.

The LM's role is supportive and motivational in energising the Partner to deliver exceptional service; however, this is significant in that it can affect PSSBs directly through the motivational route. The LM's part in communicating the importance of customer service is also key. Particularly, it is important to document that the LM's motivational role is more pronounced and obvious for the job cluster suite of practices.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the findings from the selling Partners' perspective in response to the research question set out in Chapter 1 and subsequently discussed the findings in the light of the previous academic work undertaken in this area.

The discussion identified the Partnership context as playing a substantial role in the design and implementation of people management practices. It also supported the literature in

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identifying the presence of core and non-core practices in an ownership setting (Kaarsemaker and Poutsma, 2008). Within the identified service-HPWS there was evidence of bundles (MacDuffie, 1995) and there was also support in the identification of the routes between perceptions and PSSBs, through affecting employees' ability and motivation. The findings also reinforced Knies and Leisink's (2014) and Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) suggestion that the HR-performance discussion be rechristened a 'people management and performance' discussion with the emergence of the LM as the key player in affecting Partners' perceptions. In addition, this study also uncovered the role of other Partners/co-workers and senior leadership in affecting Partner's perceptions of how HR practices are implemented.

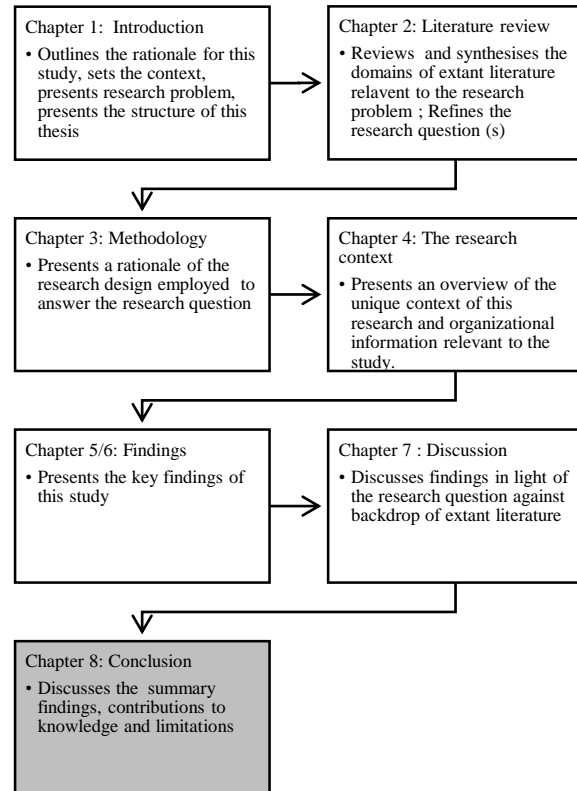
Furthermore my study also confirmed the existence of some mediating factors within the black box of people management and performance, specifically looking into mediating mechanisms between perceptions and behaviours, namely: individual human capital; POS; psychological empowerment; perceptions of fairness; organizational commitment; job-related affect; and, job satisfaction. It also uncovered interceding factors that have not been discussed in the HR-performance domain before, such as OBSE and psychological ownership and revealed them to be linking mechanisms in the people-performance discussion in an ownership context.

The final chapter (Chapter 8) summarises these findings and ascertains the contribution(s) of this study before reviewing the implications for practice. It then acknowledges the limitations associated with this piece of research and proceeds to discuss future research ideas.

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## 8 Conclusion

At the end of my Literature review chapter (Chapter 2), I finalised my research question which sought to uncover the processes by which perceptions of people management practices affect PSSBs. Even though several studies had outlined the mediators through which HR perceptions affected behaviours, it still remained unclear how this happened. By undertaking this research, I was hoping to provide a bit more clarity regarding the ‘black box’ in the HR-performance debate. So the question is “What have I uncovered through my findings to allow for a richer appreciation of the black box?”



This doctoral paper is intended to provide a nuanced explanation of how perceptions of HR practices impact on frontline service employees. The academic context for this piece of work is the HR-performance discussion and more specifically it sits within the boundaries of the black box (Paauwe, 2004, p. 56) examination. In terms of positioning the study, it is situated in the service sector and the specific site for this study is an employee-owned organization – the John Lewis Partnership – a retail organization in the UK. A review of the relevant literature revealed that it is indeed perceptions of the HR practices themselves and not the actual practices that influence employee-level outcomes; therefore, it was decided to pursue an investigation into perceptions of the practice by a selected group of employees (in this case the FLEs, i.e. selling Partners). In terms of employee outcomes in a service context, PSSBs (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997) were chosen as it is the actual service behaviour that influences customer perceptions of service quality during service encounters. Accordingly, the study contributes to a deeper

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appreciation of how perceptions of people management practices translate into employee PSSBs. The intention of this research was not to establish a link between HR and performance *per se* but to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which perceptions are translated into behaviours. To achieve this, I adopted a research design commensurate with my research question and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews (23 selling Partners and eight section managers). The interviews with the selling Partners helped identify the service-HPWSs in this ownership context and also uncovered how the perception of the HPWS and its components translated into PSSBs. The interviews with the section managers were designed to explore what they thought the selling Partners' service-HPWSs would be like with a view to enhancing the reliability of the data gathered from the selling Partners. All data gathered were then analysed using NVivo software and I employed template analysis to identify the practices, their perceptions and how these affected the behaviour in question.

There was consensus between the selling Partner and section manager data sets regarding the people management practices affecting PSSBs. The vital role of the LM was not only apparent in the enactment of HR practices but also in the form of a more general role. Furthermore, the particular context of the research, i.e. the ownership aspect, emerged as influential in the HR-performance chain. In Chapter 8 I position the findings in the light of the literature reviewed earlier in Chapter 2 which allows for a richer appreciation of how perceptions of people practices affect PSSBs in this ownership context.

Within this chapter, section 8.1 presents a brief overview of how I arrived at the research question outlined in Chapter 2; section 8.2 and 8.3 document the contributions of this study to both theory and practice; section 8.4 examines the limitations of this study; section 8.5 proposes an agenda for future research and finally, in section 8.6 I close this thesis with my reflections on the doctoral journey.

## **8.1 The research background**

The principal aim of this research was to conduct an in-depth investigation of the HR-performance stream of research in a service setting. Whilst engaging with extant

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literature, I realised that both the HR-performance and HR-performance in a service context literatures were distinct with little overlap from a research perspective, even though both streams of literature were reviewing the role of employees in organizations. Principally, there seemed to be a dearth of research in HR-performance in a service setting. Furthermore, by the early 2000s, questions were being raised about the theory of HRM, the measures of performance used, the methods employed in the studies and how HR actually translated into performance. Primarily in relation to methods, it was acknowledged that the majority of the studies in this area adopted a positivistic methodology, employing quantitative studies. Other issues that were raised were who actually provided the data on HR practices (HR/line/employees), and what performance measures were appropriate (financial/operational/attitudinal/behavioural). Authors were in agreement that even though HR was thought to have an influence on performance, how this happened was still unclear – leading to the dawn of the black box discussion. I chose to anchor my research within the HR-performance causal chain. Taking into consideration the weaknesses identified in the quantitative methodology, I opted to investigate how HR translates into performance by employing a qualitative case study. Furthermore, I chose to investigate the perceptions of HR practices from frontline employees in a service context and to examine how those perceptions translated into a certain behaviour that was particularly relevant to a service business. FLEs were my chosen target as it is their behaviour that essentially affects customers' satisfaction with the service provider. Equally in a service setting, depending on the customers' requirements, the FLEs might be required to go beyond their job descriptions to satisfy varying customer needs. Keeping this in mind, I selected prosocial service behaviours (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997), as the behaviours most relevant to frontline service, since these included both in-role and extra-role behaviour components in customer-service behaviours. After reviewing the different frameworks explaining the HR-performance chain, I chose to utilise the work of Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) as a basis from which to investigate in more depth the mechanisms by which employee perception of people management practices (both HR driven and line driven) are related to employee outcomes leading to the following research question:

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Research question: *How do perceptions of people management practices translate into frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?*

Specifically, the service business to which I gained access for data collection was an employee-owned organization. Several research sub-questions were also developed and these are listed below:

- Sub-question 1a: What are the perceptions of the people management practices that lead to frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?
- Sub-question 1b: What, from the line managers' perspective, are the people management practices that lead to frontline employees' prosocial service behaviours?
- Sub-question 1c: Are there any other factors that affect this people-performance examination?

## **8.2 Contribution**

### 8.2.1 Contribution to knowledge – theoretical

In investigating the specific questions raised, I have been able to present a more refined understanding and explanation of the mechanisms within the HR-performance discourse and within that have provided an understanding of the means by which HR perceptions are translated into employee outcomes (behaviours) in a service setting. My study contributes to existing knowledge by considering the FLE in the HR-performance discussion. Precisely, this study is only the second that examines the PSSBs of the FLE within the HR-performance discussion as an employee-level outcome. How my study fundamentally differs from the first study is by locating my investigation of PSSB within the People-Performance causal chain explicitly, whereas Tsaur and Lin (2004), even though they make reference to the role of HR practices in influencing this behaviour, do not explicitly situate their study within this HR-performance discussion. My study also differs from theirs in other ways: 1) I consider the role of people management and not solely HR practices; 2) Related to the HR practices, I do not select HR items from a list

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of pre-existing practices but generate the HR practices from the FLEs; and 3) I include the LM as a central actor affecting perceptions of HR practices, which they do not. My work also adds to the small body of literature which employs qualitative methodologies to explore how perceptions of HR practices affect behaviours. It is the first study which asks the FLEs for a list of HR practices that affect a particular employee-level outcome rather than deciding on a set of practices from existing HPWSs.

Additionally, as the site of this study is an employee-owned organization, this is also the first study to explore the HR-performance relationship within such an organization. Figure 46 highlights the key contributions of this doctoral study.

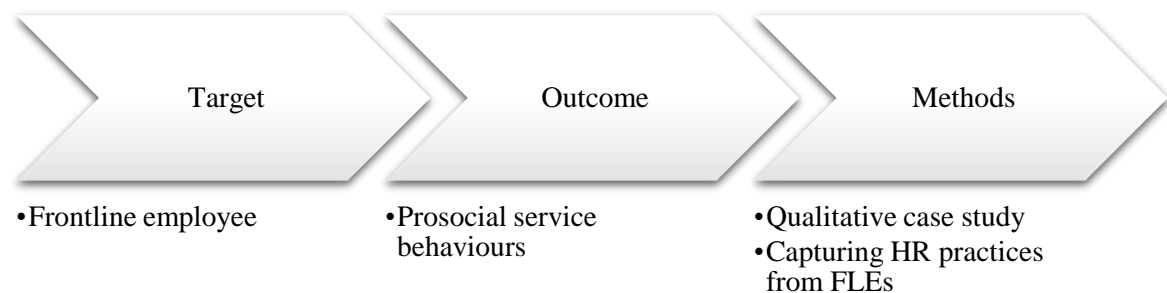


Figure 46: Contributions of this study

In responding specifically to the research question in terms of how my findings enhance, refine or refute existing knowledge, the research makes some primary contributions and a few secondary contributions. As the research question is specifically related to the HR-performance relationship, primary contributions are situated within this discussion. Secondary contributions emanate from the specific employee-ownership setting.

#### 8.2.1.1 Primary contributions

My first primary contribution lies in uncovering the processes (*how*) by which people management practices (*what*) affect PSSBs. In doing so, my empirical findings shed some light on the black box of HR and performance. Within this my findings afford a fuller

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understanding of *how* HR practices and their perceptions affect employee-level behaviours.

My results extend earlier findings that the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000) suitably describes as the mediating mechanisms with each of the three variables affecting performance in some manner. Furthermore, it sheds light on the fact that employing only one theoretical perspective while looking to investigate the HR-performance chain is inadequate (Jiang et al., 2012b; Knies and Leisink, 2014). I enhance the understanding of the processes by which HR practices affect behaviours. However, in order to be able to understand how perception of people management practices affect PSSBs, establishing what those practices in reality are is the first step. I establish the existence of bundles of practices (*what*) which appear to have similar effects on how they affect PSSBs. I determine that groups of practices impact on employees in a comparable manner. I categorise these practices based on employees' perceptions and how they felt as a consequence. To this end, my findings both confirm existing research, in terms of the existence of bundles or clusters of practices (MacDuffie, 1995; Subramony 2009), and provide a richer insight into that research.

My research shows the existence of what I have termed Job and Partnership bundles in terms of the perceptions of these practices by the FLEs. The most important points of distinction between these were that the job bundle both directly and indirectly affected FLEs' PSSBs and understanding of the importance of customer service, whilst the Partnership bundle only did so indirectly. The job bundle enhanced FLEs' confidence, understanding and motivation to display and was portrayed as playing a supporting role in displaying PSSBs; the Partnership bundle affected FLEs' motivation to engage in PSSBs positively. In the literature, the concept of bundles of HR practices has been firmly established in previous research (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Jiang et al., 2012b; Subramony, 2009) as practices that have synergistic effects amongst them. However, most of the more recent literature centres on bundling the HR practices together in terms of ability, motivation and opportunity enhancing practices. So, for example, training is grouped under ability enhancing, performance management is under motivation bundle and job autonomy is under opportunity bundle. In my previous discussion, I have demonstrated that *eventually* perceptions of the bundles do affect ability and motivation levels. However, my findings establish that the paths are varied. For example, perceptions of job

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autonomy (opportunity enhancing practice) result in employees feeling confident and supported, and enhance feelings of how FLEs perceive themselves, thus embracing both the ability and motivation routes. This illustrates that purely classifying a practice under one bundle (under AMO theory) does not reveal the whole story of how HR translates into performance. My findings confirm that perceptions of practices have an impact in more ways than one and this is indicated by how they are implemented and designed.

Within this, in terms of the broader discussion surrounding SHRM, I also offer empirical support to Martin-Alcázar, Romero-Fernandez, and Sánchez-Gardey's (2005) integrative model of SHRM. I find evidence that the universalist, contingency and configurational approaches of SHRM are relevant to my study. Notwithstanding the very important contributions made by adopting a single approach in HR-performance research, I concur with the above-named authors in adopting a more expansive and integrative perspective, incorporating the different SHRM modes.

Furthermore, the finding that both the job and Partnership bundles affect FLEs' service behaviour, also contributes to the knowledge in the discussion surrounding *equifinality* (Delery and Doty, 1996) affording voice to the conceptualisation that different bundles affect outcomes in a multitude of ways.

My findings demonstrate that the job cluster enhances ability and improves motivation whilst the Partnership cluster has no impact on ability but has a vast influence on employee motivation. The Partnership cluster of practices appears to be a key motivational aspect that seems to impact on the perception of other practices. My findings correspondingly add clarity to the debate on which theoretical perspective helps unravel the mediating mechanisms in the black box, which are specifically human capital theory, behavioural approach, social exchange theory and the socio-emotional needs theory. Most studies within the HR-performance literature investigating the black box simply employ one theoretical perspective. The most common theoretical overviews used are the human capital theory, RBV of the firm and the behavioural approach. Within the behavioural school, the social exchange theory is the most relevant (Jiang, Takeuchi, and Lepak, 2013); however, there is no evidence of any research that incorporates the needs theory of motivation in the HR-performance discussion. This will be made explicit in more detail in the subsequent discussion surrounding the mediating components. My findings reveal

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that multiple theoretical perspectives contribute to the translation of perceptions of HR practices to performance. However, in most cases only one theoretical approach is employed and selected mediators that fit that theoretical perspective are tested within the black box. Consequently this produces an incomplete depiction of the process by which HR perceptions translate into behaviours. I established that for any one practice there are multiple paths to PSSBs, with some paths evidently more impactful in influencing ability or motivation than others. The job bundle affects both ability perceptions, via associations with confidence, and employee motivation. The Partnership bundle does not affect ability but affects the delivery of PSSBs indirectly through the motivation route.

My findings also demonstrate that looking solely at ability or motivation alone, based on whether one employs a human capital or behavioural approach, is consequently inadequate. Chang and Chen (2011), Jiang et al. (2012b), Knies and Leisink (2014) and Takeuchi et al. (2007) are the only known studies that investigate more than one theoretical perspective. Within this discussion, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) encompassing the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) has been mostly applied in explicating the mechanisms (Alfes et al., 2013; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Sun, Aryee and Law, 2007; Takeuchi et al., 2007; Messersmith et al. 2011). My results show that the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldman, 1976), incorporating skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from job in addition to the social exchange theory, also explains the mediating links between perceptions of people practices and PSSBs, and supports the findings of Snape and Redman (2010). This work fully supports their notion that looking at only one theoretical angle would paint an incomplete picture but examining multiple perspectives would allow for a more robust understanding of how HR practices translate into HR outcomes.

Within this investigation of what transpires within the black box between perceptions and PSSBs, another contribution of my findings is the discovery that within the AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000), ability and motivation linking mechanisms have a direct effect on behaviours, whereas the opportunity to participate variables have an indirect result through motivation variables. Here I would add that even though the path is indirect, the opportunity to participate practices have materialised as key in this particular study as they appear to have an impact on subsequent perceptions. In doing so,

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I have clarified how the AMO variables are interlinked and support the findings of Knies and Leisink (2014) who reached similar results.

My second primary contribution lies within the larger realm of how perceptions affect behaviours whereby I not only confirm the existence of some of the most commonly discussed mediating variables in the black box research, but also extend it to include other intervening factors.. My findings support the existence of intervening factors such as individual human capital, perceived organizational support, psychological empowerment and perceptions of fairness. This adds to existing knowledge in identifying additional intervening factors, such as Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) and job-related affect, as key in affecting FLEs' PSSBs. To this end, it adds to extant knowledge and theory in terms of the theoretical frameworks used to study the mediators, by correspondingly paving a way for socio-emotional needs theory in relation to the emergence of OBSE. The discovery of OBSE is significant in that it portrays that how an individual perceives themselves is crucial to how they behave with customers in this case. This suggests that the social exchange relationship may not be the only path by which perceptions affect behaviours. It therefore refines the HR-performance causal chain by uncovering another mechanism i.e. a socio-emotional needs path that helps in explaining how HR perceptions translate into behaviour. In particular, the role of job-affect has emerged as significant and although job satisfaction has been studied to a great extent, only the cognitive component has normally been employed (Judge and Ilies, 2004).

My final primary contribution centres on the implementation of HR practices. Specifically, my results reveal that people management activities of LMs are central to the HR-performance discussion. It has been established through this study that it is not only the implementation of HR activities but the leadership behaviour of LMs as well that contribute to the Partners' perception of people practices. This supports Alfes et al.'s (2013), Knies and Leisink's (2014) and Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007) findings that employee perceptions of HR practices are indeed shaped by LMs' implementation of HR practices, but also by their leadership behaviours. Line managers emerge instrumental in providing support to Partners to enhance their ability and in general, in motivating them, and also in empowering Partners to make decisions. Thus, LMs play an indirect role in how perceptions of HR practices influence behaviours. Particularly, my findings provide a more nuanced understanding of how this happens with the LM's enactment role more

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noticeable for the job bundle in this context than the Partnership bundle of practices. To this end, Knies and Leisink (2014) advocate for the HR-performance debate to be relabelled as the ‘People-Performance discussion’ and my research adds voice to this recommendation.

How my findings enhance this discussion, rests around the other organizational actors that appeared to play a role in the enactment of the HR practices. Other employees played a part in supporting and recognising FLEs’ contributions. To all intents and purposes even though the LM is the key protagonist in the implementation and plays a central part in the execution of the people practices, the part played by other employees may also provide a platform for the perception of practices.

#### *8.2.1.2 Secondary contributions*

Having specifically detailed the primary contributions from this study in relation to the HR-performance discussion, I will now proceed to discuss the secondary contributions that emanate from the specific employee-ownership setting of this study. To principally address how the practices affect behaviours, as mentioned in the earlier section, this necessitated the identification of the people management practices that affected PSSBs or the Service-HPWS. Within this HPWS, I show (as discussed under primary contributions) the existence of the job and Partnership bundle that affected PSSBs.

My first secondary contribution, is that within this defined context, I have identified the presence of core and non-core people management bundles. The Partnership bundle proved central to the employees feeling like Partners and co-owners and emerges as the core HR bundle, and the job bundle has been labelled as the non-core bundle. The core bundle or the Partnership bundle involved the practices of employee voice, communication and financial rewards. This in essence reflects what the JLP depicts as the rewards of ownership – profit, knowledge and power. This particular finding confirms the conceptualisation of Kaarsemaker and Poutsma (2006) of the existence of core HR practices within an employee ownership context. They theorise that in any given ownership context, the core set of practices cannot be compromised and this is the foundation upon which other traditional HR practices must be built. However, they do

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not specifically discuss the concept of a bundle of practices even though they place the discussion within a SHRM scaffold, whereas my findings suggest that undeniably these core practices are perceived as a bundle with synergistic and idiosyncratic capabilities. This bundle serves as the foundation stone that impinges on any other perception of work aspects that shape the display of PSSBs. Nonetheless, it establishes validity in relation to their theorising of HR practices in an ownership context. Additionally, the Partnership bundle transpired to be an integral share of how Partners conceptualised the Partnership as a whole. Consequently individual FLEs' perception of being a Partner and/or co-owner affected how they interpreted and experienced the practices.

Another key secondary contribution rests on the perceptions of the work environment which also emerged as affecting perceptions of the Partnership. Frontline employees clearly elaborated on the role of the social environment and the atmosphere in which other employees were friendly, supportive, and respectful towards each other and how this affected their customer-oriented service citizenship behaviours. Particularly, work relationships in this employee-owned context also emerged as critical in employees' assessment of how HR practices were enacted and perceived. Both LMs and other employees (within their department and beyond) were instrumental in affecting how FLEs felt about the practices and the Partnership in general. This suggests that, in line with Collins and Clark (2003) and Frenkel, Sanders, and Bednall (2013), relationships at work are a key contributor to organizational performance. Why is this important? It is imperative because these perceptions affects Partners' delivery of PSSBs. This suggests that social capital (Gant, Ichniowski and Shaw, 2002) is another path by which HR practices may translate into employee behaviours. Within the RBV theory of the firm discussion, my findings suggest that both human capital and social capital are important in this context. Whilst human capital impacts on both ability and to a lesser extent motivation, social capital seems to affect employees' motivation.

Added to that, the role of affect and emotions at work as a consequence of social interactions is also a novel finding and contributes to knowledge by acknowledging the role of the work environment as instrumental in also affecting outcomes. Even though no similar study of an ownership organization exists, Jenkins and Delbridge (2014) established, through a relational sociological approach, that social relations at work are a key factor in employee identification in a happy call-centre. Equally, specific to this

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unique context, organizational identification emerged as a key mediator between perceptions of people management practices and PSSBs affected by the perceptions of people practices but in addition, the Partnership's external reputation as well. This suggests that in this case, the ownership context plays a unique role within the HR-performance discussion in this setting as the unearthing of organizational identification suggests. By doing so, my findings add to Jenkins and Delbridge's (2014) findings that underscore the significance of locating identifications inside their organizational contexts at work.

Furthermore, psychological ownership emerged as a mediator specific to the ownership context between perceptions of some people practices and PSSBs. This particular ownership aspect of the JLP reveals that co-owners perceive practices to make them feel that the business is theirs and this in turn affects how they engage in PSSBs. This adds to the extant literature by confirming the existence of psychological ownership as an intervening factor in an ownership organization in the HR-performance discussion (Kaarsemaker, 2008)

### 8.2.2 Contribution to knowledge – empirical

This study makes an important empirical contribution by furnishing data on the processes by which people management practices shape FLEs' PSSBs. It identifies the list of people management practices that affect PSSBs. The list of practices that have been identified from this study demonstrate the significance of opportunity-enhancing practices in enhancing employee motivation, in addition to motivation-enhancing practices. The study indicates that in addition to training, performance management, rewards, job-autonomy employee voice and communication about company-related information are also key to an HPWS. However, it should be noted that most studies involving HPWSs do not seem to include opportunity-enhancing practices (Snape and Redman, 2010; Wood and Wall, 2007; Wood and de Menezes, 2011). Nonetheless, considering its significance in the display of PSSBs, the findings indicate that it is important to bring opportunity-enhancing practices back into the suite of practices within any HPWS. The study also supplies empirical data on how the perceptions are actually translated into PSSBs and identifies

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the specific routes by means of which perceptions are translated into those PSSBs. The findings suggest that in addition to the more recurrently studied mediators such as human capital, POS and psychological empowerment, another factor through which perceptions affects PSSBs, is Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). This is achieved by impacting on employee's self-concept (or OBSE) of how important they are in their prescribed roles within the organization. I believe OBSE is a concept that could be a mediator in future examinations of the black box.

Particular to this employee-owned organization reputed for its customer service, and to the best of my knowledge, this is the first and only study in the UK that explores the role of people management and its influence on PSSBs in an ownership context. The only other study that situates the investigation of SHRM in ownership settings was conducted in the Netherlands by Kaarsemaker (2008). It demonstrates the importance of the context of ownership in whether employees display PSSBs. The identification of psychological ownership and organizational identification as outcomes of people management practices and subsequent influences of PSSBs, may moreover be pertinent to other organizational settings, especially those organizations with established history and reputation in the marketplace. Psychological ownership could also be relevant to study in organizational settings where the firm has knowledge workers, where the employee's knowledge is indeed the service provided. Equally, psychological ownership might be an intervening variable for any high-contact service organizations where FLEs have interactions with customers which require them to use their initiative and judgement. This suggests that further exploration of these dimensions may provide additional insight into divergent firm behaviour in other institutionally-influenced settings. Equally the empirical evidence surrounding the role of affect in organizational settings may also be applicable to other settings particularly those service settings that again have high interactions between FLEs and customers. This implies additional consideration of these elements might afford further appreciation of the links in the black box in varied organizational contexts.

Methodologically, the research approach pursued in this study adds credence to the developing work being qualitative in a largely quantitative discipline (Harney and Jordan, 2008; Monks et al., 2013). Analysis of the interview data demonstrates that newer influential factors of interest in the HR-performance study can be uncovered through qualitative work (OBSE, psychological ownership, organizational identification) and that

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simply focussing on using sophisticated statistical methods may not uncover these. Equally, the role of context in understanding these measures is also evident when using a qualitative study. This answers calls for qualitative research from Guest (2011) and Fleetwood and Hesketh (2008) to provide explanations to some, still unresolved, questions.

### **8.3 Implications for practice**

The results of my investigation have vital implications for practice. Considering the importance of frontline service behaviours in customers' perception of service provided by service organizations (Schneider, White, and Paul, 1998), the results of this doctoral study are pertinent to the practice world. My findings first and foremost reveal that people management makes a difference to how employees behave with customers. Thus, investment in activities and practices aimed at managing people to achieve organizational goals should be sustained. Within the realm of people management my study shows that in addition to the actual content of the practices, their implementation is equally, if not more, important in employees' overall perception of these practices. The LMs emerge as central to this implementation of people practices and management of FLEs. This suggests that LMs might also need to be supported in their managerial activities to be effective in their people management roles. My findings also demonstrate clearly that it is the perceptions that affect behaviours and therefore employers should seek feedback from employees regularly on how they perceive practices.

From a practical outlook, conceiving and executing HR practices in a positive manner influences FLEs' PSSBs. My findings confirm the existence of an HR system with bundles. The bundles are tailored to meet both the customer service and indeed in this specific ownership context, the employee philosophy of the organization. Consequently, service organizations may be required to mould the practices to their specific workforce philosophy to maximize the return on investment from utilising HPWSs.

Furthermore, organizations need to invest in practices that are ability-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing in terms of employees' PSSBs. The paths by means of which HR

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perceptions are converted into behaviours show that organizations must enhance both employee abilities and motivation in the workplace. My study provides organizations with guidance on which practices can enhance ability and which affect motivation. Fundamentally, it shows that training and performance management directly contribute to employee perceptions of ability, financial rewards and non-financial recognition, job autonomy, employee voice, communication of company information and employee welfare all playing a direct role in motivating employees. This is not to say that ability-enhancing practices may not have secondary indirect effects on FLEs' motivation to engage in PSSBs or that motivation-enhancing practices will not have some indirect effect on the ability to deliver PSSBs. However, if organizations wish to obtain the best return on investment from these practices, it is worthwhile for them to appreciate which practices directly lead to PSSBs. This will allow them to be most efficient in terms of spending on these practices.

Looking further in depth within the practices in the service-HPWSs, employers need to put a suite of practices in place that help their employees achieve organizational goals, as the case has shown. The actual choice of practices in which organizations choose to invest would need to be aligned with each other to meet specific outcomes. Within this, practices, such as employee voice (participation in decision-making and having a say) and information sharing that allows employees to feel an important part of the organization and effectual in their organizational goals, are important routes to their displaying PSSBs. In addition, the concept of profit sharing equally amongst all employees is perceived favourably. This has implications for policies on the design of shared, variable pay. Equally, employers should continue investments in practices such as training and development to enhance the ability of frontline service personnel; this has emerged as key to their confidence in dealing with customers. Likewise, the findings pertaining to job autonomy are important for organizations. This reflects the organization's active contribution to employees feeling good about themselves, by being able to help customers without the need to constantly check with their managers. However, what this also shows is that by itself and without appropriate training to enhance ability, it will not serve the same purpose. In retail shop floor environments when dealing with customers, where employees have both the knowledge and the ability to help customers, this leaves a lasting positive impression on the customers. Another implication

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for organizations lies in how performance management is designed. The finding that employees perceive training and performance management to be aligned is a positive one, as they then perceive that any efforts by the organization to manage their performance is developmental rather than just judgemental. Furthermore, perceptions of HR practices in terms of fairness also serve to influence employees' PSSBs. What does this mean for employers? It signifies that, simply put, the organization and the practices they put in place must be designed to ensure fairness. However, simply designing these practices is by itself inadequate, as it is implementation that affects behaviours; thus organizations need to focus on managing the implementation aspect of these practices to result in competitive advantage.

Another significant implication for practices ensues from the findings related to the LMs. They emerge as key not only in being involved in the implementation of practices but also in how they lead their subordinates. From an organizational viewpoint, this shows that LMs are important to the perceptions of people management practices. Findings reveal that the employees viewed the LM as the embodiment of organizational support and how the LMs dealt with the SPs affected their PSSBs. As Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) posit, organizations should select LMs not only based on their technical competence but also on how well they deal with people in general.

Another facet of practical organizational significance is the focus on the working environment and specifically on relationships between employees, LMs and senior leaders. It is apparent from the findings that this serves as a foundation for the perception of the workplace which in turn affects how FLEs behave with customers. This is something that should not cost much to put in place in organizations and it has important consequences for employee behaviours with customers. Organizations should facilitate conditions which ensure that respect forms the foundation of all workplace interactions. A way to do this could be to include respect and how employees engage in relationships as an element of measuring performance. This also indicates a shift from output metrics to process metrics in measuring employee performance.

Equally, in the service industry, if organizations wish to be considered champions of service excellence, my findings suggest that they require a clear focus on customer service and that all people management practices must aid and rally around the delivery of

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excellent service, and influence employees to display both in-role and extra-role PSSBs. This cannot be done simply by motivational mechanisms alone. As shown in my findings, Partners understood customer service as being the priority in their perceptions of most of the HPWS practices. Thus, any effort to improve the service image of the company must ensure that at its heart lie efforts to ensure that the people management practices also communicate this to the employees.

When asked by employees what made them go the extra mile, all Partners responded that they enjoyed providing high levels of service. Organizational implications associated with this involve organizational efforts to recruit and select employees who inherently enjoy providing good service. Thus, selecting employees who are oriented towards the provision of excellent service should contribute to the organization's journey to service excellence. This supports the findings of Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter, (2001) that individual service orientation influences service-oriented citizenship behaviours.

#### **8.4 Limitations**

As with any piece of research, my study is not devoid of limitations. In fact, in spite of the stimulating findings, a number of limitations must be acknowledged pertaining to this study. It is limited as a consequence of the biases that may be present in any qualitative research study. The study is furthermore limited by the fact that it includes only one firm as a case study site and within that only one store and with that comes issues of low statistical representativeness (Easton, 2010). However, as mentioned in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3) case studies are not concerned with statistical generalisations but analytical generalisation (Yin, 2008) or theoretical generalisation (Tsang, 2014), whereby scholars advance explanations of the association amongst different variables of interest. The reason I chose this particular case was because of its unique context and my endeavour was only to provide a nuanced explanation of the mechanisms that lead to the display of PSSB which I believe my study has achieved. This thesis has afforded a more refined understanding of how HR practices translate into behaviours.

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By the same token, the unique case study site and conducting research only in one store might have affected the responses from the interviewees. As a consequence of being a Partner in a retail store reputed for providing excellent customer service, social desirability bias (Bryman and Bell, 2011) could also be an issue. By framing questions not in terms of their performance but in terms of how the respondents felt might have reduced the need to provide socially biased replies. The fact that all the Partners who were interviewed stated that they genuinely liked to provide excellent customer service and go the extra mile, could be an example of this. It could also be that my sample selection of high-performing Partners (in terms of customer service) was the driver instead of the social desirability bias. My decision to include only high-performing Partners in my study could also be perceived as a limitation. The reason I did so was to ensure that I investigated employees who had been known to engage in both the in-role and extra-role aspects of PSSBs. As the findings suggest, my data are overwhelmingly positive and this could be as a consequence of the population choice I made. Nonetheless, even within that there were discrepancies and I ensured that I presented any deviance from the overarching view.

Within the case I interviewed only 31 participants, who were selected by the company. This in itself could lead to bias. It could be that the organization chose Partners and managers with a positive outlook of the organization. To counter this as best as I could, I provided a template that included the criteria for selection and ensured that the people I interviewed met this criteria. Likewise, I requested that the sample be drawn from across the range of departments within the store. Also, because I was investigating their feelings and not their performance, I believe that positive self-perceptions were not really an issue. Another limitation with interviewing participants is that I was reliant on employees' subjective assessments of their work conditions.

A further limitation was in the selection of the managers. Even though it would be best to interview the managers of the selling Partners to make like-for-like comparisons between implemented and experienced HRM, it was not possible to do so because of access issues.

The splitting of interviews (September and February) for the study was also not my preferred option but unfortunately due to access issues (as highlighted in detail in Chapter

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3 on methodology) I was left with no other option. Furthermore, the research design incorporated semi-structured interviews which by their nature have some limitations.

Another limitation was that due to the time limit set at 1 hour for each interview (because selling Partners and managers had to leave the shop floor) I could not probe as much as I would have liked to. As highlighted in the findings and analysis chapter (Chapter 4), there is evidence of this. For example, for perception of the practices, the Partners cited several themes. Due to time limitations, I could not probe each of them to see how they affected the provision of customer service.

Despite these limitations, my results afford not only a nuanced understanding of how perceptions of people management practices affect PSSBs but also provides an in-depth account of the HR-performance relationship in an employee-owned organization, this being the first study of its kind in the UK.

## **8.5 Future research**

As my study involved one case study site and one store in particular, which allowed for a rich contextualised explanation of how people practices affected FLEs PSSBs, it would benefit from being replicated in other stores of the same ownership organization as well as other ownership organizations to test whether these findings could be applicable or not. It would also be interesting to conduct similar research in other non-ownership organizations to see to what extent these findings would be replicable. Furthermore, the emergence of organization-based self-esteem, psychological ownership and organizational identification as significant mechanisms, should be investigated in more depth within the HR-performance discussion. The question to ask is “Are these only a by-product of this specific context or are they evident elsewhere?”

As mentioned at the beginning of my findings chapter (Chapter 4), Partners in JL did not conceptualise in-role and extra-role customer service behaviour as separate constructs. This, as I discussed, could have been as a result of the customer service reputation of JL. It might be worth conducting a similar research in another organization which is not

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particularly known for its customer service to investigate whether there are differences in contribution and subsequent perceptions of the HR practices on PSSBs.

Further research could also include other employee groups, such as managers, for their experience of the people practices and how their perceptions affected their PSSBs. As Lepak and Snell (2002) suggest different HR systems might be applicable to employee groups and to that end, this would be worth pursuing. I also focused only on full-time employees and considering that retail organizations have a large number of part-time workers, a future study could look at whether the perceptions and influence of people practices differ between full-time and part-time workers.

My population choice of high-performing Partners could be broadened to include Partners of varying performance levels in relation to customer service. It would be interesting to compare findings across these sub-groups to see if there are variations.

In understanding what affects employee-level behavioural outcomes, factors beyond perceptions of HR practices and line management also emerged as influencing Partners to engage in PSSBs. Factors such as individual service orientation and organizational culture focused on service and even the organization's reputation external to the company, were cited as relevant to this discussion. It would be pertinent to include these in any future investigation to provide a more holistic understanding of why FLEs engage in PSSBs. Added to this, the role of the social context and social capital should also be included in any HR-performance discussion. This would complement calls to adopt a multi-theoretical investigation in any HR-performance research. Also, the importance of co-workers in affecting Partners' perceptions and consequent display of PSSBs could be investigated further by looking at team-level research. It can be assumed that co-workers will have more of a pronounced influence in team settings and research examining this would add to advocates of multi-level research (Jiang, Takeuchi, and Lepak, 2013).

## **8.6 Personal reflection**

Undertaking a PhD is by no means an everyday feat. Over the last eight years of this exciting yet tiring journey there have been many ups and downs. Starting a part-time PhD

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with a full-time academic job and with two small children in school has had its moments. I started the process as an enthusiastic beginner, with absolutely no real comprehension of what this journey entailed. How difficult could it be? Well in essence, it was more difficult than I had anticipated but not without giving me moments of tremendous joy. It was like a roller coaster ride; I never knew what was around the corner, whether the journey would take me on a high or low – the only thing I could have done was to prepare myself for the roller coaster ride with the seat belts tightly fastened. What do I mean by this? I found that no matter what happened I could keep my focus and my dedication and this was the only thing that kept me going because I truly enjoyed the research topic.

Through this journey I have transformed into a mature and more critical person. I also feel that I have grown to be more certain of my views and informed opinions and am not afraid to voice them. This is particularly poignant considering this was one of my personal weaknesses as I do not come from a schooling system (in my day and this goes back many years!) that encouraged pupils to question!

I started my PhD when my first son was two and since then I have also become a mother second time round and this has also brought with it its own joys and difficulties. What that has taught me is to be more organized and planned with my time in order to be able to work on my PhD and also spend quality mum time with my boys and husband. It has also taught me to use the time more wisely and utilise resources as best as I can.

Academically, I have grown enormously. I have learned to delve deep into the realms of theoretical foundations to understand the context of this research. What I felt was hardest was to understand and explore research and thinking in areas beyond my familiarity. One such area was research at an individual level – organizational behaviour and psychology related areas. How I manoeuvred this challenge was to engage in conversations with experts in this area to be able to bounce off my understanding in the context of my work.

One of the most satisfying aspects of my PhD was the interviews with Partners in John Lewis. They really allowed me to realise and appreciate the challenges and complexities of working on the frontline, which indeed I found stirring. Having started this PhD with a view to understanding how frontline made sense of the people practices, I am grateful to these Partners for giving up their time for me.

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Finally, I learnt to enjoy the eureka moments when suddenly something fell into place. Within this arduous journey, these priceless moments have made this journey special.

To reflect on my PhD journey, I would like to share a quote by Susan Howatch which echoes how I have felt during this journey.

*“But no matter how much the mess and distortion make you want to despair, you can’t abandon the work because you’re chained to the bloody thing, it’s absolutely woven into your soul and you know you can never rest until you’ve brought truth out of all the distortion and beauty out of all the mess – but it’s agony, agony, agony – while simultaneously being the most wonderful and rewarding experience in the world – and that’s the creative process which so few people understand.”*

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## APPENDIX 1

### Black box studies demonstrating mediators in the HR-performance causal chain

Author	Year of publication	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
Kuvaas (2008)	2008	Banks	Quantitative	Perceptions of developmental human resource practices	Employee/organisation relationship (perceived organizational support, affective organizational commitment, and procedural and interactional justice)	Work performance Turnover intention
Edgar and Geare (2009)	2009	Range of small, medium and large firms	Quantitative	Perceptions of HR practices	Perception of shared value	Organisational commitment Job satisfaction
Liao, Toya, Lepak and Hong (2009)	2009	Banks	Quantitative	Employee experiences of HRM	Employee capital Employee psychological empowerment Employee perceived organisational support	Employee individual service performance
Boselie (2010)	2010	Hospital- case study	Quantitative	Employee perception of HPWP		Affective commitment OCB
Veld, Paauwe and Boselie (2010)	2010	Hospitals	Quantitative	HRM perceptions	Climate for quality Climate for safety	Ward commitment

Author	Year of publication	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
Wei, Han and Hsu, (2010)	2010	Manufacturing	Quantitative, Hierarchical Linear modelling	Individual perception of HPWPs	Psychological climate Job satisfaction	OCB
Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu and Olayo (2011),	2011	Service sector, banks	Quantitative	Individual HPWS perceptions	Unit-level empowerment climate Psychological climate	Service performance
Boxall, Ang and Bartram (2011)	2011	Service sector, standardised cinema, not ft workers	Qualitative and quantitative  Multiple level data ; employee and organisation	Employee perceived practices	Psychological empowerment  Compliance behaviour  Customer-oriented behaviour	Employee performance
Boon, Den Hartog, Boselie, and Paauwe (2011)	2011	2 large Organisations ( one in retail and one in healthcare)	Quantitative	Employee perceptions of HPWS	P-O perceptions P-J fit perceptions	Organisational commitment, OCB, intention to leave and job satisfaction
Wood ,S., and de Menezes,L.D (2011)	2011	Range of industries	Based on WERS(2004) data; quantitative	Employee perceptions on 4 dimensions of HPWS		Job satisfaction  Anxiety-contentment
Alfes, Shantz, and Truss. (2012)	2012	Service	Quantitative; regression	Perceived HRM	Trust	Task performance, OCB, intention to leave, EWB
Frenkel, Sanders, Bednall (2012)	2012	Financial services hospitality ,	Quantitative	Perception of line relations	Senior-HR relations; HR-Line relations	Job satisfaction  Intention to quit

Author	Year of publication	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
		communications and beverages				
Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, (2012)	2012	Alcoholic beverage firm	Quantitative, use of social identity theory (OI) and justice theory	Perceptions of HR practice	Procedural justice Organisational identification Distributive justice	Discretionary work effort Co-worker assistance
Alfes , Truss,. Soane, Rees, & Gatenby (2013)	2013	2 case study organisations ( support services) , waste management	Quantitative, SEM	Employee perceptions of HR and line managers	Employee engagement	Task performance and innovative work behaviour
Baluch, Salge &. Piening (2013)	2013	Hospital	SEM	Employee perceptions of HR system	Employees' job efficacy ( Employees' intention to leave Employees' civility toward patients	Patient satisfaction
Den Hartog, Boon, Verburg and Croon (2013)	2013	Service sector; high customer contact; restaurant chain	Multilevel SEM	Employee perceptions of HR system Manager perceptions of HR system	Employee rated HRM	Employee satisfaction Unit performance

Author	Year of publication	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
Karatepe (2013) ,	2013	Hotels	Quantitative, CFA and SEM using LISREL 8.3	FLE perceptions of HPWPs	Work engagement	Job performance Extra role customer service
Kehoe and Wright(2013)	2013	Food service organisation; Service sector	CWC(M) mediation analysis	Employees' perceptions of high performance HR practices	Affective commitment	OCB Intent to remain with the organisation Absenteeism
Piening., Baluch, , and Salge (2013),	2013	Hospitals in NHS	Quantitative longitudinal	Employees' HR system perceptions	Job satisfaction	Customer satisfaction Financial performance
Yamamoto, H., (2013)	2013	Private sector companies	Quantitative	Employees' perceptions of HRM based on the commitment model	Inter-organizational career self-efficacy Specialty commitment	Turnover intention
Boon and Kalsoven (2014)	2014	Range of organisations	Quantitative	Perception of High Commitment HRM	Task proficient( moderator) Work engagement ( mediator)	Organisational commitment
Garcia-Chas, Neira-Fontela and Castro-Casal (2014)	2014	19 different companies and industries	Quantitative, EQS 6.1	Perceptions of HPWS	Job satisfaction, Procedural justice and Intrinsic motivation	Intention to leave

Author	Year of publication	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
Knies and Leisink (2014)	2014	Cooperative insurance company Netherlands	Quantitative	Employees perception of people management ( HR and leadership behaviour)	Ability Commitment Autonomy	Extra-role behaviour

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## APPENDIX 2

*A brief overview of selected mediators in HR-performance research*

Mediator	Theoretical overview
<p><b>Perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, 1986):</b></p>	<p>Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), POS explains that the quality of the employee-organisation relationship affects how employees behave. POS reflects the employees' view of an organization's pledge to them and the extent to which the employee believes the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). When an individual perceives that the organization is supportive of their efforts and rewards them, they reciprocate this perception in the form of extra effort and dedication (Chen et al., 2009) in accordance with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Eisenberger et al. (2001) established that felt obligation and positive mood affected the POS – affective commitment relationship. Employees also believe that help will be available to them from the organization in the future when needed to do their jobs well and meet their socio-emotional needs. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) in their meta-analysis confirmed that fairness, perceived supervisor support and rewards and job characteristics were the strongest predictors of POS. In addition to perceiving the entire organization's intentions as a whole, employees also tend to interpret the intentions of their supervisors and co-workers in their analysis of perceived organizational support and these agents serve as more proximal indicators, with whom employees have higher frequency of interaction (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Line managers who are seen to implement organizational policies and practices are included in employees' assessment of the perception of overall organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 2001). More recently, co-workers have been recognised as also significant implementers of organizational policies and included by employees in their assessment of POS. Perceived co-worker support was found to be associated with POS in a study by Ng and Sorenson (2008). Hayton, Carnabucci and Eisenberger (2012) confirmed that employees in addition to managers and supervisors also perceive their social network at work as organisational representatives. It has been established that POS mediates the HR-Performance route (Kuvaas, 2008, Liao et al., 2009, Snape and Redman, 2010).</p>

Mediator	Theoretical overview
<b>Psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995)</b>	<p>On the basis of the work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Spreitzer (1995a) defined psychological empowerment as intrinsic task motivation reflecting a sense of control in relation to one’s work and an active orientation to one’s work role that is manifest in four cognitions: meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact. In another study Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) use job autonomy (self-determination), internalisation of norms (meaning) and job competence (competence) to explain psychological empowerment. Menon (2001) also conceptualises psychological empowerment to consist of perceived control (<i>self-determination</i>), perceived competence (<i>competence</i>) and goal internalisation (<i>meaning</i>) (<i>Similarities to Spreitzer’s 1995 items are in italics within brackets</i>). Menon (2001) does not differentiate between autonomy at work and at an organizational level. This is similar to Peccei and Rosenthal’s (2001) portrayal of the same construct. Even though most studies have used the Spreitzer (1995) items for studies on psychological empowerment (Amenumey and Lockwood, 2008), in studies investigating this construct, several authors found that the four dimensions could be condensed into three factor: meaning, competence and an integration of self-determination and impact (Hancer and George, 2003; Dimitriades, 2005). Amenumey and Lockwood (2008, p. 277) state that there are still no clear answers on “which of the two instruments better captures the psychological-empowerment concept”. Psychological empowerment has been established to be a mediator of the HR-performance relationship (Butts et al., 2009; Ehnrooth and Bjorkman, 2011; Liao et al, 2009). However, Boxall et al. (2011) did not find that psychological empowerment mediated the HR-customer oriented behaviour relationship in a standardised environment. Liao et al. (2009) found that ability and psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between employee perceived HPWS and knowledge-intensive service performance only.</p>

Mediator	Theoretical overview
Organizational justice	<p>“<i>Organizational justice is one of the important influences over employee attitudes</i>” (Johnson et.al., 2009, p. 432). Current understanding is that when employees receive fair treatment they experience a compulsion to respond in line with the social exchange theory (Johnson et al., 2009). The perceived fairness of organizational processes and rewards impacts on employee-level measures such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and OCBs (Colquitt et al., 2001). Organ (1988) suggested that fairness perceptions are relevant, because employees who deem to be treated in a fair manner are more prone to hold positive attitudes at work. Messer and White (2006) found that perceptions of fairness at work influenced employees’ chances of engaging in OCBs. Three types of justice perceptions have been discussed in organizational literature: distributive, procedural and interactional (Bies and Moag, 1986). Distribution justice refers to perceptions of fairness in respect of outcomes (such as pay, benefits etc.). Procedural fairness refers to perceptions of how the outcomes were reached i.e. the fairness of the process employed to arrive at the outcome. Interactional justice is the perception of whether the employees are treated with care and respect in their interactions with the organization (or line manager) and the timeliness of the information-sharing that employees perceive to be applicable to them (Bies and Moag, 1986; Colquitt and Shaw, 2005). Academics have sought to differentiate between interactional and informational fairness (Thurston and McNall, 2010). Within an organizational setting, employees interpret organizational procedures as fair or unfair. For example, procedures to arrive at pay decisions, holidays etc. could provide clues to the employees on procedural fairness. Interactions with managers and co-workers could affect employees’ perceptions of interactional fairness. Essentially employees have daily interactions with managers and co-workers and this affects their assessment of interactional fairness. Distributive and procedural fairness perceptions reflect judgements about perceptions at organisational level. Procedural fairness judgements result as a perception of organizational procedures such as how managers conduct performance appraisals. Interactional fairness perceptions would emerge out of assessments of how managers implement organizational practices (Loi, Yang, and Diefendorff, 2009). Thus on a daily basis employees would make assessments of how fair the managers have been with them in their interactions. Interactional fairness is essentially important as how employees perceive this affects their attitudes and behaviour Perceptions of fairness have</p>

Mediator	Theoretical overview
	<p>been found to be associated with positive organisational commitment (Konovsky and Cropanzano, 1991). Specifically for performance appraisals, Jawahar (2007) established that procedural justice perceptions affected satisfaction with appraisal systems while distributive justice perceptions affected satisfaction with performance. Furthermore, Narcisse and Harcourt (2008) identified four additional justice factors that influenced perceptions of fairness (uniformity in reward allocation, appraisal regularity, job pertinent criteria, and rater and ratee training). Sample items for the measurement of fairness perceptions with respect to procedures (Colquitt, 2001) include <i>Are you able to express your views and feelings during those procedures? (Procedural justice)</i>; <i>Does he/she communicate details in a timely manner? (Informational justice)</i> and <i>Does he/she treat people with respect? (Interpersonal justice)</i>.</p> <p>In addition to perceptions of fairness related to processes and rewards, more recently academics have suggested that perceptions of fairness emanate from perceptions of social entities (i.e. managers, co-workers and even organizations) (Hollensbe, Khazanchi, &amp; Masterson, 2008). Employees form perception of fairness about organizations and this affects any further perceptions of any subsequent organizational processes. Perceptions of organizational fairness influence job outcomes (Kim and Leung, 2007). A sample item from the overall organizational fairness scale is <i>the culture of this organization encourages fairness</i>. Specifically related to organizations, research investigating organizational justice offers convincing proof that fair treatment by the manager leads to more desirable attitudes and behaviours of the subordinate (Bacha and Walker, 2013). Choi (2008) found that perceptions of overall organizational fairness influenced employees' citizenship behaviours. Johnson et al. (2009) found that employees' perceptions of departmental fairness affected their job-performance more than organizational fairness perceptions. Holtz and Harold (2013, p. 511) found that <i>“leaders can significantly influence their employees' perceptions of justice through engaging behaviour consistent with consideration and structure”</i>.</p>

Mediator	Theoretical overview
Trust	<p>Trust has been studied mostly from a social exchange lens (Blau, 1964). When employees in an organization trust each other, the extent of social exchange increases. Research has mostly investigated the role of trust in management and its effects on the attitudes and behaviours of employees (Dirks &amp; Ferrin, 2001). The evidence presented suggests that there is evidence that partners do trust their managers to support them. Whitener (2001) and Appelbaum et al. (2000) suggested that trust in management could play a key intervening role between the worker experience of people practices and attitudinal outcomes to such practices. Likewise, Gould-Williams (2003) confirmed the impact of HR practices on trust and workplace performance. Zacharatos, Barling and Iverson (2005) established that trust in management mediated the relationship between HPWS and occupational safety. In the context of the organization, trust is seen to affect behaviours of both supervisors and employees. Nevertheless studies within the HR-performance discussion incorporating the concept of trust have solely focused on trust in management rather than trust in subordinate (Frenkel and Orlitzky, 2005; Orlitzky and Frenkel, 2005; Zacharatos et al., 2005, Macky and Boxall, 2007, Gould-Williams, 2003). Tzafrir (2005) was the only known study that investigated manager's trust of the subordinate as a key mechanism in the HR-performance linkage. When managers are seen to trust their employees, employees are more likely to receive favourable benefits and develop higher levels of self-esteem (Pierce and Gardner, 2004). This should subsequently lead to higher levels of commitment to the line manager and where the employees perceive the manager to be an implementer of the organisation's practices, to the organisation in general. A manager's trust in the worker is anticipated to have a bearing on how the manager behaves towards his employee, and this subsequently is expected to influence the subordinate's behaviour (Brower et al., 2009). Brower et al. (2009) found that trust in the subordinate was positively related to subordinate OCB, performance and negatively related to intention to quit. When a manager is seen to be trusting of a subordinate, he allows this subordinate more discretion and resources to carry out the tasks well. Also when a manager trusts his/her subordinate his expectations of performance are higher. Perceptions of trust amongst employees is also an important mediator between HR systems and employee outcomes (Alfes et al., 2012; Tremblay et al., 2010).</p>

Mediator	Theoretical overview
Employee engagement	<p>The psychological construct of employee engagement, initially conceptualised by Kahn (1990) is the bond between employees and their role performance on physical, cognitive, and emotional levels. More recently, employee engagement has been widely reviewed (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Rich, LePine and Crawford, 2010; Christian, Garza and Slaughter, 2011) and argued to be different from alternate attitudinal and behavioural constructs (Alfes et al., 2013). Employee engagement is defined as “<i>a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption</i>” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 74) defines vigor as “<i>high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest efforts in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties</i>”; dedication as “<i>a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge</i>” and absorption as “<i>being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work</i>” (p. 75). These three together comprise employee engagement whereby when employees are engaged they are energetic about their job; they are enthusiastic about it and fully immersed in it. Employees repay the benefits provided to them by becoming engaged in their work (Karatepe, 2011; Alfes et al., 2013) whereby when organizations afford workers with training, empowerment, and rewards this would compel them to respond to the organization via elevated levels of work engagement. Consequently, work engagement impacted employees’ extra-role customer service and job performance positively. Alfes et al. (2013) established that employee engagement operated as a mediator connecting perceived HRM practices and line manager behaviour to individual performance. Rich et al. (2010) found that employee engagement influenced job performance, which includes task performance and OCB. Soane et al. (2012) conceptualised and tested the ISA Engagement Scale whereby its measure included the intellectual, social and affective elements. The social element was a third dimension to the other intellectual and affective dimensions.</p>

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Mediator	Theoretical overview
Climate	<p>Veld, Paauwe and Boselie (2010) explain that climate is a concept that emphasises how employees perceive their everyday work environment. Schneider (1975) conceptualised the idea of strategic climate whereby organizational goals are reflected in employees' climate perceptions. Climate always has a focus such as climate for service (Schneider, 1990) or climate for safety (Zohar, 1980). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) contend that HRM can have an impact on climate by sending indications to workers as to which strategic goals are important and therefore what employee behaviours are expected, supported and rewarded in association with these specific goals. Aryee et al. (2012) studied empowerment climate and found that empowerment climate mediates the relationship between HPWS and individual service level performance. I have discussed service climate in depth in the literature review and therefore will not go on to discuss this again.</p>

## APPENDIX 3

### *Studies that have investigated the HR-performance chain in a service setting*

<b>Author</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Independent variable</b>	<b>Mediating variables</b>	<b>Performance outcomes</b>
Tsaur and Lin (2004)	Hotels	Quantitative	Employee perception of HRM practices	Service behaviour (extra role / role prescribed))	Service quality
Browning (2006)	Car rentals, hospitality, retail	Quantitative	Employee perceptions of HR practices	Organizational commitment	Service behaviour
Cho, Woods, Jang and Erdem (2006)	Hospitality (Lodging and restaurant)	Quantitative	HRM practices		Turnover rates Labour productivity Return on assets
Sun, Aryee and Law (2007)	Hotels	Quantitative	High performance HR practices	Service oriented OCB	Turnover Productivity
Tsafir and Gur (2007)	Healthcare	Quantitative	Employee perceptions of HR practices	Trust in management	Service quality
Kuvaas (2008)	Banks	Quantitative	Perceptions of developmental human resource practices	Employee/organisation relationship (perceived organizational support, affective organizational commitment, and procedural and interactional justice)	Work performance Turnover intention
Liao, Toya, Lepak and Hong (2009)	Bank	Quantitative	Employee experiences of HRM	Employee capital Employee psychological empowerment Employee perceived organisational support	Employee individual service performance
Boselie (2010)	Hospital - case study	Quantitative	Employee perception of HPWP		Affective commitment OCB
Chand (2010)	Hotel	Quantitative	HR practices	Service quality	Customer satisfaction Organisational performance

Author	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
Chuang and Liao (2010)	Range of service retail stores	Quantitative	HPWS	Concern for employees Concern for customers Service performance helping behaviours	Market performance
Snape and Redman (2010)	Emphasis on manufacturing and the public and rather less emphasis on private services	Quantitative	HR manager's reports of HR practices	Perceived job influence, Perceived organizational support	OCB In-role behaviour
Veld, Paauwe and Boselie (2010)	Hospitals	Quantitative	HRM perceptions	Climate for quality Climate for safety	Ward commitment
Boon, Den Hartog, Boselie, and Paauwe (2011)	2 large organisations ( one in retail and one in healthcare)	Quantitative	Employee perceptions of HPWS	P-O perceptions P-J fit perceptions	Organisational commitment, OCB, intention to leave and job satisfaction
Boxall, Ang and Bartram (2011)	Service sector, standardised cinema, not full time workers	Qualitative and quantitative Multiple level data ; employee and organisation	Employee perceived practices	Psychological empowerment Compliance behaviour Customer-oriented behaviour	Employee performance
Husin, Chelladurai, and Musa, 2011`	Golf course	Quantitative	Perceptions of HR practices	OCB	Perceived Service quality
Alfes, Shantz, and Truss. (2012)	Service	Quantitative; regression	Perceived HRM	Trust	Task performance, OCB, intention to leave, EWB
Aryee et al (2012)	Banks	Quantitative (Hierarchical regression)	HPWS	Experienced HPWS Psychological empowerment	Individual service performance Branch level performance
Frenkel, Sanders, Bednall (2012)	Financial services hospitality ,	Quantitative	Perception of line relations	Senior-HR relations; HR-Line relations	Job satisfaction Intention to quit

Author	Sector	Methods	Independent variable	Mediating variables	Performance outcomes
	communications and beverages				
Yang (2012)	Restaurants	Quantitative	HIWP	Affective commitment	Service OCB
Alfes , Truss,. Soane, Rees, & Gatenby (2013)	2 case study organisations ( support services) , waste management	Quantitative, SEM	Employee perceptions of HR and line managers	Employee engagement	Task performance and innovative work behaviour
Baluch, Salge and Piening (2013)	Hospital	Quantitative (SEM)	Employee perceptions of HR system	Employees' job efficacy ( Employees' intention to leave Employees' civility toward patients	Patient satisfaction
Den Hartog, Boon, Verburg and Croon(2013)	Service sector; high customer contact; restaurant chain	Multilevel SEM	Employee perceptions of HR system Manager perceptions of HR system		Employee satisfaction Unit performance
Kehoe and Patrick Wright(2013)	Food service organisation; Service sector	CWC(M) mediation analysis	Employees' perceptions of high performance HR practices	Affective commitment	OCB Intent to remain with the organisation Absenteeism
Piening, Baluch, , and Salge (2013)	Hospitals in NHS	Quantitative longitudinal	Employees' HR system perceptions	Job satisfaction	Customer satisfaction Financial performance
Knies and Leisink (2014)	Cooperative insurance company	Quantitative	Employees perception of people management ( HR and leadership behaviour)	Ability Commitment Autonomy	Extra-role behaviour
Karatepe (2014)	Airlines	Quantitative	FLE perceptions of HPWPs		POS Turnover intentions

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## APPENDIX 4

### *Prosocial service behaviour scale items*

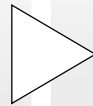
*(Bettencourt and Brown, 1997)*

#### **In-role/prescribed behaviour**

1. I perform all of those tasks for customers that are required of me by management.
2. I meet formal performance requirements when serving customers.
3. I fulfil responsibilities to customers as specified in my job description.
4. I adequately complete all expected customer-service behaviours.
5. I help customers with those things that are required of me by management.
6. I rarely go beyond my strict job requirements in serving customers.

#### **Extra-role behaviour**

1. I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond job requirements.
2. I help customers with problems beyond what is expected or required of me by management.
3. I often go beyond the call of duty when serving customers.
4. I willingly go out of my way to make a customer satisfied.
5. I frequently go out of my way to help customers.
6. I enjoy going the extra mile to make a customer satisfied.
7. I do not feel it is necessary to assist customers beyond my job requirements



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## APPENDIX 5

### *Interview guide adopted for the exploratory study*

1. When did you join John Lewis?
2. What attracted you to join John Lewis?
3. I understand that you are in the \_\_\_\_\_ department. Tell me a bit about your department. Could you tell me a bit about what your job is?
4. Do you understand what commitment to customer service means? Could you please elaborate?
5. Think of a colleague who in your mind is very committed to delivering customer service.
  - a. Why do you think so?
  - b. How do you know?
  - c. What do you think makes him/her be so committed?
6. What are the factors that you think affects your commitment to customer service?
  - a. Elaborate.
7. Tell me what you understand by ownership/partnership.
  - a. Tell me a bit about what being a partner in John Lewis means.
8. Do you believe you actually 'own' John Lewis?
  - a. If so, how do you feel?
  - b. How do you think this affects you in your day to day operations?
9. What do you think are the values that are important to John Lewis?
10. What makes John Lewis different from other retail stores?
  - a. What are John Lewis' views on customer service?
11. Could you describe what you understand by excellent customer service?
  - a. Tell me about an incident when you felt you delivered excellent customer service.

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- i. Why did you do what you did? What influenced you to provide this high level of service?
12. Now, could you describe what you understand by poor customer service?
- a. Tell me about an incident when you felt you could not deliver good customer service or you observed someone in John Lewis unable to deliver good customer service.
    - i. Why did you/they do that? What inhibited you/the person you observed in providing the level of service that was required?
13. What do you think the personnel department does for you?
- a. Tell me a bit about how that is done in practice.
    - i. Probe: line manager, role of line manager
  - b. How well does it work? Should anything be changed, and if so, what could be changed?
  - c. What kind of messages are these communicating to you?
  - d. How does that influence you in your job?
    - i. Does this impact on how you feel/behave about/towards your customers? How?
14. Do departments differ in the level of customer service they provide to their customers? Why or why not?
- a. Probe: people practices, line manager
15. What do you think could be done to improve the level of customer service John Lewis partners provide?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

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## APPENDIX 6

### *Interview guide adopted for the main study*

1. Tell me a bit about how long you have been in John Lewis and your role in John Lewis.
2. What are the values of John Lewis?
3. What do you think John Lewis expects you to achieve in your role?
4. What makes John Lewis different from other retail stores?

Let's now move to customer service.

5. What help does John Lewis give you to provide excellent customer service?  
How does John Lewis help you to provide excellent service?
  - i. Probe on each tool/practices identified in the above question.
    1. How is it done in practice? How does it contribute to you providing this high level of service?
    2. Probe : line manager
    3. What is your overall perception of your experience with this practice been?
    4. How would you explain how this perception affects you in how you provide excellent service?
    - 5.
6. In what way do you go the extra mile to make the customer happy? Examples.
  - a. Why do you act in this way? What influences you to provide this high level of service?
  - b. How does John Lewis help you to go the extra mile?
    - i. Probe on each practices/tool identified in the above question.
      1. How is it done in practice? How does it contribute to you providing this high level of service?
      2. Probe : line manager
      3. What is your overall perception of your experience with this practice been?

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4. How would you explain how this perception affects you in how you go the extra mile for your customers?
7. What do you expect from Personnel in John Lewis? Could you elaborate please?
- Why do you have these expectations?
  - What is your overall perception of Personnel?
  - Does this perception affect you in your job? Why or why not?
8. What does being a partner mean to you?
- What is it in your day to day job that makes you feel it is a partnership/co-ownership?
  - Do you feel like a co-owner? Explain.
  - How does this affect you in how you go about your daily job?
  - Could you please explain/elaborate on that further? Can you please help me understand how this happens?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

## APPENDIX 7

### *Rationale behind questions in the Interview Guide*

Questions	Question Type	Reason
1. Introductory questions  <i>Tell me a bit about how long you have been in John Lewis and your role in John Lewis.</i>	General	Rapport building
2. <i>What are the values of John Lewis?</i>	Open	Understand what the partners think are the values important to John Lewis and also to find out the importance placed on customer service.
3. <i>What do you think John Lewis expects you to achieve in your role?</i>	Open	Ascertain perceived expectations of their role as frontline employees
4. <i>What makes John Lewis different from other retail stores?</i>	Open	Understand contextual factors and people practices that affect the frontline employees
5. <i>How does John Lewis help you to provide excellent service?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How is it done in practice? How does it contribute to you providing this high level of service?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the role of the LM in this?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your overall perception of your experience with this practice been?</i></li> </ul>	Open with probes	Establish perceived tools/practices (from HR/Personnel and from ownership aspects) that help employees to deliver excellent service (in-role customer service) and also how these practices help/contribute to the service behaviour of the partners. Specifically explore how each perceived practice finally translates into observable customer service behaviours.

Questions	Question Type	Reason
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How would you explain how this perception affects you in how you provide excellent service?</i></li> </ul> <p>6. <i>In what way do you go the extra mile to make the customer happy? Examples.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does John Lewis help you to go the extra mile?</i></li> <li>• <i>How is it done in practice? How does it contribute to you providing this high level of service?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the role of the LM in this?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your overall perception of your experience with this practice been?</i></li> <li>• <i>How would you explain how this perception affects you in how you go the extra mile for your customers?</i></li> </ul>	Open with probes	Allows for subjective interpretation of extra role behaviours (extra-role customer service behaviours) and focusing the respondent on how JL helps them to engage in such prosocial behaviours.
<p>7. <i>What do you expect from Personnel in John Lewis? Could you elaborate please?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Why do you have these expectations?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your overall perception of Personnel?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does this perception affect you in your job?? If yes, how? If no, why not?</i></li> </ul>	Open with probes	Understand what the partners expect from the Personnel and situate the discussion in the ownership context and also explore how these perceptions of the Personnel department influence them in their jobs
<p>8. <i>What does being a partner mean to you?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is it in your day to day job that makes you feel it is a partnership/co-ownership?</i></li> </ul>	Open with probes	Ascertain respondent's understanding of what it means to be a partner and also explore how their perceptions of management

Questions	Question Type	Reason
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do you feel like a co-owner? Explain.</i></li> <li>• <i>How does this affect you in how you go about your daily job?</i></li> </ul> <p>9. <i>Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?</i></p>	Open	<p>practices they associate with ownership affect them in their daily jobs.</p> <p>Allow the respondent to include any other issues that he/she perceived to be relevant, which my questions may not have touched upon.</p>

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## APPENDIX 8

### *Demographic breakdown of respondents (Selling partners and section managers)*

#### *Selling partners:*

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Hailey	F	Fashion	Less than a year
Jason	M	Fashion	< 1
Alex	M	Home	< 1
Mark	M	Home	2
Greg	M	Home	2
Maddox	M	Home	2
Amber	F	Commercial support	2.5
Rupert	M	Fashion	3
Kim	F	Fashion	3
Laila	F	Home	3
Thula	F	Fashion	3.5
Bailey	M	Home	4
Roger	M	Fashion	5
Carmen	F	Home	6

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Delia	F	Home	8
Bella	F	Home	8
Mia	F	Fashion	9
Aliya	F	Home	11
Sophie	F	Fashion	12
Abbie	F	Home	15
Ruby	F	Home	15
Amelie	F	Fashion	23
George	M	Commercial support	32

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*Section managers:*

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Sebastian	M	Home	2
Aaron	M	Fashion	7
Carys	F	Home	8
Lionel	M	Fashion	16
Viola	F	Home	16
Polly	F	Home	24
Gabriel	M	Commercial support	27
Rita	F	Home	33

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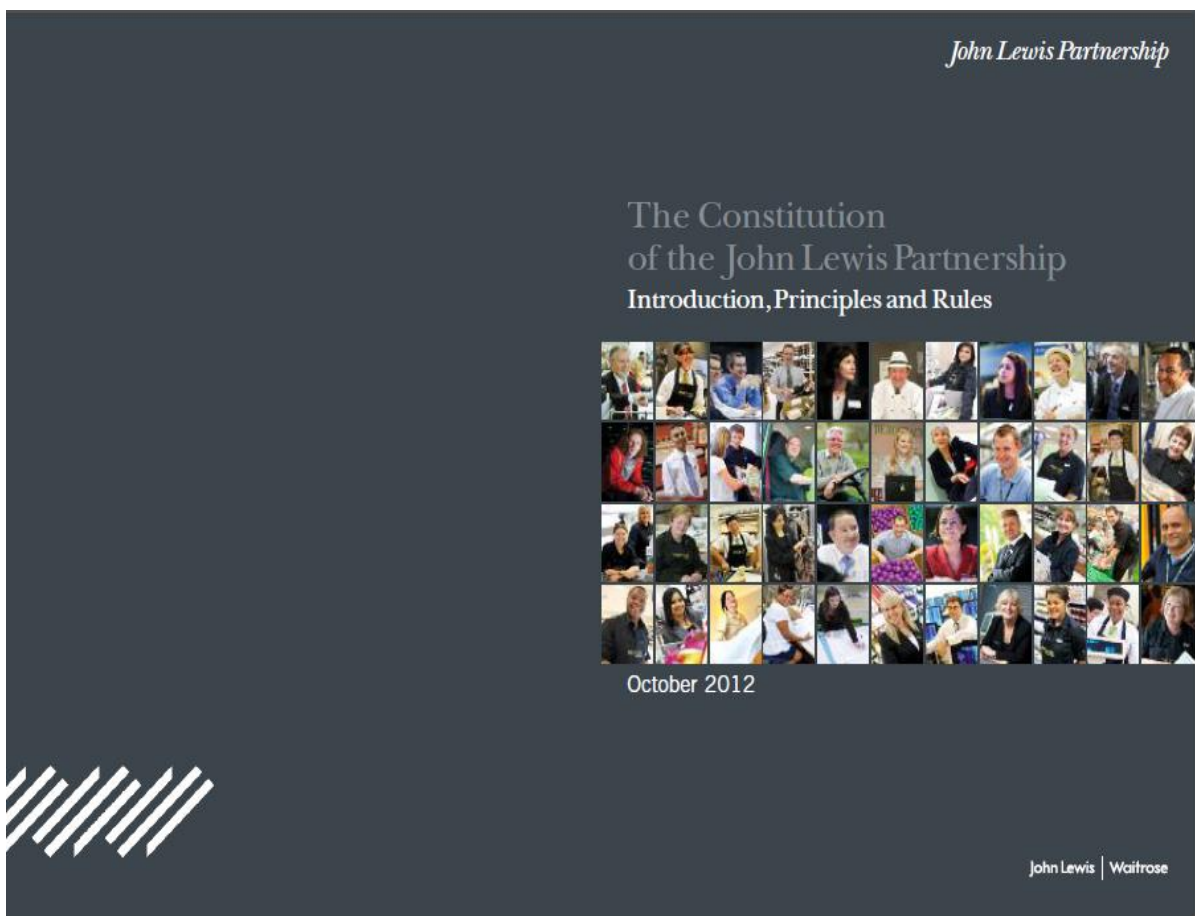
## APPENDIX 9

### *John Lewis<sup>5</sup> Partnership – The Constitution*



Constitution.pdf

*(Click on the icon to access the pdf document)*



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<sup>5</sup> For appendices related to JL data, please note that this document only includes those pages that have been referred to in the document. An additional document with all the pages in all the mentioned documents can be requested from the PhD office.

- 7 The Constitution applies to all Partners (and to all other employees as described in their contracts of employment) and in all units of the Partnership's business, except when:
  - (i) specific provision is made in the Rules for more limited application; or
  - (ii) the Chairman has excluded specific parts of the Partnership's business from specific Rules.
- 8 Every Partner is responsible for knowing, complying with and upholding the Partnership's Principles and those Rules which concern him.
- 9 In the Partnership's Constitution, unless the context requires otherwise, the masculine includes the feminine and the singular the plural and vice versa.

## Part 2 – Principles

### Purpose

- 1 The Partnership's ultimate purpose is the happiness of all its members, through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business. Because the Partnership is owned in trust for its members, they share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power.

### Power

- 2 Power in the Partnership is shared between three governing authorities, the Partnership Council, the Partnership Board and the Chairman.

### Profit

- 3 The Partnership aims to make sufficient profit from its trading operations to sustain its commercial vitality, to finance its continued development, to distribute a share of those profits each year to its members, and to enable it to undertake other activities consistent with its ultimate purpose.

### Members

- 4 The Partnership aims to employ and retain as its members people of ability and integrity who are committed to working together and to supporting its Principles. Relationships are based on mutual respect and courtesy, with as much equality between its members as differences of responsibility permit. The Partnership aims to recognise their individual contributions and reward them fairly.

### Customers

- 5 The Partnership aims to deal honestly with its customers and secure their loyalty and trust by providing outstanding choice, value and service.

- 91 Registrars must encourage understanding about the Partnership and be channels of communication between Partners in the branches they cover and other Partnership authorities. They act as local representatives of the Partners' Counsellor.
- 92 Registrars will do all they can to provide helpful advice to Partners about any matter.

## Section 3 – Responsibilities to others

### Customers

- 93 The Partnership aims to offer its customers the best value in the marketplace for goods and services of comparable quality and availability. Prices must be as low as is consistent with achieving sufficient profit.
- 94 The Partnership must deal honestly, fairly, courteously and promptly with customers, and respond generously to complaints or claims made in good faith.
- 95 The Partnership must not take advantage of a customer's ignorance, and must do everything reasonably possible to put matters right if it inadvertently does so.

### Suppliers

- 96 The Partnership's relationships with its suppliers must be based, as with its customers, on honesty, fairness, courtesy and promptness. It looks for a similar attitude throughout its supply chains. In particular, the Partnership expects its suppliers to obey the law and to respect the wellbeing of their employees, their local communities and the environment.
- 97 The Partnership values long-term cooperation with its suppliers. But it must carefully weigh the risk of vulnerability before becoming unduly dependent on any supplier or group of suppliers, and it should not seek to make any supplier unwillingly dependent on the Partnership.
- 98 The Partnership must inform every supplier promptly of the guidelines and rules that concern its relationships with suppliers.

## APPENDIX 10

### *John Lewis Partnership – Welcome booklet*



welcome\_booklet.pdf

*(Click on the icon to access the pdf document)*

# A different way to do business

#### **The First Principle**

Spencer Lewis wrote in the Constitution that "The Partnership's ultimate purpose is the happiness of all its members through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business."

He then went on to write that "Because the Partnership is owned in trust for its members, they share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards - profit, knowledge and power".

It puts the happiness of Partners at the heart of how the we operate, and empowers individuals to get involved and share responsibility for the business.

**But the Constitution was written over 80 years ago, so how does Principle 1 work in today's modern Partnership?**

#### **Our democracy: The power**

One of the key differences between the John Lewis Partnership and other companies is that we are all co-owners: we share responsibility for the success of our business and influence what happens by voicing our views and opinions.

There are many different ways to do this. At its simplest, we encourage you to talk to your manager and colleagues on a daily basis about what is going well in your department and discuss any ideas you might have to make improvements.

However, we also have a more formal democratic structure, which is made up of elected groups of Partners at all levels of the business.

These elected Partners will represent your views and engage with senior managers on your behalf. An overview of this structure is shown on the opposite page.



The Partnership Aims (or) set the direction for the Partnership's business strategy and how we will achieve Principle 1 in the next 3 to 5 years. The Aims identify how we will compete, what behaviours are required and how we will judge success.



## The profit, the knowledge, the power



The Partnership democracy in action  
Members of the Partnership Council vote on key decisions



**The Gazette and the Chronicle**  
Most publications are printed weekly

The Gazette is the 'national newspaper' of the Partnership. Its news pages, analysis and features allow Partners to take the temperature of the business in an entertaining, engaging and useful way. The Partnership has 33 Chronicles, which are the 'local' weekly magazines that complement the Gazette. They vary in size, frequency and format depending on their readership.

**The benefits of ownership: The profit**

The most tangible advantage of being a Partner is the annual Partnership Bonus, when we distribute a proportion of profits equally to Partners as a percentage of salary. But the Partnership has always believed that there is more to a job than just work and pay.

So, on top of your pay and annual bonus, you can expect to receive an extensive range of market-leading financial benefits.

**These include:**

- ▶ Pension (final salary, non-contributory)
- ▶ Discount in our shops (25% in John Lewis shops\* and 15% in Waitrose supermarkets\*)
- ▶ Life assurance, worth 3 times your salary
- ▶ Subsidised food
- ▶ Access to any of our holiday centres located across the country

- ▶ Membership to a wide variety of clubs and societies, including golf, sailing, music and art
- ▶ Subsidy for concerts, sporting events and further education
- ▶ Discounts on holidays, restaurants and theme parks
- ▶ Savings on insurance, healthcare and even driving lessons.

In fact, there is too much to list here, so have a look in your **PartnerChoice** booklet that you received with this pack.

**Open communication: The knowledge Journalism**

The Partnership has several publications that keep Partners informed about business developments and they also play an important role in promoting our unique democracy. Our company-wide weekly publication, the Gazette, was set up by our founder both to communicate news to

Partners and to give them a forum for airing their views.

To this day, Partners can write in to the Gazette anonymously if they choose, about any subject or issue and expect a reply. In addition to the Gazette, the Chronicle is a weekly magazine that keeps Partners up-to-date on their divisional and local news.

**Partner Survey**

We also carry out an annual Partner Survey which helps us to create a working environment where everyone feels valued and can reach their potential.

The anonymous survey includes questions about how you feel as a Partner, your views about your manager and how you think the business is run. The questions are all based around **Principle 1**.

\* there are some exceptions to discount rates



**Partnership Clubs & Societies**

The Partnership offers lots of opportunities to try something new

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## APPENDIX 11

### *John Lewis Partnership – Selling partner role profile*

Selling Partner

role profile

#### Purpose of Role

To make a full contribution to the successful achievement of the department's business plan objectives. To demonstrate complete commitment to achieve customer service satisfaction targets by offering care, attention and flexibility whilst maintaining the Partnerships core values and commitments.

#### Role category

Selling

Reporting to

Selling Section Manager

#### Main Responsibilities

##### Role Specific

- Use knowledge of additional services and actively sell from JL.com to enhance the customer experience
- Keep up to date with product knowledge by fully utilising the Selling Academy and other resources available
- Achieve the most outstanding shopkeeping and presentation skills in the marketplace
- Resolve customer issues or complaints promptly, courteously and effectively in accordance to Branch Operating Procedures

##### Commercial awareness

- Actively demonstrate flexibility across the branch when required to achieve business targets

- Take calculated risks to pursue continuous improvement
- Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the direction, goals and targets for the department and branch and your part in achieving these
- Be aware of the competition, trading climate and business performance and use this to drive improvement and enhance sales
- Is committed to multi-channel retailing

#### Contributing to a safe working environment

- Contribute to a safe working environment by being aware of, and adhering to, legislative and health and safety requirements of the workplace and the products we sell.
- Follow the appropriate systems and procedures to ensure the prevention of wastage and/or to ensure stock availability
- Be aware of and adhere to all ISI policy requirements

#### Co ownership

- Uphold the Partnership's reputation in the community
- Participate fully in the department, branch and Partnership's unique co-ownership culture, embracing the Partner Commitments
- Bring ideas to management on how ongoing improvements can be achieved to Partner Survey scores

#### Customer

- Understand and demonstrate fully the ABC service standards
- Deliver outstanding service to every customer, both internal and external, through all channels

#### Development of self and others

- Take ownership for own development and participate in a coaching and feedback culture
- Maintain an active personal development plan to achieve your agreed objectives, both 'business' and 'personal'
- Explain the reasons for and embrace change and lead by example
- Share learning experiences to develop others

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## Section manager role profile

Selling  
Section Manager

role profile

### Purpose of Role

To support the Department Manager in formulating, implementing and achieving the department operating plan and branch targets.  
To lead, coach and develop the team to achieve customer service and sales targets whilst maintaining the Partnership core values, behaviours and principles.

### Role category

Selling  
**Reporting to** Department  
Manager

### Main Responsibilities

#### Role Specific

- Focus Partners on delivering service that exceed customers' expectation through demonstration and delivery of the principles of ABC
- Commit to multi-channel retailing with a tangible hunger for sales and delivering profit
- Develop Partners' knowledge of available systems to ensure product is in the right place at the right time
- Lead Partners to achieve consistently high and market-leading merchandising and shop keeping standards across all areas of the department, focussing on our customer strategic priorities and reacting to the different customer types and retail trends
- Ensure Partners develop their product knowledge through use of the Selling Academy to ensure accurate information for the customer and to enhance selling and customer service standards

#### Commercial Awareness

- Be aware of the competition, trading climate and business performance and use this to drive improvements and enhance sales
- Actively encourage flexibility across the branch when required to achieve business targets
- Support and monitor the department operating plan, leading your team to deliver this within the context of branch goals
- Make confident decisions and take calculated risks to pursue continuous department improvement in all target areas

- Is committed to multi-channel retailing

#### Contributing to a safe working environment

- Inspire a culture of loss prevention with your team through diligent use of systems, care of stock/equipment and vigilance.
- Apply health and safety management standards evenly and effectively across the department, thus creating and enabling a safe working environment and also meeting any legislative requirements indicated by the products and/or equipment you work with
- Be aware of and adhere to all ISI policy requirements

#### Co Ownership

- Participate fully in the department, branch and Partnership's unique co-ownership culture, embracing the Partner Commitments and demonstrating them in your own behaviour. Ensure your team understand the behaviours expected of them
- Engage the team in the Partner Survey throughout the year and provide input into the department action plan designed for continuous improvement
- Uphold the Partnership's reputation in the community
- Communicate and share information on the direction and targets for department respecting that your team are co-owners

#### Customer

- Focus Partners on service levels that exceed customers' expectation, both internal and external, through all channels constantly looking to improve standards

#### Leading & Developing

- Take ownership for own development and participate in a coaching and feedback culture to achieve your agreed objectives to deliver department targets
- Maintain an active personal development plan to achieve your agreed objectives, both 'business' and 'personal'
- Delegate authority and empower Partners to take on more responsibility, and monitor progress
- Deliver results through your team and continually strive to achieve KPIs. Question team about missed targets and agree an action plan to achieve them
- Inspire and motivate your team through outstanding leadership and empowerment, ensuring all Partners can maximise their performance, through coaching and feedback
- Embrace change and lead by example with your team, showing flexibility to support across the branch and encourage your Partners to do likewise
- Recognise, celebrate and reward success within the team

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## Management of Performance

- Execute honest and fair performance management, including a relevant working knowledge and application, where necessary, of disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Carry out Partner performance reviews within the required timeframe
- Recognise talent in the team and maximise this by providing regular support to individuals to pursue their own development using horizons and other performance management tools

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## APPENDIX 12

### *John Lewis Partnership – Partner Behaviours booklet*



PartnershipBehavio  
ursbooklet.pdf

*(Click on the icon to access the pdf document)*

Build **relationships** powered by our principles

## 13. Partnership Behaviour Detail



### Delivers Excellent Service

Is passionate about achieving consistent high quality service. Understands customers needs, and builds lasting relationships with all customers

#### Partner Partnership Level 10

- ▶ Goes the extra mile for customers, treating them fairly, with honesty and courtesy
- ▶ Knows who their internal and external customers are
- ▶ Looks at what we are doing through the eyes of the customer
- ▶ Adapts their communication style to suit the customer
- ▶ Offers the best solutions to fulfil customer needs
- ▶ Acts on feedback from customers to increase satisfaction

#### Assistant Section Manager, Section Manager or equivalent Partnership Levels 9&8

- ▶ Sets high service standards for the team and leads by example
- ▶ Drives sales and/or efficiencies through service delivery
- ▶ Constantly reviews levels of service to identify and make improvements
- ▶ Acknowledges excellent service
- ▶ Takes accountability for the delivery of service level requirements
- ▶ Is firm, calm and assured with difficult customers and stakeholders

#### Department Manager or equivalent Partnership Level 7

- ▶ Creates an atmosphere where great service relationships are consistently achieved
- ▶ Keeps customer and stakeholder interests in mind when making decisions
- ▶ Inspires the team to drive sales performance through customer service
- ▶ Looks internally and externally to understand and anticipate customer and stakeholder needs

#### Negative Indicators

- ▶ Lacks confidence with customers and stakeholders
- ▶ Ignores customer and stakeholder concerns
- ▶ Over promises to customers or stakeholders
- ▶ Lets frustrations and stresses show to customers and stakeholders
- ▶ Is reluctant to change their work/plans to deal with customer priorities
- ▶ Doesn't consider the customer perspective when making decisions

#### Negative Indicators for Assistant Section Manager, Section Manager and Department Manager or equivalent. In addition to Negative Indicators for Partner

- ▶ Views situations entirely from a profit perspective
- ▶ Doesn't reinforce positive service to customers and stakeholders

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## APPENDIX 13

*Intervening routes from perceptions to Prosocial service behaviours*

	Importance of Customer service	Confidence	Supported	Valued	Important	Trusted	Motivated	Appreciated/recognised	Part of a team/partner/co-owner	Perception of fairness	Feeling good	Safer	Relaxed	Happy	Satisfied in the job
People management practices															
Training	Many	All	Some	Some							Some				
Performance management	Majority	Majority	Many	Many			Some	Majority		Few	Many		Few	Few	
Non-financial recognition	Few						Some	Many			Some			Some	
Job autonomy	Some	Some	Some		Many	Many					Many		Few		Few
Employee voice									Many	Some	Many			Few	
Communication	Few						Few		Many		Many	Few			
Financial rewards and benefits	Some						Some	Few	Some	Few	Few				
Employee welfare (Registry)			Few										Few		
Line manager	Few														

Prosocial service behaviours

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## APPENDIX 14

*Comparing HR practices gathered in this study against the AMO theory (Appelbaum et al., 2000) and PIRK framework (Lawler, 1992)*

<i>HR practice identified in this study</i>	<i>Link to AMO theory (Appelbaum et al, 2000)</i>	<i>PIRK model of High-involvement work practices ( Lawler, 1992)</i>
<i>Training</i>	<i>Ability</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>
<i>Communication</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Information</i>
<i>Performance management</i>	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Rewards</i>
<i>Non-financial recognition</i>	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Rewards</i>
<i>Financial rewards and benefits</i>	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Rewards</i>
<i>Job autonomy</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Power</i>
<i>Employee voice</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Power</i>